



JESSE WAYNE CONNER

January 5, 1929 - May 9, 2008

A native of Dallas, Texas, Jesse Wayne Conner received a Bachelor's degree in accounting from Southern Methodist University, where he then attended law school before being urged by friends to consider singing.

He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with such teachers as Richard Bonelli, Martial Singher, Elizabeth Westmoreland, Vladimir Sokoloff, Leo Rosenek, and Tito Schipa.

In addition to his Curtis degree, he held a graduate degree from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. A winner of the Walter W. Naumburg Competition, he made his New York debut in a Town Hall recital under their auspices, and was tenor soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Zagreb Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, the Bethlehem Bach Festival, the Baltimore Bach Society, the Philadelphia Lyric Opera, and the Marlboro Music Festival.

He served as tenor soloist at Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, as well as First Baptist Church in Philadelphia. He was also tenor soloist with the Philadelphia Oratorio Choir and with Young Audiences "Introduction to Opera".

For thirty years he produced and hosted two radio programs, "Singer's World" and "Collector's Corner", on National Public Radio. For twelve years he produced and hosted "The Sunday Opera" on WHYF-FM, Philadelphia, and organized and administered a series of Master Classes for Singers at The Peabody Conservatory, with celebrated singers and musicians Risë Stevens, Jan Peerce, Bidú Sayão, Eleanor Steber, Theodore Uppmann, Martial Singher, Joan Dornemann, Thomas Grubb, and Eileen Farrell.

His musical knowledge was extensive, encompassing orchestral and chamber-music repertory, string music (particularly violin), choral works, keyboard literature and performers. He maintained a vast library of recorded performances, both historic and contemporary, from which he frequently drew information for his teaching and lecturing.

A prolific recitalist, he also recorded the Brahms *Liebeslieder Waltzes* for Columbia Records (now SONY/BMG), at the Marlboro Music Festival, which also featured Benita Valente, Marlene Kleinman, Martial Singher, Leon Fleisher and Rudolf Serkin. It has remained in the catalog since its first release.

Mr. Conner served on the voice faculty of Mannes College in New York, taught voice and vocal literature courses at The Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore for forty-four years, and was a faculty member of both the Academy of Vocal Arts and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.