

A Year of Women

Lost in history: Women in Arts & Entertainment

Fact #7

Frances Lillian Bible, Sackets Harbor, N.Y. rose to fame as a New York City Opera mezzo-soprano. She graduated from the Juilliard School of Music, making her New York City Opera debut in 1948. She was the only singer in New York City Opera history to receive an award commemorating her artistic contribution to the company.

Teaching Points

1. The role of the New York City Opera's influence in American intellectual and artistic life.
2. Frances Bible's role in the New York City Opera Company.
3. The role of women in the creation of an all American style of Opera.

NY Learning Standard(s)

ELA 1, 2, 3, 4

Discussion Questions

- 1a. Was there a truly American Opera form before the New York City Opera Company?
- 1b. How does Frances Bible's work in the Opera's *Baby Doe* and *The Crucible* reflect a truly American Opera?
- 2a. How does a young woman from a small rural town become a world famous opera star?
- 2b. Does a small town girl reflect American values in a European art form?
- 3a. What in the make up of the New York City Opera fostered women of talent?
- 3b. What roles did women play in the world of American Opera?

Activity Extensions

1. **Essay.** Prepare an essay on the role of women in American artistic life.
2. **Compare and Contrast.** In a class discussion, compare *Baby Doe*, an Opera about the Gold Rush of the West, in which Frances Bible created the character of Augusta Doe with a European Opera such as, *Aida*, an Opera about Ancient Egypt.
3. **Dialogue.** Prepare a conversation that you feel would have taken place between Frances Bible and the American characters she created in song of Augusta (Baby) Doe or Elizabeth Proctor.