

Davis, Peter G. "Captain of Industry." *New York Magazine* (June 10, 1996): 51-52. Commends Previn for his astonishing variety of musical skills.

Holland, Bernard. "Pursuing the Soul of *Streetcar* in Opera." *The New York Times*, September 20, 1998. A journalist finds much to admire in the first production of Previn's opera, but he notes the difficulty of setting Williams's classic play in operatic terms.

Nelson, Byron. "Previn's Preference." *Pittsburgh Magazine* (March, 1980): 70. Assesses Previn's first five seasons with the Pittsburgh Symphony and questions the conservative nature of his programming.

Previn, André. *No Minor Chords: My Days in Hollywood*. New York: Doubleday, 1993. Previn fondly recounts his early days as a Hollywood composer, arranger, and orchestrator of film musicals at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Ruttencutter, Helen Drees. *Previn*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. This biography appeared shortly after Previn's Pittsburgh years.

**See also:** Ashkenazy, Vladimir; Bernstein, Leonard; Chung, Kyung-Wha; Fitzgerald, Ella; Green, Adolph, and Betty Comden; Lerner, Alan Jay; Loewe, Frederick; Mercer, Johnny; Mutter, Anne-Sophie; Perlman, Itzhak; Price, Leontyne; Rózsa, Miklós; Schoenberg, Arnold; Shankar, Ravi; Tatum, Art.

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## Leontyne Price

### American classical and opera singer

*With her elegant voice and extraordinary vocal range, Price captivated the world with her powerful operatic performances.*

**Born:** February 10, 1927; Laurel, Mississippi  
**Also known as:** Mary Violet Leontyne Price (full name)

### Principal works

**OPERATIC ROLES:** Mistress Ford in Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff*, 1952; Saint Cecelia in Virgil

Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, 1952; Bess in George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, 1952; Tosca in Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*, 1955; Aida in Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, 1957; Madame Lidoine in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 1957; Pamina in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, 1958 (*The Magic Flute*); Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, 1960; Minnie in Puccini's *La fanciulla del west*, 1961 (*The Girl of the Golden West*); Butterfly in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, 1961; Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani*, 1962; Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore*, 1962; Lenora in Verdi's *La forza del destino*, 1963 (*The Force of Destiny*); Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, 1964; Tatyana in Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, 1965; Cleopatra in Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1966; Liù in Puccini's *Turandot*, 1966; Amelia in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, 1969 (*A Masked Ball*); Ariadne in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 1970; Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro*, 1970; Manon in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, 1970.

### The Life

Mary Violet Leontyne (lee-AHN-teen or LEE-ahn-teen) Price is the daughter of a carpenter, James Anthony Price, and a midwife, Kathrine Baker. She was exposed to music while she was a toddler. While her mother attended rehearsals and sung in the choir at the local church, Price sat next to her and heard her mother's beautiful soprano voice. Price had her first music lesson with a music teacher from the Negro Oak Park Vocational High School at the age of three. Her mother had high hopes of her daughter pursuing a career in music. Her father was not supportive of Price's music interest until he heard her perform her first piano recital at the age of five. From that point on, her parents did everything they could to ensure that Price had a future in music.

Price had a normal childhood, enjoying her toys and girlfriends. Before she was allowed to play, however, she had to practice. During her teen years, Price played piano and sang at funerals, weddings, and other events. She was well compensated for her performances.

Education was important to Price and her parents, and she graduated cum laude from high

school. Soon after, she attended Wilberforce College in Wilberforce, Ohio, on a full scholarship. At first she majored in music education, but she decided to pursue a concentration in voice after a recommendation from one of her voice teachers. She was even more confident that she wanted a career in opera after hearing Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot* (1926). At this time Price focused on a career in opera, one that lasted until she retired in 1985. She remains active in the music world, presenting recitals and teaching voice to talented sopranos.

### The Music

Price possesses an extraordinary lyric soprano voice. During her first operatic world premiere in 1952, she was an immediate success. Her musical style is superb, and her voice is moving.

**Porgy and Bess.** Price first performed George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) in 1952, when the opera was set for an all-black cast. *Porgy and Bess* transforms jazz and blues idioms into an operatic classical art form. The opera was highly regarded, but not all African Americans were willing to accept its negative depiction of blacks. Price played the role of Bess, and William Warfield, who later became her husband for two years, played Porgy. Each time Price performed the role of Bess, critics commented on her remarkable vocal power and purity. They believed Price sang the most electrifying and breathtaking Bess ever heard.

**Tosca.** Price premiered in Puccini's *Tosca* (1900) in 1955 on NBC-Television's *Opera Workshop* production. She was the first African American opera singer to premiere in a televised opera. Several stations in the South threatened not to televise the opera because of its interracial aspects. However, the opera was aired, and it was a success. Critics believed Price's performance as Floria Tosca was astonishing.

**Aida.** Price felt a personal connection to the role of Aida in Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* (1871). The opera is a love story set in ancient times when Ethiopia and Egypt were at war. Princess Aida of Ethiopia is abducted with other Ethiopians and forced into slavery in Egypt. While a servant to Pharaoh's daughter, she initiates contact with the captain of the Egyptian army, and they fall in love. Price first premiered in *Aida* at the San Francisco Opera House in 1957. She portrayed Aida with charm.



Leontyne Price. (Library of Congress)

Some critics believed Price was born for this role and that the composer would have found Price was the ideal soprano for the role of Aida.

**Il Trovatore.** Price made history when she played the leading role, Leonora, in Verdi's *Il trovatore* (1853) at the Metropolitan Opera in 1961. *Il trovatore* is a love story about Leonora, the queen of Spain, who is in love with a nomadic poet and musician. However, his brother, the count, also loves her. Price's performance was so astonishing that the audience gave a standing ovation for forty-two minutes at the conclusion of the opera. Price believed that she had reached the peak of her success with this performance.

**Antony and Cleopatra.** In 1966, Price gave the world premiere of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Lincoln Center, for the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House. Cleopatra's role was customized specifically for Price.



**Musical Legacy**

Price captivated the world with her extraordinary lyric soprano voice, using its power to integrate audiences in Laurel, Mississippi, for the first time in history. Known as the first lady of opera, Price has been honored with numerous awards. She was the first opera singer to be given the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Italy honored her with the Order of Merit. She has collected three Emmy Awards and twenty Grammy Awards. Price also received the Kennedy Center Honors Award and the National Medal of Arts.

Monica T. Tripp

**Further Reading**

Bolden, Tonya. *And Not Afraid to Dare: The Stories of Ten African-American Women*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1998. This book recounts the lives and major accomplishments of ten extraordinary African American women, including a brief biography of Price and details on her opera debuts.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Cornel West. *The African-American Century: How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Country*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. A brief overview of the achievements of the leading African Americans, including Price, who have helped transform America.

Lyon, Hugh Lee. *Leontyne Price: Highlights of a Prima Donna*. New York: Authors Choice Press, 2007. This book offers a candid view of Price's personal life based on interviews with her teachers, family members, and friends.

Price, Leontyne. *Aida*. San Diego, Calif.: Voyager Books, 2007. Details about the opera *Aida* through the eyes of the performer.

Sargeant, Winthrop. *Divas*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973. This book examines the life and major works of leading female opera singers, including Price.

**See also:** Anderson, Marian; Barber, Samuel; Björling, Jussi; Harrison, Lou; Norman, Jessye; Previn, Sir André; Puccini, Giacomo.

## Charley Pride

**American country singer, songwriter,  
and guitarist**

*Pride was the first commercially successful African American in country music.*

**Born:** March 18, 1938; Sledge, Mississippi  
**Also known as:** Charley Frank Pride (full name)

**Principal recordings**

**ALBUMS:** *Country Charley Pride*, 1966; *The Country Way*, 1967; *The Pride of Country Music*, 1967; *Make Mine Country*, 1968; *Songs of Pride . . . Charley, That Is*, 1968; *The Sensational Charley Pride*, 1969; *Charley Pride's Tenth Album*, 1970; *Christmas in My Home Town*, 1970; *Just Plain Charley*, 1970; *Charley Pride Sings Heart Songs*, 1971; *Did You Think to Pray?*, 1971; *From Me to You*, 1971; *I'm Just Me*, 1971; *A Sunshine Day with Charley Pride*, 1972; *Amazing Love*, 1973; *Songs of Love by Charley Pride*, 1973; *Sweet Country*, 1973; *Country Feelin'*, 1974; *Pride of America*, 1974; *Charley*, 1975; *The Happiness of Having You*, 1975; *Sunday Morning with Charley Pride*, 1976; *She's Just an Old Love Turned Memory*, 1977; *Burgers and Fries*, 1978; *Someone Loves You Honey*, 1978; *You're My Jamaica*, 1979; *There's a Little Bit of Hank in Me*, 1980; *Roll on Mississippi*, 1981; *Charley Sings Everybody's Choice*, 1982; *Country Classics*, 1983; *Night Games*, 1983; *Power of Love*, 1984; *Collector's Series*, 1985; *Best There Is*, 1986; *After All This Time*, 1987; *I'm Gonna Love Her on the Radio*, 1988; *Moody Woman*, 1989; *Country in My Soul*, 1991; *My Six Latest and Six Greatest*, 1994; *Classics with Pride*, 1996; *A Tribute to Jim Reeves*, 2001; *Comfort of Her Wings*, 2003; *Happy Christmas*, 2004.

**The Life**

Charley Frank Pride was born on a cotton farm in Sledge, Mississippi. Pride's early exposure to country music came from listening to Grand Ole Opry radio broadcasts with his father. At age fourteen, Pride bought his first guitar from Sears, Roebuck, and he began learning to play by ear. Baseball