



HARP

Gladys Hubner Margolis (1907-2005)

by Saul Davis-Zlatkovsky

Prominent Twin Cities harpist Gladys Hubner died not long ago at the age of 98. She enjoyed a lengthy and varied life as an entertainer and harpist.

Gladys Hubner Margolis was born in Minneapolis in 1907 and as a child studied interpretive dance and piano. At the age of 14, she taught herself to play the Irish harp so that she could appear in her high school play, performing the famous air *I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls* from Balfé's *The Bohemian Girl*. Once she showed her dedication to the harp, her teacher arranged for her to borrow a full-size pedal harp. Gladys then began performing at church services, weddings, radio shows and funerals while still in high school. She was also an honors student all the way through college. She continued performing as a dancer, but was very committed to becoming a concert harpist. She performed in operas, tableaux and plays, and was a regular soloist on WCCO radio. Other gigs typical of these Roaring 20s included playing in the lobbies of Minneapolis' grand Orpheum Theater and at the once-famous Curtis Hotel.

Gladys was also athletic, active in riding and archery. One thing she could not countenance was jazz; she never played jazz and considered it unsuitable for the harp. She studied at the University of Minnesota where she was a member of Sigma Alpha Iota, the music sorority. Her harp teacher was Henry Williams, the principal harpist of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. She was known for developing her intellect through reading Spinoza and Kant.

Gladys learned to take great pride in her appearance and presentation from performing as an interpretive dancer. Once, when told she could not have a gig because she was a brunette, she showed up the next day as a blonde and got the job, remaining

blonde thereafter.

In 1927, Gladys was offered a position with the Marie MacQuarrie Harp Ensemble, which performed on the major vaudeville circuit all over the five boroughs in New York City, so she moved to Manhattan and began her free-lance career there. She later performed musical interludes and in the orchestra at the Radio City Music Hall as well as in *The Sound of Music* and *The Fantasticks*. Well-known harpist Gene Bianco says of Gladys, "She had a wonderful reputation in New York, as a harpist and as a person."



To my very good friend, Jack, [Jack Nebergall?] with many best wishes and much appreciation — Gladys Hübner, Harpist

While in New York, Gladys was a pupil of Marcel Grandjany, winning his approval and endorsement. According to students of Gladys, Grandjany originally wrote the string quartet accompaniment to his *Rapsodie* for her to perform at Radio City, and they toured together in joint recitals.

At Radio City Music Hall Gladys met and later married Arthur Margolis, who owned a men's clothing store. They were very happily married and kept a residence in Minneapolis for their frequent visits and summers. They purchased a colonial house in the Diamond Lake neighborhood, furnished with her fabulous collection of antiques and always a pair of dachshunds.

Gladys served on the faculty of Macalester College, and taught a good number of talented students, many of whom are active in the Upper Midwest. She performed with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra as second harpist in some seasons, including playing in their well-known recordings of the complete works of Ravel. Notably, she worked closely with Alan Hovhaness when he was in residence at Macalester College and was composing *Garden of Adonis for Flute and Harp*. She gigged with area ensembles, at such establishments as the Rosewood Room,

and played background music, weddings, and annually at the State Fair with a string trio until well into her 80s. She owned several Lyon & Healy concert harps, both natural and gold colored, and also owned an early 1900s single-action harp. She left her valuable collection of antiques and art to the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis.

Saul Davis-Zlatkovsky, composer-harpist, studied harp at MacPhail, Macalester College, Tanglewood, Manhattan School of Music and the Salzedo Summer Harp Colony. Currently living in Philadelphia, Saul has coached harp students at the Curtis Institute of Music. His compositions were performed at the 2004 national conference of the American Harp Society. His teachers have been Frances Miller, Lynne Aspnes, Alice Chalifoux and Lucile Lawrence. Saul also serves as Harp Forum editor for the American String Teacher magazine. †

Memories of Gladys

by Anna Vorhes

The Zen saying "When a student is ready, a teacher will appear" fit my relationship with Gladys Hubner very well. She came into my life at a point I was ready to be serious about the harp. She demanded careful and endless attention to technique — when I played something for her just a few years ago, she thought the music was fine, but wondered how I could play so well with my thumbs so low. (Back to the etudes, and reposition those thumbs!) She taught me how to play the harp well, but also how to be a gracious and attentive lady and a warm and loving friend.

Anna Vorhes studied with Gladys Hubner at Macalester and currently has an active career in Sioux Falls SD.