

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6081

Phillips, Linda

(1899 - 2002)

Born 1 January, 1899, Prahran Victoria Australia

Died 31 December, 2002

Occupation Composer, Journalist, Music critic, Musician

Details

Rosalind Philippa Phillips was, for much of her long life, better-known as a music critic than for her own compositions and performance as a pianist. Her talent, however, had been noticed early, with a comment, which would not be published today, in the *Graphic of Australia* that:

Linda Phillips, who was honoured at the recent Conservatorium concert by having a number of her own song compositions sung, is only in her 'teens, and is really a musical genius. At the age of three she was able to sit up to a piano and play correctly without music, and at the present time, rarely, if ever, uses a score. She is dark, petite, nervy, and is a member of the Jewish persuasion – always lovers of music.[1]

Linda Phillips attended the Melbourne Conservatorium at the University of Melbourne and the Albert Street Conservatorium, where she was able to concentrate on composition rather than performance. She quickly became known for the songs in which she set her own lyrics to music, also enjoying a career as a pianist, especially on the ABC.

After the death of her husband (Adolph) Maurice Kauffmann in 1945 Linda Phillips began her journalist's career with the Melbourne *Sun*, where she was to work until 1976 and for the *Australian Musical News*. She was an adjudicator of the Sun Aria Contest, published poetry and contributed to scholarly journals.[2] In *Meanjin Papers* she made an eloquent plea for the publication of a broad range of Australian composition:

Australia must have her devotees of Beethoven and Chopin, of Romberg, of Irving Berlin – even of boogie woogie, and the sentimental ballads that 'touch all hearts.' The last two are among the best commercial speculations; but is there no place for 'middle-brow' music which, is pleasant to hear, not too difficult to play or sing, and not too abstruse to understand? Such music should receive encouragement, along with the greater works which Australians are writing, and will not be discouraged from undertaking.[3]

Her compositions fell out of favour as Australian music became more modernist while hers remained untouched by the changing fashion. Those influenced by her study of Jewish and Middle Eastern melodies remain the most popular. She was awarded an OBE in 1975 and named Composer of Honour by Monash University in 1994.

[1] 'Girls' Gossip'. *Graphic of Australia* . 5 October 1917: 27.

[2] Linda Phillips. *From a City Garden*. Melbourne: Endacott, 1922.

[3] Linda Phillips. 'Creative Music in Australia'. *Meanjin Papers*. v.5 no. 4(Summer 1946):312-315.

Published resources

Book
40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Flesch, Juliet, 2015,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/>

Author Details

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