



Judith G. Kellock

February 16, 1951 – March 27, 2015

Judith Kellock, Professor of Music, died in Ithaca on March 27, 2015 from complications following cancer surgery. She was 64. Kellock was a beloved and active member of the Cornell music faculty, which she joined in 1991, and an enthusiastic participant in Arts College and University events campus-wide. She taught voice performance to generations of students and participated in numerous recitals and concerts. Her last performance on campus was a midday recital in Lincoln Hall on December 4, 2014: "Love, Loss, and Longing: The World of 19th- Century German Song." She is survived by her brother James and a nephew, James Albert.

Professor Kellock was lauded in the press as "a singer of rare intelligence and vocal splendor, with a voice of indescribable beauty." According to the *Boston Globe*, to listen to her voice "was to be plunged into another world, one of outright, risk-taking virtuosity, extremes of range and color." She sang with the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra and the St. Louis Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New World Symphony, the Limburg Symphony Orchestra, the Honolulu Symphony, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and the Greek Radio Orchestra, among other ensembles in the United States and Europe. She performed major operatic roles in Italy and Greece, toured with the Opera Company of Boston, and performed with the Mark Morris Dance Company in Brussels. Her honors included a National Endowment for the Arts recitalist fellowship, which led to a string of innovative song recitals in California.

She also led master classes at institutions from Prague to San Francisco and gave voice lessons in New York at her studio in Jackson Heights. Also in Jackson Heights she launched an innovative grass-roots series at the Renaissance Charter School, "Chamber Music for the Neighborhood, celebrating the diversity and energy of Queens." As *The New York Times*

reported, "The soprano Judith Kellock has been producing concerts in Jackson Heights since 2005, usually including music that reflects the neighborhood's Indian, Latin American and gay residents." The series included local performers but also outsiders whom residents of the district hoped to hear in person. For instance, in 2012 she arranged for "an ambitious event: the world premiere of the first act from "Agni Varsha" (Fire and Rain), an opera by the veteran Bollywood composer Vanraj Bhatia," who flew in from Mumbai for the occasion.

"It goes without saying that Judy was an important artist – one of the very few equipped to carry on the legacy of her own teacher, the great American mezzo Jan DeGaetani, in art song, in vocal chamber music and in championing the living American composer," said Steven Stucky, Given Foundation Professor of Composition emeritus. "But more importantly, on a personal level with her colleagues and friends, she was warm-hearted, passionate and fiercely loyal. The outpouring now of love and grief from her legions of students reminds us that she was a teacher of rare gifts, utterly dedicated to passing on the secrets of her craft and to bolstering her students' integrity and confidence. As a mentor and friend, she set a standard we can all aspire to but few can match. Her passing leaves a hole in the lives of so very many – scores of lives she changed decisively for the better."

Assistant Professor of Music Roger Moseley adds: "My favorite memory of Judy is from the semester we taught a class on Lieder together. She hosted a dinner party attended by Johannes Mannov, a visiting Danish baritone who took part in the class, his wife Adrienne, my wife, Associate Professor of Classics Verity Platt, our twin three-year-old boys, and me. There was torrential rain that evening and Forest Home was hit by a blackout, throwing Judy's dinner plans into darkness and disarray. What amazed and amused us all about Judy that evening was the effortless panache with which she took this major disruption in stride: we grilled fish outside by candlelight as she told the boys stories before indulging them with deliciously soft ice cream. What could have been a disaster turned into an adventure.

"Poise under pressure, imagination, and generosity: these qualities were typical of Judy as an artist as well as a colleague and friend. Although I miss her intense devotion to her craft and her deep knowledge of her repertoire, I will always remember them. It was a profound pleasure to work and play alongside her."

"Judy was one of the most positive and generous people I know, always looking for new approaches and creative projects that included friends and colleagues," said pianist Xak Bjerken, professor of music. "Her singing was emotionally committed and expressive, and she was beloved by her students and by her many friends here in Ithaca and afar. Those who knew her and worked with her are left heartbroken."

Professor Kellock held a master of music degree from Boston University. A primary influence in her musical life was the late Jan DeGaetani, with whom she studied for many years. Other teachers included Grace Hunter, Hazel O'Donnell, Phyllis Curtin at Tanglewood, and Wilma Thompson at Boston University.

On Monday, April 20, 2015, in Barnes Hall Auditorium, the Department of Music presented “A Concert for Judy.” Among the tributes on stage, five of Judy’s former students who are now professional singers — Arsenia Soto Brickley, Brian Ming Chu, Terence Goff, Jamie Jordan and Nathaniel McEwen — returned to campus to honor their mentor by performing some of her favorite vocal works. “Losing Judy creates a void in our hearts and in our department,” said Roberto Sierra, interim chair of the Department of Music. “She was a beloved teacher and colleague, and her artistry graced our stages for over two decades.”

Judy's repertory was wide and deep, but she especially championed 20th Century Music and young composers and performers, influencing the lives and careers of her many students at Cornell. She was a founding member of Ithaca's new-music group, Ensemble X.

Composer Kevin Ernste, associate professor of music, created his own memorial to Judy: a new composition using the sounds of her recorded voice. As Ernste explains, his piece was an electronic interpretation of the Cornell chimes stretching, manipulating and filtering the last five notes of the alma mater to produce new sounds and harmonies. Added to the mix was Professor Kellock's voice. “The melody was constructed, note-by-note, from a combination of source recordings, projects that [Judy] and I worked together on over the years. I specifically sought to undermine any perceptible language, transcending words in order to more directly convey the indelible timbre of her unique voice. I was pleased to discover that many of my colleagues and students, those close to her, immediately recognized the source.

“The idea of using Judy's voice was one that I couldn't avoid. It anchored the piece, for me, in people and work, rather than the institution. Or perhaps I simply needed the joy of performing with her one last time, something my particular form of expression, with electronic sounds, makes possible.”

As Ernste's description reminds, Judy's voice is still with us on her recordings. They include *The Astronaut's Tale*, an opera by Charles Fussell, as well as the music of Samuel Barber, Paul Hindemith, Lukas Foss, Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra, Judith Weir, Arthur Berger, Chen Yi, Toshio Hosokawa, Donald Womack, Peter Askim and Lawrence Moss. Those who wish to listen to Judy might begin with her Grammy-nominated disk of Paul Hindemith's song cycle, *Das Marienleben*, continue with Roberto Sierra's *Cancionero*, Steven Stucky's *In Shadow, in Light*, David Dies' *Agevolmente* or Samuel Barber's song cycle, *Everything but the Hermit*; then move on to Lucas Foss's *Complete Vocal Chamber Music* or Dan Welcher's *Vox Femina, Seven Songs of Poems of e. e. cummings, The Bequest* and *Harbor Music*. These recordings are available commercially and may also be sampled in Cornell's Sidney Cox Library of Music and Dance.

Neal Zaslaw, chair; Roberto Sierra, Steven Stucky, Xak Bjerken, Kevin Ernste, Roger Moseley