

MANI MEKLER Biography

One of the most heralded dramatic sopranos of her time, Mani Mekler's powerful voice and commanding presence was renowned throughout Europe for more than two decades and still reveals traces of her mentor Tito Gobbi and the diva's own meteoric rise with the Stockholm Royal Opera and Dusseldorf's Deutsche Oper am Rhein.

Born in Haifa, Israel, Ms. Mekler joined a family whose musical prowess spanned generations: her father had been a founder and first trumpet player of the Haifa Philharmonic; her brothers both earned accolades as concert pianists, one later becoming a prominent record producer in the United States.

Accompanying her family to the U.S. at age nine, she discovered her own talent—voice—amid the public school of Los Angeles. At the urging of her brother Gabriel, she moved to London. It was in the U.K. that she decided to seriously pursue opera. Soon thereafter, she was noticed at Morley College by a friend of the great dramatic baritone and teacher Tito Gobbi. Along with such other legendary figures as Maria Callas and Maria Caniglia, Gobbi would be a primary force in guiding Ms. Mekler toward a future in opera.

Convinced of her potential as an opera star, Gobbi brought Ms. Mekler to the Villa Schifanoia Music Academy in Florence. From there he brought her to live and study in Rome, where he offered private lessons, heartfelt advice and an introduction to internationally renowned coach Maestro Luigi Ricci. Ms. Mekler worked with Gobbi and studied every major operatic role, also appearing in numerous television specials including a BBC special with Gobbi.

While attending a Gobbi master class in Florence in 1974, the director of the Stockholm Royal Opera heard Ms. Mekler and invited her to audition for the Swedish company. The results of her first audition defied all expectations: Mani Mekler was offered the starring role of Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. Her debut evoked a wealth of critical praise, with one reviewer from the London Times noting: "What made Miss Mekler's appearance so striking...was the fact that this pupil of Tito Gobbi was treading the boards of a stage for the first time in her life, with the assurance and skill of a practiced singer. Hers was indeed a new name to be watched!"

Her performance in Gotz Friedrich's *Così fan Tutte* at Drottningholm Court Theater earned her a home at the Stockholm Royal Opera. For two years she graced the stage in *La Bohème*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Sour Angelica*, *Tabarro* and other productions, garnering critical praise: "a striking stage personality," "a gift for suggesting psychological ambiguity," "a natural, dignified and intense actress," among other kudos. During her tenure with the Swedish company, she was invited to sing *Il Trovatore* with the Welsh National Opera, followed by *The Magic Flute* at the Glydebourne Festival and

her commanding interpretation of Marta in *Tiefland* at the Wexford Festival, a performance that prompted one critic to call her “the star attraction of the festival.”

In 1978 Ms. Mekler left Sweden for Dusseldorf, where she further developed her career with the Deutsche Oper am Rhein. Amongst the numerous leading roles Ms. Mekler sang with the German company—including those in *Tosca*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Elektra*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Alceste*, *Jenufa*, and *Salome*—she names as her most enjoyable *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, a challenging Shostakovich work that led the London Financial Times to write: “Behind her gutsy, uninhibited, yet utterly controlled acting, (Mani Mekler) displayed complete identification with Katerina’s suppressed need for love, the inexorable personal agonies, her underlying nobility and courage...It is no overstatement to say she is ideal for the part.”

Ms. Mekler has sung in some of the most prestigious opera houses in the world, including Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Jerusalem, Paris, Madrid, Torino, Zurich, London, Chicago as well as Milan’s La Scala.

She retired from singing in 1999. Currently living in Los Angeles, Ms. Mekler is married to entertainment public relations executive Paul Baker and the mother of a son, Gabriel. She continues to teach and lecture.