

**ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY
DECEMBER 26**

On December 26, 1935, noted singer Susanne Fisher, a native of Sutton, made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera.

CSO: SS.8.9, SS.8.24, ELA.8.1

Investigate the Document: (*The Braxton Democrat*, December 26, 1935)

1. Where is Susanne Fisher's hometown?
2. Where was her Metropolitan Opera debut?
3. How did she become involved with the Metropolitan Opera?

Think Critically: Have you heard of the Metropolitan Opera? What three things does Susanne Fisher credit as having helped to start her music career? Where did she study prior to becoming involved with the Metropolitan Opera?

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MISS SUSANNE FISHER MAKES METROPOLITAN OPERA DEBUT



Great Applause Shows That Debut Was a Success

MUSICAL CAREER BEGAN AT SEVEN

Studied in Staatsoper in Berlin and at Opera Comique in Paris

NEW YORK, Dec. 24.—A rosy cheeked young soprano from the Mountain State of West Virginia bowed to the Metropolitan Opera's matinee crowds today, but her fondest applause came from Lucretia Bori, famous diva.

She is brown eyed Susanne Fisher from Sutton, a tiny town near Clarksburg.

The petite lass, in her twenties, sang the role of Clo-Clo-San, the beautifully pitiful Japanese maiden who loved but lost her American naval officer.

Her debut was a success—the applause showed that, but her greatest tribute came from the famous Bori.

It was a large bouquet of flowers, handed over the footlights after the second act aria "One Fine Day".

Susanne's debut in Puccini's "Madame Butterfly" came by a circuitous and individual route.

In the first place, she admits her early musical attempts were the result of rage. Sometimes she was a bad little girl. Then she was punished. Because she was as determined as she had been naughty, she would rush to the piano and pound out what seemed a tune, and sing at the top of her voice to keep from crying.

In the second place, her musical career began at seven years with piano lessons. These she would not have taken seriously, she now says, if her mother had not persuaded her that somehow they might be important. She liked "Run Sheep Run" better than music.

And, in the third place, she was lucky enough to fall into good hands, musically, in Cincinnati after graduating from high school. There it was decided she must begin all over again, and quite patiently she sat herself down and began her scales and arpeggios, and this time took them even more seriously.

Then there appeared a good friend. This friend heard her singing to herself, and decided she had better investigate the vocal possibilities of the girl from Sutton. Her voice proved promising, vocal lessons began and when she was graduated from the Cincinnati conservatory, her program was of songs instead of a piano recital.

But graduation recitals provide no sustenance. Miss Fisher's first job—on her own—was as a teacher of both piano and voice in Norfolk, Va., at the Bristow-Hardin conservatory. It was there that another friend had another brilliant idea. The friend persuaded Miss Fisher to go to New York for further study, and helped arrange an audition for her at the Juilliard school of music which looks benignly at the world and Grant's Tomb on New York's upper West Side.

Miss Fisher confesses she was much awed by the prospect. She didn't bother to tell her family; the idea seemed too audacious. The piece she sang for the judges ended appropriately. The line was "protect me, O God!" She held the Juilliard fellowships for three years and worked with Paul Reimers.

She worked hard, Reimers says, and when she was sent as an exchange student to the Berliner Hochschule fur Musik, nobody was surprised, unless, indeed, it might have been Miss Fisher herself. She was supposed to stay eight months, but remained five years.

From the Hochschule she went to the Staatsoper, and quickly earned a reputation as a good lyric soprano to have around. She once studied "Butterfly" in German overnight and saved

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a performance. Her roles improved and she began to have her own place in the European art world.

Then she went to the Opera Comique in Paris, adding two seasons there to her three in Berlin. It was while she was at the Comique that her opportunity at the Metropolitan came and was seized.

Oddly enough, she returned to America almost unknown artistically except for a short period with the Little Theater Opera company some years ago, and successful appearances at the last two Worcester festivals.

Her only important pre-Metropolitan engagement in New York this winter was with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony society. Under Otto Klemperer she did the soprano solos in Mahler's Second Symphony when that gigantic work was revived two weeks ago, and did them successfully.

Anyway, she feels, it's nice to sing for the home folks, while she is youthful. And, she hopes, they like her.