

THE HISTORIC STRATER HOTEL PRESENTS

ROOM 227: THE EDITH MASON ROOM

Legendary Soprano Opera Singer

Summarized from typed manuscript (as best possible) for Strater Hotel – Durango CO.

Welcome to this special room honoring Edith Mason, a legendary soprano whose voice and artistry defined the golden age of opera.

Born Edith Marjory Barnes in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 22, 1891 (a birth year she famously adjusted in later years), Edith's rise to opera stardom was nothing short of extraordinary. Her childhood was shaped by resilience: her father's untimely death and her mother's fragile health brought challenges, but her grandfather introduced her to opera, sparking a lifelong passion.

Edith's journey began with studies at an exclusive finishing school in Bryn Mawr before moving to Paris, where she dyed her hair red in homage to her idol, soprano Mary Garden. She trained with renowned vocalists Victor Maurel and Enrico Bertram, making her operatic debut with the Boston Opera Company in the 1911–1912 season. In her early career, she shared the stage with opera greats like Enrico Caruso and Geraldine Farrar, whose mentorship profoundly influenced her artistry.

Throughout her illustrious career, Edith performed on the world's most prestigious stages, including the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Opera, and La Scala in Milan. Her repertoire included beloved roles such as Mimi in *La Bohème*, Marguerite in *Faust*, and Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*. She worked closely with legends such as Giacomo Puccini, who famously told her to "sing from the heart." Audiences were captivated by her luminous voice, emotional depth, and commanding stage presence.

Edith's personal life was as vibrant as her performances. She was married seven times—three of those to conductor Giorgio Polacco, her artistic collaborator and kindred spirit. Her adventurous spirit, resilience, and zest for life carried her through personal challenges, including a tumultuous marriage to Dr. Maurice Bernstein, legal guardian to a

young Orson Welles, and financial difficulties during the Great Depression. Yet through it all, Edith remained a beacon of strength, creativity, and passion.

In 1938, Edith found lasting happiness with William Ragland, her devoted husband of 36 years. During this time, she began transitioning from performing to teaching, inspiring young artists as a faculty member at DePaul University and sharing her rich experiences on the lecture circuit. Her performances, however, remained iconic. She gave her final operatic appearance in 1941 as Mimi in *La Bohème* and concluded her public singing career with a Grant Park concert in 1942.

Edith's later years were filled with reflection and restoration. She split her time between Villa Graziella, her

cherished Italian retreat in Cortina d'Ampezzo, and homes in Arizona and California. Her health declined in the early 1970s, and she passed away in November 1973.

Today, we celebrate Edith Mason not only for her remarkable contributions to opera but also for her

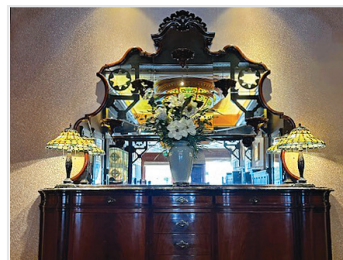
indomitable spirit, grace, and love of beauty. This room at the historic Strater Hotel serves as a tribute to her artistry and as an inspiration for all who enter to dream boldly, live passionately, and leave their mark on the world, just as Edith did.



Edith Mason



Edith photographed with husband and conductor Giorgio Polacco.



This credenza in the Strater Hotel, was once owned by Edith.