

ARROYO, MARTINA (1937–)

“I had a lot of dreams when I was a kid, and my mother humored them.” Martina Arroyo. *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*.

Martina Arroyo was born in Harlem, New York. Her mother taught her to play the piano and encouraged her passion for performing. Arroyo joined a graduate-level opera workshop and impressed the director with her abilities. Her big break came in 1958 when she sang an aria from *Aida* in the Metropolitan Opera's Auditions of the Air competition. The following year she debuted at Carnegie Hall in *Assassinio nella cattedrale*. During an overseas tour she married violist Emilio Poggioni and joined the Zürich Opera Company. Soon thereafter, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera called Arroyo inviting her to substitute for the suddenly ill soprano, as the lead in *Aida*. The audience's standing ovation at the final curtain was extraordinary and Arroyo was offered a contract with the company. A series of triumphs throughout the years brought Arroyo fame on both sides of the Atlantic. At London's Covent Garden, she appeared as Valentine in *Les Huguenots* and was the first Puerto Rican/African American artist to portray Elsa in *Lohengrin*. Marking his 1,000th performance with the New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein specifically invited Arroyo, one of his favorite singers, to perform with him in concert. She currently sits on both boards of trustees of Hunter College and Carnegie Hall.