

## FACEBOOK TRIBUTES *BIRGIT NILSSON*

Frank Gagliano (May 16, 2018)

On 17 May, famed Swedish Wagnerian soprano, Birgit Nilsson, would have been 100: She died in 2005, age 87. Sometime in the 1950s, I first heard Nilsson sing Richard Strauss's "*Salome*" at the Munich Opera House. I was in the army, stationed in the city of Lenggries, just south of Munich, at the foot of the German alps. I had never heard of Birgit Nilsson, but I wanted to see the Strauss opera and, on a weekend pass, I recall getting a seat in the last row of the Munich Opera House balcony.

To this day, I can remember being overwhelmed by Nilsson/*Salome*'s last monologue to the newly severed head (on a tray) of John The Baptist (don't ask). The director staged the scene with Nilsson, on her stomach, singing her depraved monologue to some of the most impassioned music ever written. On her belly though Nilsson was — her voice reached me as if I were in the first row of the opera house — and I swear the wall behind me shuddered. Overwhelming!

Soon after, Brigit Nilsson captivated the world and became known, I believe, as the Ethel Merman of the opera stage. And was it any wonder! (<https://www.nytimes.com/.../m.../birgit-nilsson-nina-stemme.html>)

