

Maria Callas: La Divina [B2]

Negli anni '50 e '60 la diva greco-americana trionfò in tutto il mondo con la sua straordinaria estensione vocale e le sue capacità interpretative. La sua vita ebbe però un epilogo tragico. Ne parliamo con l'autrice della sua biografia.



The life of American-Greek soprano Maria Callas, called “La Divina” by her legions of fans, reads like the [plot](#) of an opera. She was born Maria Anna Cecilia Sofia Kalogeropulu in New York on 2 December 1923, the daughter of Greek immigrants to the US. As a teenager, she returned to Athens, her voice already noted as unusual in its sound, versatility and expressive qualities.

BEL CANTO

[Driven](#) by [unwavering commitment](#), Callas’s career developed in Greece and then in Italy, where she performed in prestigious [venues](#) such as La Scala in Milan, rising to become prima donna, the leading woman in an opera. She is credited with reviving interest in the 19th-century bel canto operas of Vincenzo Bellini (Norma), Gaetano Donizetti (Lucia di Lammermoor) and Gioachino Rossini (The Barber of Seville), and performed

under internationally-renowned opera directors Luchino Visconti and Franco Zeffirelli.

PERSONAL LIFE

In 1949, Callas married Italian industrialist Giovanni Battista Meneghini, who [appointed](#) himself her manager. In 1953, she [underwent](#) radical weight loss, losing thirty-six kilograms. This was for health reasons and to make her more '[suitable](#)' for the big roles; however, she became extremely thin, and there was controversy about how she lost weight and its effect on her voice and health.

EARLY DEATH

As Callas' international career [soared](#), so did her reputation for temperamental behaviour. There were rumours surrounding her [fiery](#) personal relationships, her angry [walkouts](#) and her rivalry with other opera stars. A 1956 article in Time magazine reported a [feud](#) between Callas and her mother, and in 1959 her marriage to Meneghini was annulled, and she embarked on an [on-off](#) love affair with Greek [shipping tycoon](#) Aristotle Onassis. By the 1970s, Callas' voice had deteriorated, and she gave her last performance in Paris in 1974. In 1977 she died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-three.

Glossary

- **tycoon** = magnate
- **plot** = trama
- **walkouts** = abbandoni
- **commitment** = impegno
- **soared** = alzarsi, sollevarsi
- **fiery** = focose
- **on-off** = intermittente
- **shipping** = trasporto
- **Driven** = spingere
- **unwavering** = risoluto
- **underwent** = sottomettersi
- **feud** = lite
- **venues** = spazi, strutture
- **appointed** = nominare
- **suitable** = idonea