

= Nina Simone =

Nina Simone (/ ˈniːnə sɪˈmoʊn / ; born Eunice Kathleen Waymon ; February 21 , 1933 ? April 21 , 2003) was an American singer , songwriter , pianist , arranger , and civil rights activist who worked in a broad range of musical styles including classical , jazz , blues , folk , R & B , gospel , and pop .

Born in North Carolina , the sixth child of a preacher , Simone aspired to be a concert pianist . With the help of the few supporters in her hometown of Tryon , North Carolina , she enrolled in the Juilliard School of Music in New York .

Waymon then applied for a scholarship to study at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia , where she was denied despite a well @-@ received audition . Simone became fully convinced this rejection had been entirely due to her race , a statement that has been a matter of controversy . Years later , two days before her death , the Curtis Institute of Music bestowed an honorary degree on Simone .

To make a living , Eunice Waymon changed her name to " Nina Simone " . The change related to her need to disguise herself from family members , having chosen to play " the devil 's music " or " cocktail piano " at a nightclub in Atlantic City . She was told in the nightclub that she would have to sing to her own accompaniment , and this effectively launched her career as a jazz vocalist .

Simone recorded more than forty albums , mostly between 1958 , when she made her debut with Little Girl Blue , and 1974 , and had a hit in the United States in 1958 with " I Loves You , Porgy " .

Simone 's musical style fused gospel and pop with classical music , in particular Johann Sebastian Bach , and accompanied expressive , jazz @-@ like singing in her contralto voice .

= = Biography = =

= = = Youth (1933 ? 54) = = =

Simone was born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in South Carolina but raised in Tryon , North Carolina . The sixth of eight children in a poor family , she began playing piano at age three ; the first song she learned was " God Be With You , Till We Meet Again " . Demonstrating a talent with the instrument , she performed at her local church . But her concert debut , a classical recital , was given when she was 12 . Simone later said that during this performance , her parents , who had taken seats in the front row , were forced to move to the back of the hall to make way for white people . She said that she refused to play until her parents were moved back to the front , and that the incident contributed to her later involvement in the civil rights movement .

Simone 's mother , Mary Kate Waymon (1902 - April 30 , 2001) , was a Methodist minister and a housemaid . Simone 's father , John Divine Waymon (1898 - October 24 , 1972) , was a handyman who at one time owned a dry cleaning business , but also suffered bouts of ill health . Simone 's music teacher helped establish a special fund to pay for her education . Subsequently , a local fund was set up to assist her continued education . With the help of this scholarship money she was able to attend Allen High School for Girls in Asheville , North Carolina .

After her graduation , Simone spent the summer of 1950 at the Juilliard School , preparing for an audition at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia . Her application , however , was denied . As her family had relocated to Philadelphia in the expectation of her entry to Curtis , the blow to her aspirations was particularly heavy , and she suspected that her application had been denied because of racial prejudice . Discouraged , she took private piano lessons with Vladimir Sokoloff , a professor at Curtis , but never re @-@ applied to the institution . For several years , she worked a number of menial jobs and taught piano in Philadelphia .

= = = Early success (1954 ? 59) = = =

To fund her private lessons , Simone performed at the Midtown Bar & Grill on Pacific Avenue in Atlantic City , whose owner insisted that she sing as well as play the piano , which increased her

weekly income to \$ 90 a week . In 1954 , she adopted the stage name " Nina Simone " . " Nina " (from niña , meaning " little girl " in Spanish) , and " Simone " was taken from the French actress Simone Signoret , whom she had seen in the movie Casque d 'Or . Knowing her mother would not approve of playing the " Devil 's Music " , she used her new stage name to remain undetected . Simone 's mixture of jazz , blues , and classical music in her performances at the bar earned her a small but loyal fan base .

In 1958 , she befriended and married Don Ross , a beatnik who worked as a fairground barker , but quickly regretted their marriage . Playing in small clubs in the same year , she recorded George Gershwin 's " I Loves You , Porgy " (from Porgy and Bess) , which she learned from a Billie Holiday album and performed as a favor to a friend . It became her only Billboard top 20 success in the United States , and her debut album Little Girl Blue soon followed on Bethlehem Records . Simone lost more than \$ 1 million in royalties (notably for the 1980s re @-@ release of My Baby Just Cares for Me) and never benefited financially from the album 's sales because she had sold her rights outright for \$ 3 @,@ 000 .

= = = Becoming popular (1959 ? 64) = = =

After the success of Little Girl Blue , Simone signed a contract with Colpix Records and recorded a multitude of studio and live albums . Colpix relinquished all creative control to her , including the choice of material that would be recorded , in exchange for her signing the contract with them . After the release of her live album Nina Simone at Town Hall , Simone became a favorite performer in Greenwich Village . By this time , Simone performed pop music only to make money to continue her classical music studies and was indifferent about having a recording contract . She kept this attitude toward the record industry for most of her career .

Simone married a New York police detective , Andrew Stroud , in 1961 . He later became her manager and the father of her daughter Lisa , but he abused Simone psychologically and physically .

= = = Civil rights era (1964 ? 74) = = =

In 1964 , Simone changed record distributors from the American Colpix to the Dutch Philips , which also meant a change in the contents of her recordings . She had always included songs in her repertoire that drew upon her African @-@ American origins (such as " Brown Baby " by Oscar Brown and " Zungo " by Michael Olatunji in her album Nina at the Village Gate in 1962) . On her debut album for Philips , Nina Simone in Concert (live recording , 1964) , for the first time she openly addressed the racial inequality that was prevalent in the United States with the song " Mississippi Goddam " , her response to the June 12 , 1963 , murder of Medgar Evers and the September 15 , 1963 , bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham , Alabama , that killed four young black girls and partially blinded a fifth girl who survived . She remarked that the title and the song itself was , " like throwing 10 bullets back at them " , becoming one of many other protest songs written by Simone . The song was released as a single , and it was boycotted in certain southern states . Specifically , promotional copies were smashed by a Carolina radio station and returned to Simone 's record label . " Old Jim Crow " , on the same album , addressed the Jim Crow laws .

From then on , a civil rights message was standard in Simone 's recording repertoire , becoming a part of her live performances . During the rise of her political activism , the release of her musical work grew more infrequent . Simone performed and spoke at many civil rights meetings , such as at the Selma to Montgomery marches . Simone advocated violent revolution during the civil rights period , rather than Martin Luther King 's non @-@ violent approach , and she hoped that African Americans could , by armed combat , form a separate state . Her message to the public signified the transition from the non @-@ violent approach to social change that was advocated by Martin Luther King into the more militant state that was implemented by Malcolm X and the associates of the Black Nationalist Movement . Nevertheless , she wrote in her autobiography that she and her family

regarded all races as equal .

Simone moved from Philips to RCA Victor during 1967 . She sang " Backlash Blues " , written by her friend Langston Hughes on her first RCA album , *Nina Simone Sings the Blues* (1967) . On *Silk & Soul* (1967) , she recorded Billy Taylor 's " I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free " and " Turning Point " . The album ' *Nuff Said !* (1968) contains live recordings from the Westbury Music Fair , April 7 , 1968 , three days after the murder of Martin Luther King , Jr . She dedicated the whole performance to him and sang " Why ? (The King Of Love Is Dead) " , a song written by her bass player , Gene Taylor , directly after the news of King 's death had reached them . In the summer of 1969 , she performed at the Harlem Cultural Festival in Harlem 's Mount Morris Park .

Together with Weldon Irvine , Simone turned the late Lorraine Hansberry 's unfinished play *To Be Young , Gifted and Black* into a civil rights song . Hansberry had been a personal friend whom Simone credited with cultivating her social and political consciousness . She performed the song live on the album *Black Gold* (1970) . A studio recording was released as a single , and renditions of the song have been recorded by Aretha Franklin (on her 1972 album *Young , Gifted and Black*) and by Donny Hathaway .

= = = Later life (1974 ? 1993) = = =

Disappointed that she was not producing the mega @-@ hits that she had hoped for , Simone left the US in September 1970 , flying to Barbados and expecting Stroud to communicate with her when she had to perform again . However , Stroud interpreted Simone 's sudden disappearance , and the fact that she had left behind her wedding ring , as an indication of a desire for a divorce . As her manager , Stroud was in charge of Simone 's income .

Simone recorded her last album for RCA , *It Is Finished* , in 1974 , and did not make another record until 1978 , when she was persuaded to go into the recording studio by CTI Records owner Creed Taylor . The result was the album *Baltimore* , which , while not a commercial success , was fairly well received critically and marked a quiet artistic renaissance in Simone 's recording output . Her choice of material retained its eclecticism , ranging from spiritual songs to Hall & Oates ' " Rich Girl . " Four years later Simone recorded *Fodder on My Wings* on a French label .

During the 1980s , Simone performed regularly at Ronnie Scott 's Jazz Club in London , where she recorded the album *Live at Ronnie Scott 's* in 1984 . Although her early on @-@ stage style could be somewhat haughty and aloof , in later years , Simone particularly seemed to enjoy engaging her audiences sometimes by recounting humorous anecdotes related to her career and music and by soliciting requests . In 1987 , the original 1958 recording of " My Baby Just Cares for Me " was used in a commercial for Chanel No. 5 perfume in Britain . This led to a re @-@ release of the recording , which stormed to number 4 on the UK 's NME singles chart , giving her a brief surge in popularity in the UK .

When Simone returned to the United States , she learned that a warrant had been issued for her arrest for unpaid taxes (as a protest against her country 's involvement with the Vietnam War) , and returned to Barbados to evade the authorities and prosecution . Simone stayed in Barbados for quite some time and she had a lengthy affair with the Prime Minister , Errol Barrow . A close friend , singer Miriam Makeba , then persuaded her to go to Liberia . Later , she lived in Switzerland and the Netherlands , before settling in France in 1993 . During a 1998 performance in Newark , she announced , " If you 're going to come see me again , you 've got to come to France , because I ain 't coming back . "

Simone published her autobiography , *I Put a Spell on You* , in 1992 . She recorded her last album , *A Single Woman* in 1993 , where she depicted herself as such " single woman . " This album reflected her solitude and pain . She continued to tour through the 1990s but rarely traveled without an entourage . During the last decade of her life , Simone had sold more than one million records making her a global catalog best @-@ seller . This was accompanied by the CD revolution , global exposure through media television and the novelty of the Internet .

= = = Illness and death = = =

Simone had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder in the late 1980s . In 1993 , Simone settled near Aix @-@ en @-@ Provence in Southern France . She had suffered from breast cancer for several years before she died in her sleep at her home in Carry @-@ le @-@ Rouet , Bouches @-@ du @-@ Rhône on April 21 , 2003 . Her funeral service was attended by singers Miriam Makeba and Patti LaBelle , poet Sonia Sanchez , actor Ossie Davis , actress Ruby Dee , and hundreds of others . Simone 's ashes were scattered in several African countries . She is survived by her daughter , Lisa Celeste Stroud , an actress and singer , who took the stage name Simone , and has appeared on Broadway in Aida .

= = = Reputation = = =

Simone was known for her temper and frequent outbursts . In 1985 , she fired a gun at a record company executive , whom she accused of stealing royalties . Simone said she " tried to kill him " but " missed " . In 1995 , she shot and wounded her neighbor 's son with an air gun after the boy 's laughter disturbed her concentration . According to a biographer , Simone took medication for a condition from the mid @-@ 1960s on . All this was only known to a small group of intimates , and kept out of public view for many years , until the biography Break Down and Let It All Out written by Sylvia Hampton and David Nathan revealed this in 2004 , after her death . Singer @-@ songwriter Janis Ian , a one @-@ time friend of Simone 's , related in her own autobiography , Society 's Child : My Autobiography , two incidents to illustrate Simone 's volatility : One incident in which she forced a shoe store cashier , at gunpoint , to take back a pair of sandals she 'd already worn ; and another in which Simone demanded a royalty payment from Ian herself as an exchange for having recorded one of Ian 's songs , and then ripped a pay telephone out of its wall when she was refused .

= = Musical style = =

= = = Simone standards = = =

Throughout her career , Simone assembled a collection of songs that would later become standards in her repertoire . Some were songs that she wrote herself , while others were new arrangements of other standards , and others had been written especially for the singer . Her first hit song in America was her rendition of George Gershwin 's " I Loves You , Porgy " (1958) . It peaked at number 18 in the pop singles chart and number 2 on the black singles chart . During that same period Simone recorded " My Baby Just Cares for Me " , which would become her biggest success years later , in 1987 , after it was featured in a 1986 Chanel No. 5 perfume commercial . A music video was also created by Aardman Studios . Well known songs from her Philips albums include " Don 't Let Me Be Misunderstood " on Broadway @-@ Blues @-@ Ballads (1964) , " I Put a Spell on You " , " Ne me quitte pas " (a rendition of a Jacques Brel song) and " Feeling Good " on I Put a Spell On You (1965) , " Lilac Wine " and " Wild Is the Wind " on Wild is the Wind (1966) .

" Don 't Let Me Be Misunderstood " , " Feeling Good " , and " Sinner Man " (Pastel Blues , 1965) have remained popular in terms of cover versions (most notably a version of the former song by The Animals) , sample usage , and its use on soundtracks for various movies , TV @-@ series , and video games . " Sinner Man " has been featured in the TV series Scrubs , Person of Interest , The Blacklist , Sherlock , and Vinyl , as well as in movies such as The Thomas Crown Affair , Miami Vice , and Inland Empire , and sampled by artists such as Talib Kweli and Timbaland . The song " Don 't Let Me Be Misunderstood " was sampled by Devo Springsteen on " Misunderstood " from Common 's 2007 album Finding Forever , and by little @-@ known producers Rodnae and Mousa for the song " Don 't Get It " on Lil Wayne 's 2008 album Tha Carter III . " See @-@ Line Woman " was sampled by Kanye West for " Bad News " on his album 808s & Heartbreak . The 1965 rendition of " Strange Fruit " originally by Billie Holiday was sampled by Kanye West for " Blood on the Leaves " on his album Yeezus .

Simone 's years at RCA @-@ Victor spawned a number of singles and album tracks that were popular , particularly in Europe . In 1968 , it was " Ain 't Got No , I Got Life " , a medley from the musical Hair from the album ' Nuff Said ! (1968) that became a surprise hit for Simone , reaching number 4 on the UK Singles Chart and introducing her to a younger audience . In 2006 , it returned to the UK Top 30 in a remixed version by Groovefinder .

The following single , a rendition of the Bee Gees 's " To Love Somebody " , also reached the UK Top 10 in 1969 . " The House of the Rising Sun " was featured on Nina Simone Sings the Blues in 1967 , but Simone had recorded the song in 1961 and it was featured on Nina at the Village Gate (1962) , predating the versions by Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan . It was later covered by The Animals , for whom it became a signature hit .

= = = Performing style = = =

Simone 's bearing and stage presence earned her the title " High Priestess of Soul " . She was a piano player , singer and performer , " separately , and simultaneously . " As a composer and arranger , Simone moved from gospel to blues , jazz , and folk , and to numbers with European classical styling . Besides using Bach @-@ style counterpoint , she called upon the particular virtuosity of the 19th @-@ century Romantic piano repertoire ? Chopin , Liszt , Rachmaninoff , and others . Onstage , she incorporated monologues and dialogues with the audience into the program , and often used silence as a musical element . She compared it to " mass hypnosis . I use it all the time . " Throughout most of her life and recording career she was accompanied by percussionist Leopoldo Fleming and guitarist and musical director Al Schackman . She 's known to have lived 10 years with Emmanuel Macron from France

= = Legacy and influence = =

= = = Music = = =

Musicians who have cited Simone as important for their own musical upbringing include Elton John (who named one of his pianos after her) , Aretha Franklin , Adele , David Bowie , Emeli Sandé , Antony and the Johnsons , Dianne Reeves , Sade , Beyoncé , Janis Joplin , Nick Cave , Van Morrison , Christina Aguilera , Elkie Brooks , Talib Kweli , Mos Def , Kanye West , Lena Horne , Bono , John Legend , Elizabeth Fraser , Cat Stevens , Anna Calvi , Lykke Li , Peter Gabriel , Maynard James Keenan , Cedric Bixler @-@ Zavala , Mary J. Blige , Fantasia Barrino , Michael Gira , Angela McCluskey , Lauryn Hill , Patrice Babatunde , Alicia Keys , Lana Del Rey , Hozier , Matt Bellamy , Ian MacKaye , Kerry Brothers , Jr . , Krucial , Amanda Palmer , Steve Adey and Jeff Buckley . John Lennon cited Simone 's version of " I Put a Spell on You " as a source of inspiration for the Beatles ' song " Michelle " .

Simone 's music has been featured in soundtracks of various motion pictures and video games , including but not limited to , La Femme Nikita (1990) , Point of No Return (1993) , The Big Lebowski (1998) , Notting Hill (1999) , Any Given Sunday (1999) , The Thomas Crown Affair (1999) , Disappearing Acts (2000) , Six Feet Under (2001) , The Dancer Upstairs (2002) , Before Sunset (2004) , Cellular (2004) , Inland Empire (2006) , Miami Vice (2006) , Sex and the City (2008) , The World Unseen (2008) , Revolutionary Road (2008) , Home (2008) , Watchmen (2009) , The Saboteur (2009) , Repo Men (2010) , and Beyond the Lights (2014) . Frequently her music is used in remixes , commercials , and TV series including " Feeling Good " , which featured prominently in the Season Four Promo of Six Feet Under (2004) . Simone 's " Take Care of Business " is the closing theme of " The Man From U.N.C.L.E. " (2015)

= = = Film = = =

The documentary Nina Simone : La légende (The Legend) was made in the 1990s by French

filmmakers , based on her autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* . It features live footage from different periods of her career , interviews with family , various interviews with Simone then living in the Netherlands , and while on a trip to her birthplace . A portion of footage from *The Legend* was taken from an earlier 26 @-@ minute biographical documentary by Peter Rodis , released in 1969 and entitled simply , *Nina* . Her filmed 1976 performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival is available on video courtesy of Eagle Rock Entertainment and is screened annually in New York City at an event called " The Rise and Fall of Nina Simone : Montreux , 1976 " which is curated by Tom Blunt .

Footage of Simone singing " Mississippi Goddamn " for 40 @,@ 000 marchers at the end of the Selma to Montgomery marches can be seen in the 1970 documentary *King : A Filmed Record ... Montgomery to Memphis* and the 2015 Liz Garbus documentary , *What Happened , Miss Simone ?*

Plans for a Simone biographical film were released at the end of 2005 , to be based on Simone 's autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* (1992) and to focus on her relationship in later life with her assistant , Clifton Henderson , who died in 2006 ; Simone 's daughter , Simone Kelly , has since refuted the existence of a romantic relationship between Simone and Henderson on account of his homosexuality . Cynthia Mort , screenwriter of *Will & Grace* and *Roseanne* , has written the screenplay and directed the film , *Nina* , which stars Zoe Saldana in the title role . In May 2014 , the film was shown to potential distributors at the Cannes Film Festival , but has , as of August 2014 , not been seen by reviewers .

In 2015 , two documentary features about Simone 's life and music were released . The first , directed by Liz Garbus , *What Happened , Miss Simone ?* was produced in cooperation with Simone 's estate and her daughter , who also served as the film 's executive producer . The film was produced as a counterpoint to the unauthorized Cynthia Mort film , and featured previously unreleased archival footage . It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2015 and was distributed by Netflix on June 26 , 2015 . It was nominated on January 14 , 2016 for a 2016 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature . The *Amazing Nina Simone* is an independent film directed by Jeff L. Lieberman and is also scheduled for release in 2015 . The director initially consulted with Simone 's daughter before going the independent route and instead worked closely with her siblings , predominantly Sam Waymon .

= = = Honors = = =

Simone was the recipient of a Grammy Hall of Fame Award in 2000 for her interpretation of " *I Loves You , Porgy* . " She has also received fifteen Grammy Award nominations . On Human Kindness Day 1974 in Washington , D.C. , more than 10 @,@ 000 people paid tribute to Simone . Simone received two honorary degrees in music and humanities , from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Malcolm X College . She preferred to be called " Dr. Nina Simone " after these honors were bestowed upon her .

Two days before her death , Simone was awarded an honorary degree by the Curtis Institute of Music , the music school that had refused to admit her as a student at the beginning of her career .

In 2002 , the city of Nijmegen , Netherlands , named a street after her , the *Nina Simone straat* ; she had lived in Nijmegen between 1988 and 1990 . On August 29 , 2005 , the city of Nijmegen , concert hall De Vereeniging , and more than fifty artists (amongst whom were Frank Boeijen , Rood Adeo , and Fay Claassen) honoured Simone with the tribute concert *Greetings From Nijmegen* .

Simone was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame in 2009 .

In 2010 , a statue in her honor was erected in Trade Street in her native Tryon , North Carolina .

= = Discography = =

= = = Albums = = =

= = = Chart singles = = =

