

Peel Biography: Margolese, Sandra
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City woman in spotlight as opera diva in Phantom

By MIKE TOTH
Special

Shari Margolese's little sister sure has grown up in the past few years.

Sandra Margolese was just a slip of a girl with the promise of a golden singing voice and dreams of a career in the world of theatre when big sis' Shari wore the crown of Miss Mississauga in 1982 and hugged the family spotlight.

Today, Sandra has the spotlight to herself. She is appearing in Andrew Lloyd Webber's long-running musical masterpiece, *Phantom of the Opera*, at the Pantages Theatre in Toronto.

She started out playing the role of Princess in the show's opening sequence, but lately has been sharing with well-known Canadian star Irena Welhasch Baerg the role of

Mississauga's most interesting

PEOPLE

Carlotta Giudicelli.

Not bad showing for a girl who made her first stage appearance singing at a once-a-school-year student music night at Streetsville Secondary.

The Streetsville High experience led to voice lessons from a pair of well-known Mississauga musicians and voice coaches, Don Stanton and Eleanor Calbes.

Margolese says she loves playing

the high-profile role of Carlotta, an aging opera diva anxious to hang on to her glory days. In fact, it's the most favorite role she ever played. Margolese, you see, is 26 years old and finds it an interesting challenge to be cast in the role of a 40-something diva.

"The beautiful part of theatre is that you get to play anything from a six-year-old to a 40-year-old," Margolese says. "And you want as many roles as you can get."

Since graduating from the Peel School of Arts at Cawthra Park and going on to earn a degree in Bachelor of Arts in performance music at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Margolese has played a wide variety of musical roles.

Big break

She got her first big break when she landed the part of Hodel in *Fiddler on the Roof* ("I just love that musical," she says) at the Huron County Playhouse. Then came other roles - Old Sal and Milkmaid in *Oliver*, once again at Huron Playhouse; Peep-Bo in *Mikado* and Edith in *Pirates of Penzance* at the Drayton Festival; and the title role of Iolanthe in the Toronto Gilbert and Sullivan Society's production, just to name a few.

And now featured roles and an eight-month contract in the *Phantom of the Opera*.

"I feel very good about what I have done," Margolese says. "I had an ambition to land a role in a major Toronto show and now I have done that."

Having successfully auditioned, she joined the cast at the end of May and after two weeks' rehearsals, was thrown in at the deep end. She recalls the final rehearsal on the afternoon of the show wasn't even a full-run and without costumes.

"The first time I wore the costume was at the show," Margolese says. "It was a frightening experience."

After some 160 shows she still gets a little nervous now and then and has butterflies in her stomach at odd times – especially when she has the centre stage as Carlotta – but not too often.

"The beautiful part about live theatre is you are playing before an audience of 2,000. It is never the same. Things can happen and will," she says.

Margolese didn't always want to be an actress. Throughout high school, her burning ambition was to become a teacher. "I still would like to teach," she says.

But that project is on the back burner – and will remain there for the time being.

There are other musical hills to climb and peaks to conquer.

She had auditioned for a role in *Beauty and the Beast* and is pinning hopes on a spot in the coming musical *Sunset Boulevard*.

"You never know what will happen," says Margolese.

Her fondest dream is to get married (some day when she finds time for it), settle down in a house with a white picket fence with a dog and pets, and raise a family.



MARGOLESE