MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR PROFESSOR YOLANDA MARCULESCU

With a deep sense of loss and sadness the UWM Music Department learned of the December death of Professor Yolanda Marculescu. It was a lengthy and noble fight against cancer by a seemingly invincible and great lady whose magnetic presence and infectious spirit will continue to be greatly missed by all of us.

Professor Marculescu had retired in June 1992 at the close of the International Art Song Festival which she founded over ten years ago and which became one of the premiere events of its kind in the world. Since her youngest years in Romania, Yolanda showed musical promise, but the 1948 Communist takeover forced her at age 20 to become the family breadwinner, first as a chorus singer and eventually as leading soprano of the Bucharest Opera. Despite her refusal to join the Communist Party, she rose to diva status both in Romania and throughout the Eastern Bloc due to her many tours and recordings which showed her to be a lyric coloratura of immense agility, brilliance and intelligence. Her subtle humor or delicate expressiveness and penetrating musicality, her ever creative and convincing approach to tone, color, nuance and musical style - are all things which any performer, instrumental as well as vocal, would do well to emulate.

In 1968, fully aware of the consequences, she and her husband, Sandu Stern, felt compelled to flee the oppressive Romanian political system. Securing tourist passports (itself no simple task), she, her violinist husband and her mother-in-law fled in great haste and secrecy to Austria, leaving nearly everything behind.
Through help of a Hebrew resettlement organization in Vienna they were able to find work first at Roosevelt University in Chicago, where Yolanda taught briefly, and then in 1969 in Milwaukee where Sandu for a time played with the Milwaukee Symphony. It was also in 1969 that fortuitously a position on UWM's voice faculty opened up and Yolanda accepted it, resulting in a most fortunate gain for the School of Fine Arts as well as for the University and the entire community. Her biennial Art Song Festival, her eloquent and celebrated art song recordings and performances, and most important, her students, who went on to noteworthy careers, are some of her chief legacies in America.

In 1991 Yolanda was awarded UWM's Distinguished Teaching Award and in 1992 the Milwaukee Civic Music Association's Award.

Had Yolanda Marculescu-Stern returned to her native Romania prior to the political upheaval of December 1989, it would have meant 20 years in prison for her. Like most celebrities who fled Communist countries, she was declared a persona non grata in Romania after 1968. Her name was erased from archives and her recordings were banned. When Communism crumbled there, however, she was invited by the Romanian Minister of Culture to return in September 1991 and to adjudicate at the famed International Festival George Enescu and to sing on national television. To see her homeland at last again, to bask in the welcome and the acclaim given her, and to hear her recordings once more played on Romanian radio was a highly emotional and gratifying experience for the illustrious diva turned refugee. Madame Yolanda Marculescu-Stern left her country a star. Twenty-three years later she could finally return -- a star.

Yolanda, we are sorely missing you.

William Duvall, Robert Goodberg, Evelyn LaBruce, Daniel Nelson