



## 2023 Nomination Form

Application deadline: Friday, February 24 by 5 p.m.

DELIVER TO: City Hall, 101 N. Main St., Winston-Salem,  
Marketing & Communications Department, Suite 336

OR MAIL TO: City of Winston-Salem,  
Marketing & Communications  
Department  
P.O. Box 2511  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102

Nominee's Stage Name: Kathryn Grayson Given Name: Zelma Kathryn Hedrick

Address at Time of Death: Los Angeles State: CA

Dates of Residency: 2-9-1922 to: ca 1930 (ex: 2000-2010)

Category:  Music  Visual Arts  Dance  Motion Pictures  
 Theater  Television  Writing  Radio

### Criteria:

- The nominee(s) exhibited sustained excellence in his or her field for at least five years.
- The nominee(s) made distinguished contributions to the community and civic-oriented participation.
- The nominee(s) is deceased (must provide copy of death certificate or obituary).
- The nominee(s) was a resident of Winston-Salem for at least five years.
- The nominee(s) made a significant contribution to the arts or entertainment industry in one or more of the following areas: music, dance, theater, writing, visual arts, motion pictures, television, or radio.

A "significant" contribution would be iconic in terms of renown and the impact on the artistic disciplines or popular culture.

### Application to Include:

- Attach nominee's performance/accomplishment biography which must include at least 5 years of accomplishments in the arts, culture, or entertainment field.
- Attach a list of nominee's civic/community involvement.
- Attach a copy of nominee's death certificate or obituary.

Sponsor Name: Frank Johnson

Address: 841 W. 6th St Apt A

City: W-S State: NC Zip Code: 27101

Email: Frank Neal Johnson @ Gmail .com

Phone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: 336 577-6110

Signature: Frank Neal Johnson Date: 2-9-23

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# Kathryn Grayson

**Kathryn Grayson** (born **Zelma Kathryn Elisabeth Hedrick**; February 9, 1922 – February 17, 2010<sup>[1]</sup>) was an American actress and coloratura soprano.<sup>[2][3][4][5][6][7]</sup>

From the age of twelve, Grayson trained as an opera singer. She was under contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer by the early 1940s, soon establishing a career principally through her work in musicals. After several supporting roles, she was a lead performer in such films as *Thousands Cheer* (1943), *Anchors Aweigh* (1945) with Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly, and *Show Boat* (1951) and *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), both with Howard Keel.<sup>[8]</sup>

When film musical production declined, she worked in theatre, appearing in *Camelot* (1962–1964). Later in the decade she performed in several operas, including *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *La traviata*.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Early life

Zelma Kathryn Elisabeth Hedrick was born on February 9, 1922, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, one of four children of Charles Hedrick, a building contractor-realtor, and Lillian Hedrick (née Grayson).<sup>[9]</sup>

The Hedrick family later moved to Kirkwood, Missouri, outside St. Louis, where Grayson was discovered singing on the empty stage of the St. Louis Municipal Opera House by a janitor, who introduced her to Frances Marshall of the Chicago Civic Opera, who gave the twelve-year-old girl voice lessons. Grayson's sister, Frances Raeburn (born Mildred Hedrick) was also an actress and singer, appearing alongside her in the film *Seven Sweethearts*.<sup>[10]</sup> She had two brothers, Clarence "Bud" E. Hedrick,<sup>[11]</sup> and Harold. The family moved to California when Grayson was 15 years old.

## Film career

### 1940s

In 1940, an MGM talent scout saw Grayson performing at a music festival. Metro hoped to find a replacement for Deanna Durbin, who left the studio for Universal Pictures.<sup>[12]</sup> For the next 18 months, Grayson went through voice lessons, drama coaching, diction, diets and exercise. Within a year, Grayson had her first screen test.

Kathryn Grayson



Grayson in 1943

<b>Born</b>	Zelma Kathryn Elisabeth Hedrick February 9, 1922 <u>Winston-Salem, North Carolina, U.S.</u>
<b>Died</b>	February 17, 2010 (aged 88) <u>Los Angeles, California, U.S.</u>
<b>Occupation(s)</b>	Actress, singer
<b>Years active</b>	1941–1998
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	<u>John Shelton</u> (m. 1941; div. 1946) <u>Johnnie Johnston</u> (m. 1947; div. 1951)
<b>Children</b>	1
<b>Website</b>	<u>kathryngayson.com</u> ( <a href="http://kathryngayson.com">http://kathryngayson.com</a> )

However, the studio executives were not satisfied, and she went through a further six months of lessons until she made her first film appearance in 1941's *Andy Hardy's Private Secretary* as the character's secretary Kathryn Land.<sup>[13]</sup> In the film, she takes part in three musical numbers.

Two further films were planned for Grayson in 1941; *White House Girl*,<sup>[14]</sup> which was later made in 1948 with Durbin,<sup>[15]</sup> and *Very Warm for May*, from the Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein musical of the same name.<sup>[16]</sup> Ann Sothorn was also slated to appear, however, this fell through as well. The film eventually was made in 1944 as *Broadway Rhythm*.

She appeared in three films in 1942: *The Vanishing Virginian*, *Rio Rita* and *Seven Sweethearts*. In the first, Grayson plays the teenage daughter, Rebecca, of the eccentric Yancey family from Lynchburg, Virginia.<sup>[17]</sup> Set in 1913, the film was based on Rebecca Yancey Williams's own family.



Grayson as Billie Van Maaster in *Seven Sweethearts*.

Grayson co-starred in *Rio Rita* with Abbott and Costello.<sup>[18]</sup> Grayson portrayed the title character, Rita Winslow. The film was originally meant to be an adaptation of the 1927 Broadway musical; however, only two songs were retained for the film, the title song, and "The Ranger Song", which was performed by Grayson.

Co-starring Van Heflin, *Seven Sweethearts* cast Grayson as the youngest of seven daughters from Holland, Michigan, who is hired by reporter-photographer Heflin to serve as a model and secretary while he covers the town's tulip festival, and with whom he falls in love.<sup>[19]</sup>

In 1943, Grayson appeared in the film *Thousands Cheer*, (originally titled *Private Miss Jones*), along with Gene Kelly, Mickey Rooney, Eleanor Powell, June Allyson and others. The film was intended as a morale booster for American troops and their families. Grayson starred as the singing daughter of an Army commander.

It was announced in 1942 that Grayson would appear in *An American Symphony* with Judy Garland.<sup>[20]</sup> Garland was replaced by June Allyson, and the film was retitled as "*Two Sisters from Boston*" and released in 1946.

Grayson did not appear in any films for nearly two years (from 1943 to 1945), but instead worked at entertaining troops during the war and performing on radio programs.<sup>[21]</sup> Notably, it is reported that she would only perform under the condition that the audience was integrated, as troops were segregated at the time.<sup>[22]</sup>

She returned to films in *Anchors Aweigh*, a musical romantic-comedy set in Los Angeles and co-starring Kelly and Frank Sinatra. *Anchors Aweigh* was the fifth-highest grossing film of 1945, earning over \$4.779 million.<sup>[23]</sup>

This was followed by *Two Sisters from Boston* and guest appearances in *Ziegfeld Follies* and *Till the Clouds Roll By*. Her performance in *Till the Clouds Roll By* included "Make Believe" in a capsule version of the musical *Show Boat*, which would be remade five years later, with Grayson in the starring role.

MGM re-paired Grayson and Sinatra for two movies in 1947 and 1948, *It Happened in Brooklyn* and *The Kissing Bandit*. Both films performed poorly at the box office, and audiences thought the plots absurd.<sup>[24]</sup> After the setbacks of *Brooklyn* and *Bandit*, Grayson was partnered with tenor Mario Lanza

in *That Midnight Kiss* in 1949.

## 1950s



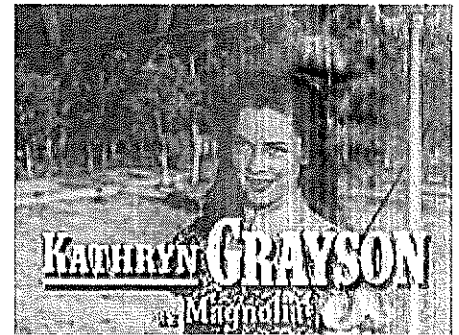
with Mario Lanza in *The Toast of New Orleans*

In 1950, Grayson was once again partnered with Lanza, and portrayed an opera singer in *The Toast of New Orleans*, and performed the Academy-Award-nominated song "Be My Love". While shooting the *Madama Butterfly* scene in the film, Lanza kept attempting to french kiss Grayson, which Grayson claimed was made even worse by the fact that Lanza would constantly eat garlic before shooting. Grayson went to costume designer Helen Rose, who sewed pieces of brass into Grayson's gloves. Any time Lanza attempted to french kiss her after that, she hit him with the brass-filled glove.<sup>[25]</sup>

For the premiere of the film in New Orleans, she was a guest at an auction selling the film's costumes.<sup>[26]</sup>

Grayson replaced June Allyson in the role of Ina Massine in 1951's *Grounds for Marriage*.<sup>[27]</sup> She portrayed an opera singer with laryngitis, alongside Van Johnson who played her doctor and love interest. This was also her first non-singing role at MGM. Grayson's musical performances do appear in the film, but in the form of recordings.

Grayson was next cast as Magnolia Hawks in the 1951 remake of the 1927 Hammerstein and Kern musical, *Show Boat*, alongside Howard Keel and Judy Garland who dropped out of production,<sup>[28][29]</sup> and the role went to Ava Gardner. *Show Boat* was the third-highest-grossing film of 1951, earning over \$5.533 million.<sup>[30]</sup>



Grayson as Magnolia Hawkes.

Grayson teamed again with Keel in the 1952 Technicolor musical *Lovely to Look At*, a remake of the 1935 Astaire and Rogers film *Roberta*.<sup>[31]</sup>

She was released to the Warner Brothers studio in January 1953, with the stipulation that she return to MGM for one more film. She returned to co-star for a third time with Howard Keel in her most acclaimed role, as Lilli Vanessi/Katharina in *Kiss Me Kate*, released in November 1953. The film was lavishly produced (the only musical other than *Those Redheads from Seattle* (1953) to be filmed in 3-D), with songs by Cole Porter, choreography by Hermes Pan, and musical direction by André Previn.

## Warner Bros

While on loan to Warner Bros, her first musical release was *The Desert Song*, May 1953, alongside Gordon MacRae. She was asked to perform *La Bohème* at the Central City Opera House in Central City, Colorado, but due to her filming obligations for *The Desert Song*, she had to turn it down.<sup>[32]</sup> Warner Bros. starred her in a second musical that year, *So This Is Love*.

Grayson appeared on television occasionally, having guest starred in the CBS anthology series, *General Electric Theater* in the episode, *Shadow on the Heart*, with John Ericson, and on *Playhouse 90* in the title role of the "Lone Woman", with Raymond Burr and Scott Brady in the historical roles of the brothers Charles and William Bent, respectively. In the 1980s, Grayson guest starred in three episodes as recurring character Ideal Molloy on *Murder, She Wrote*.

## Stage career

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Grayson appeared on stage in numerous productions including *Show Boat*, *Rosalinda*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Naughty Marietta*, and *The Merry Widow*, for which she was nominated for Chicago's Sarah Siddons Award. In 1953, Grayson optioned the story *It's Greek to Me*, written by Helen Deutsch, to be accompanied by a score from Cole Porter. The story was a mythical love story about Hercules and Hippolyte, and Grayson hoped to be reunited with Howard Keel and take the show on the road. However, the project fell apart.<sup>[33]</sup>

Her casting in *The Merry Widow* led to her replacing Julie Andrews in 1962 as Queen Guinevere in *Camelot*. She then continued the role for over sixteen months in the national tour of the United States before leaving for health reasons.

Grayson had a lifelong dream of being an opera star, and she appeared in a number of operas in the 1960s, such as *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *La traviata*. Her dramatic and comedy stage roles included *Night Watch*, *Noises Off*, *Love Letters* and *Something's Afoot* as Dottie Otterling.

## Musical career

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Grayson trained from the age of twelve as an opera singer.<sup>[34]</sup>

While appearing in her film roles, Grayson also performed on the radio.<sup>[35]</sup> Grayson performed on concert tours throughout the 1950s. In May 1951, Grayson had to postpone a concert tour due to being unknowingly cast in *Lovely to Look At*. "My concert bookings were all set. So when I read in New York that I was to do this film, I said 'How silly!', then boom! The next day I got my studio telegram asking me to return for the picture!"<sup>[36]</sup>

In 1952, Grayson was offered more than \$10,000 to perform for a week at the Riviera night club in New Jersey before making *The Desert Song*.<sup>[37]</sup> After filming *The Desert Song*, Grayson created a recording of the musical with Tony Martin.<sup>[21]</sup>

Grayson gave nightclub and concert tours in Australia a few times. On one of those trips to the Far East, Grayson also gave a concert in Manila, the Philippines, in 1969, where she performed at the New Frontier theater.

Grayson supervised the Voice and Choral Studies Program at Idaho State University.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

## Personal life

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Grayson married twice, first to actor John Shelton and then to the actor/singer Johnnie Johnston. She was a Republican.<sup>[40]</sup> Grayson adhered to Roman Catholicism.<sup>[41]</sup>

## John Shelton

Shelton and Grayson eloped to Las Vegas, where they were married on July 11, 1941.<sup>[42]</sup> The two had courted for 18 months, after meeting while making screen tests. In July 1942, Shelton moved out of their Brentwood home and into his own apartment. This came after a month of reconciliation after a judge dismissed their divorce suit. Grayson charged Shelton with mental cruelty.<sup>[43]</sup> They divorced on June 17, 1946.<sup>[44]</sup>

## Johnnie Johnston

Grayson wed singer/actor Johnnie Johnston on August 22, 1947, in Carmel, California.<sup>[45]</sup> On October 7, 1948, Grayson's only child, daughter Patricia "Patty Kate" Kathryn Johnston was born. Patricia married Robert Towers and had two children, Kristin and Jordan. Jordy Towers became the lead singer of the band SomeKindaWonderful.

Grayson and Johnston separated on November 15, 1950. On October 3, 1951, Grayson was granted a divorce from Johnston on the grounds of mental cruelty.<sup>[46]</sup>

Johnston's *This Time for Keeps* co-star, Esther Williams, claimed in her 1999 autobiography that while making the film, Johnston would read Grayson's intimate letters aloud to the girls in his fan club, including the "all-too-graphic details concerning what she liked about his love-making."<sup>[47]</sup>

According to her secretary, Grayson died in her sleep at her home in Los Angeles on February 17, 2010, aged 88.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Honors

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On February 9, 2022, in honor of the 100th anniversary of Grayson's birth, Turner Classic Movies TV network showed five of Grayson's films.

## Filmography

Year	Film	Role
1941	<i>Andy Hardy's Private Secretary</i>	Kathryn Land
1942	<i>The Vanishing Virginian</i>	Rebecca Yancey
1942	<i>Rio Rita</i>	Rita Winslow
1942	<i>Seven Sweethearts</i>	Billie Van Maaster
1943	<i>Thousands Cheer</i>	Kathryn Jones
1945	<i>Anchors Aweigh</i>	Susan Abbott
1946	<i>Ziegfeld Follies</i>	Herself
1946	<i>Two Sisters from Boston</i>	Abigail Chandler
1946	<i>Till the Clouds Roll By</i>	Magnolia in 'Show Boat'
1947	<i>It Happened in Brooklyn</i>	Anne Fielding
1948	<i>The Kissing Bandit</i>	Teresa
1949	<i>That Midnight Kiss</i>	Prudence Budell
1949	<i>Some of the Best</i>	Herself
1950	<i>The Toast of New Orleans</i>	Suzette Micheline
1951	<i>Grounds for Marriage</i>	Ina Massine
1951	<i>Show Boat</i>	Magnolia Hawks
1952	<i>Lovely to Look At</i>	Stephanie
1953	<i>The Desert Song</i>	Margot Birabeau
1953	<i>So This Is Love</i>	Grace Moore
1953	<i>Kiss Me Kate</i>	Lilli Vanessi / Kate
1956	<i>The Vagabond King</i>	Catherine de Vaucelles
1976	<i>The Amazing World of Psychic Phenomena</i>	Psychic Detective
1994	<i>A Century of Cinema</i>	Herself
2003	<i>Cole Porter in Hollywood: Too Darn Hot</i>	Herself-Kate/Lilli in <i>Kiss Me Kate</i>
2004	<i>The Masters Behind the Musicals</i>	Herself

## Stage Work

- *Madama Butterfly* (1959)
- *La Traviata* (1960)
- *La bohème* (1960)
- *The Merry Widow* (1961)
- *Naughty Marietta* (1961)

- *Rosalinda* (1962)
- *Camelot* (1962)
- *Show Boat* (1964)
- *Night Watch* (1982)
- *Orpheus in the Underworld* (1983)
- *Something's Afoot* (1983)
- *Noises Off* (1987)
- *Love Letters* (1996)
- *Red Sox and Roses* (1997)

## Notes

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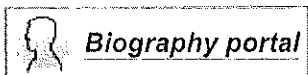
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## External links

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**Biography portal**

- Official website (<http://www.kathryngrayson.com/>) <sup>arch</sup> (last updated 2005)
  - Kathryn Grayson (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0337113/>) at IMDb
  - Kathryn Grayson (<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/99302>) at the Internet Broadway Database
  - Kathryn Grayson photographs and literature (<http://film.virtual-history.com/person.php?personid=2313>)
  - Kathryn Grayson (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/film-obituaries/7272836/Kathryn-Grayson.html>) – The Daily Telegraph obituary (subscription required)
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Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kathryn\\_Grayson&oldid=1135487490](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kathryn_Grayson&oldid=1135487490)"

# Kathryn Grayson



LOS ANGELES (AP) - Kathryn Grayson, whose beauty and lilting soprano brightened MGM musicals of the 1940s and 1950s including "Anchors Aweigh," "Show Boat," "The Desert Song" and "Kiss Me Kate," has died. She was 88.

Grayson died Wednesday of natural causes at her Los Angeles home, said the actress' longtime companion and secretary, Sally Sherman.

Grayson's youthful ambition was to sing opera, but she wasn't able to accomplish that dream until after her movie career ended. While still a teenager, she was placed under contract at MGM at a time when the studio was assembling a stable of musical talent that would dominate the era of great musicals.

"I thought they were wasting their time and money," Grayson recalled of her first days at the studio. "I even told (studio boss) Louis B. Mayer that. He said he knew a lot more than a 16-year-old girl who is and who isn't good material for pictures.

"He offered a deal: I would make a screen test, and if the studio liked the test, I would shut up forever. If not, I would go.

"It was the longest test in motion picture history. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars; it was almost a two-reeler .... The studio liked it. I told Mr. Mayer I didn't like it. He went home with a heart attack."

Concerned, Grayson agreed to stay, and she turned down an offer to sing "Lucia" at the Metropolitan Opera. She later learned that Mayer had two ploys to persuade recalcitrant actors: to cry or to claim a heart attack.

Like Lana Turner, Esther Williams, Donna Reed and other MGM newcomers, Grayson was given a tryout as Mickey Rooney's sweetheart in the studio's popular Hardy Family series. She played the title role in "Andy Hardy's Private Secretary" and sang Strauss's "Voices of Spring." Mayer was convinced that he had a future star.

She was cast in three minor films, including a musical with Abbot and Costello, then played Gene Kelly's girlfriend in a wartime revue that included major MGM stars, "Thousands Cheer."

"Anchors Aweigh," a 1945 hit with Kelly and Frank Sinatra, confirmed her star status. Her bell-like soprano made her the ideal co-star with Hollywood's full-voiced male singers in operettas and other musicals. She made three films with Howard Keel, two with Mario Lanza, one with Gordon MacRae.

Normally she was the most congenial of actresses during filming, but she did have one public flare-up with the temperamental Lanza. He lit the fire when he told an interviewer: "I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for Kathryn because she was in my first two pictures."

She took offense because she believed as an established MGM star, they were her pictures. She told an interviewer she objected to Lanza's behavior on the set, especially his vulgar language.

She was born Zelma Kathryn Hedrick on Feb. 9, 1922, in Winston-Salem, N.C., her father a building contractor and realtor. Because of his business, the family moved frequently, finally settling in St. Louis, Mo. Her parents recognized her gifted voice and arranged an audition before opera star Frances Marshall. She encouraged the girl to continue her music lessons.

The family moved to Los Angeles so Kathryn could have more professional training. She came to the attention of Mayer, who had been searching for a lovely young soprano to rival Universal's sensational Deanna Durbin (Durbin had been under contract to MGM, but she was dropped in favor of Judy Garland).

When the newly named Kathryn Grayson sang two arias in "Andy Hardy's Private Secretary," Mayer realized he had a new star. Among her musicals: "Two Sisters from Boston," "Ziegfeld Follies," "Till the Clouds Roll By," "That Midnight Kiss," "The Toast of New Orleans," "Show Boat," "Lovely to Look At," "Kiss Me Kate," "The Desert Song" and "So This Is Love" (as Grace Moore).

Her last film, "The Vagabond King" in 1956, soured her on movies. She was scheduled to be reunited with Lanza, but he pulled one of his characteristic no-shows. An unknown Oreste Kirkpop (billed only as Oreste), was a last-minute substitution. "He couldn't speak English, so the director, Mike Curtiz, told me to speak his lines. 'But I'm not Francois Villon,' I said. 'It doesn't matter,' said Mike." Oreste's lines were dubbed.

"It never should have been made," she told an interviewer." (Composer) Rudolf Friml was so upset about it that he told Paramount he was going

out of town for the weekend. He went to Hong Kong."

Her film career over, Grayson remained active. She realized her long-held ambition to sing in opera, and she also starred in productions of "The Merry Widow," "Rosalinda," "Naughty Marietta," and "Camelot." She and Howard Keel toured extensively in "Man of La Mancha" and appeared together in Las Vegas. She sang concerts in Australia and appeared in a one-woman show of film clips and reminiscences.

She married and divorced MGM contract players John Shelton (1940-1946) and Johnny Johnston (1947-1951). The marriage to Johnston produced her only child, Patricia Kathryn. Grayson never remarried.

In a 1988 interview Grayson remarked that she had given up writing her memoirs because it wouldn't be the "kiss and tell" kind the publishers wanted.

"I'm a Pollyanna," she confessed. "I had to stop writing because I love everybody and I was saying everyone was beautiful. I just happen to think people are pretty wonderful."

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**Gray**

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