



# Can't Help Singing: The Life of Eileen Farrell

*Eileen Farrell, Brian Kellow*

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Eileen Farrell is blessed with two voices. A classically-trained dramatic soprano who also loves to belt pop songs and torch the blues, she successfully conquered the worlds of opera and popular music over the course of her whirlwind career. Now, Farrell shares reminiscences about her remarkable professional and personal life.

With candor, humor, and affection, she recalls her New England childhood, her overnight success at age twenty as star of her own CBS radio show, her big break dubbing vocals for Eleanor Parker in the MGM movie *Interrupted Melody*, and her many guest appearances on television shows. Farrell discusses her rise to fame as an opera star, from her highly acclaimed performance in *Medea* in 1955, to her historic debut at the Metropolitan Opera in *Alceste* in 1960. She also fondly recollects her marriage of forty years to New York police officer Robert Reagan and her life outside the limelight, including her frustrating tenure as a faculty member at Indiana University.

Farrell speaks frankly about her tumultuous years at the Met, where her head-to-head confrontations with Sir Rudolph Bing brought her promising operatic career to an abrupt close after five seasons. While she loved singing the music of Verdi, Mascagni, and Giordano, Farrell reveals that she never reconciled herself to the life of a diva, preferring the friendliness of show business to the aloofness of the opera world.

Populated with such figures as Leonard Bernstein, Arturo Toscanini, Maria Callas, Ethel Merman, Mabel Mercer, and Carol Burnett, this engaging memoir takes the reader from backstage at the Met to behind-the-scenes of the Ed Sullivan Show, providing a fascinating view of opera and the entertainment industry. Eileen Farrell's legion of fans will delight in her inviting story of a career that was like no other singer's.

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