

Portia White (born June 24, 1911, in Nova Scotia and died February 13, 1968, in Toronto)

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Portia White's family is no stranger to firsts. Her father, the son of former slaves in Virginia, was the first Black Canadian to graduate from Acadia University with a Doctorate of Divinity. Ms. White grew up singing in her father's church (Portia White, 2022). While she participated in singing competitions during her teens, she could not afford to pursue her dream of professional singing and first studied to become a teacher. As a teacher she was then able to afford training and continued to win competition after competition, specifically the Helen Kennedy Silver Cup where "festival organizers decided to award her the cup permanently" (Portia White, 2022, para. 8). Ms. White then trained at the Halifax Conservatory of Music and made her debut in 1941 receiving critical acclaim. She sang across Canada, the U.S., Central and South America and Europe, becoming the first Black Canadian concert singer to achieve international fame (Portia White, 2022). One of her last major concerts was for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in 1964. Declared a person of national historic significance by the Government of Canada, she was posthumously awarded a lifetime achievement award by the East Coast Music Association. Alongside many awards given out in her name for those who show "exceptional commitment and potential in voice" (Portia White, 2022, para. 16).

Reference

Portia White. (2022, January 27). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portia_White

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