

FACEBOOK TRIBUTES MILDRED KAYDEN, COMPOSER

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James Morgan, Artistic Producing Director of New York's "York Theatre," informed me that composer/lyricist/playwright Mildred Kayden died on 20 Nov. I worked with Mildred in the 60s on my first musical, "*Paradise Gardens East*." It was the first time I wrote book and lyrics for an Off Broadway show.

Mildred was the perfect collaborator: A skilled theatre composer, thoroughly professional (it was always about the work), always upbeat and full of the joy of making musical theatre. In the last couple of years James Morgan reintroduced us for a possible project. Mildred, I think, was 91 then. We just talked on the phone and the quality of her voice was the same as I had recalled. In addition, she still remembered our "*Paradise Gardens East*" songs—could sing them and she remembered every single lyric. Here's part of Mildred's obit:

"She taught music at Vassar for a number of years before turning full-time to composing and lyric writing. Her musical theatre productions include "*Storyville*," "*Ionescopade*," "*Call the Children Home*," "*Sepia Star*," "*Cut the Ribbons*," and "*Vanity Fair*." Both "*Storyville*" and "*Ionescopade*" were recently revived Off Broadway at the York Theatre in New York City. She also wrote the operas "*Mardi Gras*" and "*The Last Word*."

At a time when women theatre composers were scarce, Mildred was out there strutting her stuff. She was a terrific melodist — had the musical chops to set anything — and was always positive. Mildred and I laughed a lot back then and we resumed the laughing when we reconnected.

As I wrote James Morgan: Reconnecting with Mildred validated a period of my career that I had begun to believe had all been a dream. Mildred was 95 when she died—peacefully, I’m told, in her sleep. Sleep well, Mildred.

(Photos: 1) Mildred at the York “Storyville” revival. 2) Young Mildred, composing. 3) “Ionescopade” book cover.

