

Cecilia Roser

She Was Elegant, Beautiful, Civilized

Editor's Note: Cecilia Roser's remembrances were a musical ode to Muriel. It was a joy to listen to her.

Cecilia Roser was a contemporary of Muriel Sharon. Both Cecilia and Muriel were good friends of Florence Winston, Muriel being so close to Florence that Cecilia said, "they were almost like sisters." Florence was an actress and teacher, teaching alongside Muriel at the 92nd St. Y and Cecilia was an artist. "I was a painter, a manual laborer."

Cecilia, Muriel and Florence along with their husbands socialized together, going to concerts, jazz performances, the theater and parties. "Me and my husband and the Winston's had parties." Muriel and her husband Sidney, not so much. "They were socially much in demand as a couple, but Sid lacked sophistication and would say, 'we never reciprocate'. They both earned a living from their work and were always so busy. Sidney would invite us to his art openings and Muriel to her theatrical events.

"I was in awe of her, she was so far above me, beautiful, intelligent and sophisticated - she had the looks and artistic abilities. Sidney was not as quick as Muriel. He was tall and extremely intelligent and complicated. By that I mean, his knowledge was wide. His conversation would dodge off into corners you didn't quite understand. For instance, he was a marble champion when he was younger.

"I wondered why Muriel choose him," Cecilia said. "He was ungainly, not handsome and she was beautiful and graceful. He was strictly American culture. She was cosmopolitan, international. But they stimulated each other intellectually. I was always happy to hear their conversations. He was not as outstanding as she was, but they were very much a couple. She yielded to him, as so many women of that period did. She thought he was brilliant and was proud of him and he was intellectually proud enough to admit that he was limited."

Cecilia saw Muriel's "splendid" production of Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat* in the Kaufman Concert Hall at the 92nd Street Y. "I was swept away by it. She was a perfectionist, always brilliant and rewarding. I remember seeing William Faulkner coming into to the auditorium and I was very surprised. He was short, about 5 feet, 4 inches. Just by reading his books, I expected him to be about 8 feet tall.

"My husband and I saw them in the Hamptons in the summer and would visit them in the evenings. Muriel had a theatrical day camp with the children of the so-called intellectuals and elites. They were tweens, about eleven to fourteen-year-olds. I remember Muriel's production of the *Blue Bird of Happiness*. It was magical and engaging, the costumes were charmingly done and very effective. The Blue Bird wore a blue cap and a blue dress that expressed the character so well. Amazing that I remember it all these years later. Three of the students in particular I remember. Nicholas and Alexander were the grandchildren of Diana Vreeland, and Sandra was the daughter of Ambassador Heywood Isham and Sheila Isham. The remarkable thing was that Sandra Isham, who played the Blue Bird grew up to

marry Alexander, who played, I think the King. It was so romantic and magical. From a fairy tale to a fairy tale.”

Cecilia ended her reminisces by commenting on Muriel’s influence on her students. “It was a great time in their lives to train and influence them. At that age, they were physically ahead, but intellectually behind. It was absolutely wonderful for her to influence them. She stimulated them at the right time and gave them a higher education.

“If teenagers had her today, they would not need opioids.”