

Chronicle Profile

Singer Is A Star At Home

By **AUDREY L. WILLIAMS**
Staff Writer

All it took to change John Williams' mind about a full-time career as an opera performer was his two children sitting at the dinner table.

Today, at 35, Williams says he no longer has the ambitions he once had as a bright-eyed student at the North Carolina School of the Arts to become a world-renowned classical baritone.

"I thought about going to New York," he says, "and each time I would sit down at the dinner table and see my two little children, I knew I had to work. When I was a young student in school, I had those illusions."

By profession, Williams is a loan officer at the Reynolds Carolina Credit Union on Fifth Street, but whenever free time will allow, the accomplished singer will absorb himself in rigorous hours of practice with one of his two accompanists.

His baritone voice has taken him as far away as a summer of study in Italy and as close to home as the town of Inez in Warren County for a guest performance.

For 15 years now, Williams' voice has also been a mainstay at First Presbyterian Church and, he says, "I've been with them since my days at the School of the Arts. I can never forget Presbyterian."

Throughout Winston-Salem's more sophisticated and select audiences of opera, Williams, who qualified last year as a semi-finalist for the New York Metropolitan Opera, is considered a high-caliber baritone.

While still a student at the School of the Arts, he won young artist competitions for the Charleston, S.C., Symphony and the N.C. Symphony. And if that's not enough, Williams also performed in the Winston-Salem Symphony's first concert at the Stevens Center. He has since appeared with the local symphony on numerous occasions.

This Sunday he will be the featured baritone in the "Messiah" with the First Baptist Church at the K.R. Williams Auditorium at Winston-Salem State University, and is also gearing up for the part of Balthazar in the Menotti opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

"I don't get to perform opera very much," he says, "because there's just not enough outlets, and practice for the major operas means a lot of time that I don't have."

A native of Raleigh, Williams says his interest in classical music was sparked by an aunt, a local singer herself, when he was in high school.

"Had times been different, she would have probably been a star," says Williams. "She was instrumental in my taking music lessons. I used to just listen to her sing."

Somewhat shy, Williams doesn't seem to take kindly to a delve into his past, but he almost seems to dote on his years as a high school student in Raleigh.

"I guess I was just like any red-blooded American kid," says Williams, "but I was a misfit. I didn't play any sports, but I did go out for waterboy. I made two games and that didn't work out because the water was too heavy."

Since his brief career on the football team didn't



John Williams is considered one of the best classical baritones in the area, but the reality of a not so financially-sound career in the opera world makes him an occasional performer (photo by James Parker).

pan out too well, Williams says he began spending most of his time in the music room. There, he took voice lessons and was later encouraged by a music teacher to enter the School of the Arts.

"There was just no place for someone to seriously take up music in my high school and I feel fortunate to have gone to the School of the Arts," says Williams.

If Williams had to choose his favorite singer, he says Leontyne Price would be number one on his list,

with Aretha Franklin and Roberta Flack vying for a close second and third, all three having accomplished much in the entertainment business by knocking down many barriers.

"I've gotten further in this thing than I thought I would," says Williams. "There is still a good amount of prejudice in the opera world that I would like to see eliminated. Sometimes those frustrations are a little disappointing."

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March of Dimes From Page A6

film coverage in Burlington. WXII weather-caster, Debbie Severs and sports director Cameron Kent have been named honorary chairpersons of the Walk.

Noted team participants from last year's Walk are: Fairchild Industries, who received national recognition as the top winner in the small company category; Wachovia Bank and Trust Co., the first member of the \$10,000 TeamWalk Club; Western Electric, with the highest per capita team and

Olde Worlde Inc., the company whose participants personified the fun and spirit of WalkAmerica, were present to encourage similar corporate participation in TeamWalk '84.

This event is the largest fund-raiser for the March of Dimes in its efforts to prevent birth defects. The community involvement nationwide on WalkAmerica Day is proof of America's support of the efforts being made by the March of Dimes in the research and prevention of birth defects.

Calendar From Page A6

ing a workshop on Street Law at 6:30 p.m. at the 14th Street Recreation Center. The topic will be "Youth and the Law." For more information call 727-2891.

•Attorney Billy D. Friende, Jr. will speak on wills and estates at the third session of the East Winston Monday Night Law Series at 7:30. at the East Winston Branch Library.

•Consumer Credit Counseling Services and Northwestern Bank will co-sponsor the workshop, "Balancing Your Checkbook" from 7-8:30 p.m. at the American Red Cross Bldg. in Room 109. Brenda Morgan, assistant vice-president and branch manager of Northwestern, will be the guest speaker. For more information call 725-1958.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

•Tickets are still available for "Salem Christmas," the traditional holiday program to be presented twice from 4-6 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. at Old Salem.

•The Winston-Salem Chapter of Women Aglow will meet from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Central YMCA at 775 West End Blvd. Fellowship will begin at 9 a.m.

•"Here Come Santa Claus: Keeping Up With Holiday Cheer," will be the topic of discussion at the YWCA Mothers Network from 9:30-11 a.m. at the YWCA. Betsy Butterfield, MSW will be the guest speaker.

•A special Christmas celebration and a sharing of Christmas memories will be the emphasis at the YWCA Options For Living Series from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Granville Place on Granville Drive.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

•The High Point Parks & Recreation Department is forming a basketball league for women. All teams interested in joining the league may call call 887-2511 for more information.

•The Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center will sponsor a six-week class in aerobics on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 7-8:30 and Wednesday mornings from 10-11:30. For pre-registration and fee information call 727-2740.

•The United African American Network, an outreach ministry of New Hope of Deliverance and Miracle Center Inc., is sponsoring a drive to supply food, clothing and toys for needy families this Christmas. Contributions can be brought by the office at 1700 N. Liberty St., or call 723-1436.

Student Of Month

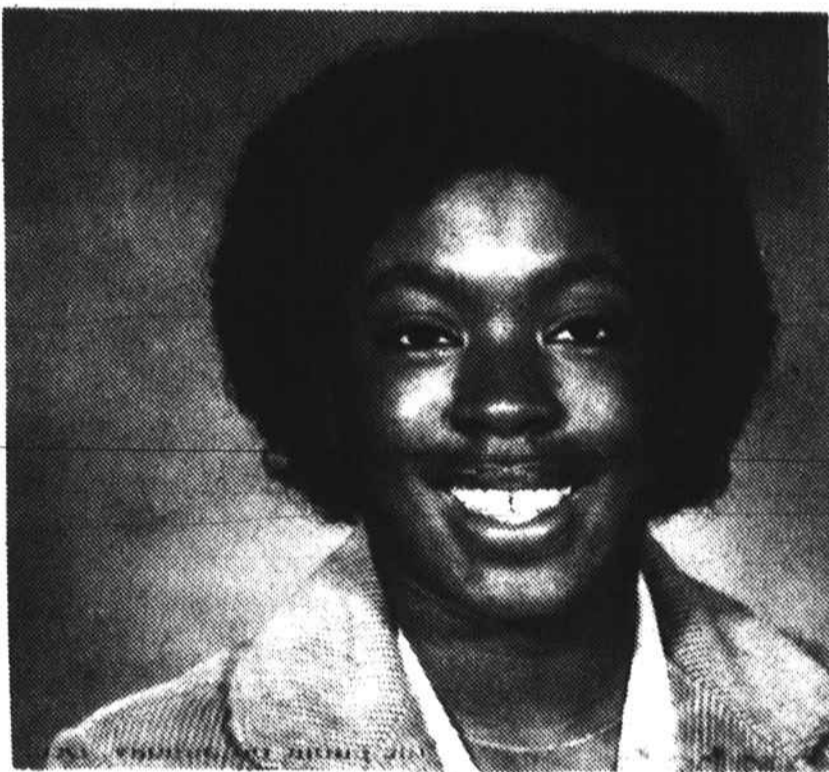
Melanie T. Agnew, a 10th grader at Carver High School, has been named the November Band Student of the Month.

She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Agnew of Whitfield Drive.

Melanie, an honor student, is active in the marching, pep and concert bands and plays the clarinet, bells and piano. Her music teachers include Mrs. Jean Tripp, Mrs. Peggy Wheeler and Mrs. Evangeline Metts.

Melanie's ambition is to become a professional musician. One of her goals for the year was to become Band Student of the Month. In addition, she has already been named to the United States Achievement

Academy Band. She says that she learned a lot in band last year and hopes to learn even more this year. She is a drum major for the R.V. Boone Sr., her pre-



Melanie Agnew

sent band director says, "Melanie is one of the most loveable and teachable students I have ever worked with in my 29 years. She is also one of the most well-mannered and helpful students. She has the capacity to excel in many things."

Cathi Lambe, a 10th-grade-flute/piano-player won the runner-up honors. She is a drum major for the marching band and accom-



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