

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Singer Betty Wright performs the national anthem in 2013 before an NBA basketball game in Miami. The Grammy-winning soul singer and songwriter died of cancer at her home in Miami on Sunday. (AP photo)

## 70s Soul Singer Betty Wright Dies

### Influential hit-maker remembered

(AP) — Betty Wright, the Grammy-winning soul singer and songwriter whose influential 1970s hits included “Clean Up Woman” and “Where is the Love,” died May 10 at her home in Miami after being diagnosed with cancer in the fall. She was 66.

Wright had her breakthrough with 1971’s “Clean Up Woman,” which combined elements of funk, soul and R&B.

Recorded when she was just 17, the song would be a top 10 hit on both the Billboard R&B and pop charts, and its familiar grooves would be used and reused in the sampling era of future decades.

The youngest of seven children, Wright was born Bessie Regina Norris in 1953 in Miami, the city whose funk and soul sounds

her music would always be identified with.

She started singing with the family gospel group, Echoes of Joy, and released her solo debut album, “My First Time Around,” at age 15 in 1968. The album yielded a top 40 hit, “Girls Can’t Do What the Guys Do.”

After “Clean Up Woman,” written by Clarence Reid and Willie Clarke and later sampled by Afrika Bambaataa and Mary J. Blige, she would have her first hit she wrote herself with “Baby Sitter,” a 1973 hit that showed off her so-called “whistle register” vocals, an ultra-high singing style later employed by Mariah Carey and others.

With members of K.C. and the Sunshine Band, she co-wrote her 1975 proto-disco hit, “Where is

the Love,” which would win her a Grammy for best R&B song.

A career lull in the late 1970s and early 1980s prompted Wright to start her own label in 1985, leading to a gold album, “Mother Wit,” in 1987 and the comeback hit “No Pain (No Gain)”

She spent much of the rest of her life as a producer and mentor to younger artists, many of whom were singing her praises after her death.

“Thank you for being a master teacher, a friend and one of the greatest female soul singers in our industry,” Ledisi said on Twitter. “You were so much more than your music. We were blessed to be around royalty.”

John Legend tweeted that Wright “was always so loving and giving to younger artists. Always engaged, always relevant. She will be missed.”



PHOTO BY BEV STANDISH/COURTESY PORTLAND YOUTH PHILHARMONIC

The Portland Youth Philharmonic is connecting virtually with its community during the coronavirus health crisis by conducting weekly video chats for musicians, live-streamed concerts and conversations for the public.

## Youth Orchestra Online

As concert halls across the country go dark due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Portland Youth Philharmonic has made significant efforts to connect virtually with its community.

The nation’s first and oldest youth orchestra has joined other orchestras to give hope and solace to a quarantined public by making an unprecedented number of online performances and educational resources available free of charge.

The Portland Youth Philharmonic is now featured in the League of American Orchestras’ a new Symphony Spot website ([symphonyspot.org](http://symphonyspot.org)), a one-stop hub of orchestra live-streams, videos and digital learning events.

In addition, the Portland Youth Philharmonic presents “Conversations with the Conductor,” on YouTube and Facebook. The outreach will continue every Thursday at 6 p.m. for the time being,” says Musical Director David Hattner.

“Each week, I create a short playlist of music without identifying the performers. I am joined by a panel of musicians, made up of fascinating people and friends that I have been fortunate to meet during my career, and we spend an hour talking about the performances.”

All episodes of Conversations with the Conductor can also be found on PYP’s blog [portlandyouthphil.org/blog/conversations](http://portlandyouthphil.org/blog/conversations).



PHOTO BY TRISTAN PAIIGE

Anis Mojgani is the new Poet Laureate of Oregon. Born in New Orleans to Black and Iranian parents, he is a National Poetry Slam champion and author of five books of poetry, including his latest, “In the Pockets of Small Gods.”

## Oregon’s New Poet Laureate

Gov. Kate Brown has named Anis Mojgani, a two-time individual champion of the National Poetry Slam and an International World Cup Poetry Slam winner, to a two-year appointment as Poet Laureate of Oregon. Mojgani succeeds Kim Stafford, who has held the post since 2018, to become Oregon’s 10th Poet Laureate.

Brown called Mojgani the “pragmatic optimist” Oregon needs, especially now as it deals with the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

“His words breathe fresh air into the anxiety and negativity that we all feel. He urges us to resolutely reflect in the moment,” she said.

Born in New Orleans to Black and Iranian parents, Mojgani first called Oregon home in 2004. He is the author of five books of poetry including his latest, “In the Pockets of Small Gods.” Mojgani has also

done commissioned work for the Getty Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum, and the premiere of his first opera libretto, “Sanctuaries,” is scheduled for April 2021.

His work has appeared on HBO, National Public Radio, in the Academy of American Poets Poem-A-Day series, and in the pages of such journals as Rattle, Platypus, Winter Tangerine, Forklift Ohio and Bat City Review. His performance credits include hundreds of universities across the U.S. as well as international festivals.

“I believe all of us wish to be seen on some level, to be heard,” said Mojgani. “For then we get a little closer to being known and understood. The closer we get to that, the more we are able to see and understand how we belong to the world we are a part of -- To belong. That is what poetry does -- it gives us all the power and path to being known, both to ourselves and to others.”