



# Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone

*Nadine Cohodas*

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Born Eunice Waymon in Tryon, North Carolina, Nina Simone (1933-2003) began her musical life playing classical piano. A child prodigy, she wanted a career on the concert stage, but when the Curtis Institute of Music rejected her, the devastating disappointment compelled her to change direction. She turned to popular music and jazz but never abandoned her classical roots or her intense ambition. By the age of twenty six, Simone had sung at New York City's venerable Town Hall and was on her way. Tapping into newly unearthed material on Simone's family and career, Nadine Cohodas paints a luminous portrait of the singer, highlighting her tumultuous life, her innovative compositions, and the prodigious talent that matched her ambition.

With precision and empathy, Cohodas weaves the story of Simone's contentious relationship with audiences and critics, her outspoken support for civil rights, her two marriages and her daughter, and, later, the sense of alienation that drove her to live abroad from 1993 until her death. Alongside these threads runs a more troubling one: Simone's increasing outbursts of rage and pain that signaled mental illness and a lifelong struggle to overcome a deep sense of personal injustice.

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