

## **The Story of the June Lythgoe Music Scholarship**

Perhaps not widely known is that the existence of the Amy Ferguson Institute (AFI) came about as a result a passing comment made by June Lythgoe after visiting her daughter Shannon in the year 2000, who at the time was the Volunteer Coordinator for the BC Festival of the Arts, taking place in Nelson in the summer of that year. June and her husband Len attended the Festival and volunteered at one of the music venues. June made the comment to her husband and daughter that Nelson would be a great place to hold a classical music festival. It seemed such a natural fit, with an already vibrant artistic community thriving in an environment of spectacular natural beauty. And the Lythgoes were no strangers to either the world of music - Len having taught music in the public school system and subsequently winding up as a music education consultant at UBC, and daughter Shannon having obtained her music degree from Western Washington University - or the mounting of large events - June having taken leadership roles in the production of numerous conferences and public project initiatives.

Shortly thereafter, the Lythgoe family initiated a meeting at the Hume Hotel with a number of local folks already well connected with the Nelson musical community, and from that meeting the Amy Ferguson Institute was born. As those who have some knowledge of the musical history of the West Kootenays will know, the Amy Ferguson Institute was named to honour the life and legacy of Amy Ferguson, a much loved music teacher and mentor best remembered for the Nelson Boys Choir which she founded in 1930. Among those attending the meeting were locals Marty Horswill, Eric Galbraith (both former students of Amy Ferguson, as was Len Lythgoe), and Allison Girvan, all three of whom remain actively involved on the Board of the AFI to this day. The AFI went on to produce the Nelson Summer Songfest, a classical music festival featuring the vocal arts (both choral and solo), between the years of 2001-2004, and subsequently produced a series of summer voice masterclasses under the tutelage of internationally renowned sopranos Nancy Argenta and Ingrid Attrot.

In 2008, AFI also took on the operations of the Nelson Community Opera (NCO). Since its inception in 1996, NCO has mounted annual productions of opera and musical theatre including two original local operas, *KHAOS* and *Jorinda*, among many popular operas and musical theatre productions.

June and Len Lythgoe moved back to the Lower Mainland in 2005 and shortly after June became ill and passed away on March 31, 2006. To honour her legacy as a founder of the Institute, the AFI endowed a musical scholarship with the Osprey Foundation in her name, 'The June Lythgoe Music Scholarship Fund', which provides a biennial \$1000 scholarship to a deserving West Kootenay area student of music. For more information or donate to the scholarship fund and visit [www.amyfergusoninstitute.ca/awards](http://www.amyfergusoninstitute.ca/awards)

*Written by Shannon Lythgoe*