

Memory Project: Interview with Jocelyn Pritchard

August 25, 2020

Interviewee: Jocelyn Pritchard Interviewed by: Roseanne Chu
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Transcribed by: Roseanna Chu

Jocelyn May Pritchard was born in Nova Scotia in the late 1920's. She began her musical studies at a young age and continued in both piano and music theory, completing a Licentiate of Music from Dalhousie University and a Bachelors of Fine Arts from the University of Alberta. She left in Nova Scotia in 1947, teaching and studying first in Edmonton and then Vernon, before finally settled in Vancouver. She has been an active member of the BCRMTA for over 30 years.

Jocelyn has a long history of supporting the musical community. While in Vernon, she worked to raise the standard of teaching by encouraging individuals to continue studying past the Grade 8 level. In Vancouver, Jocelyn was also active in the choral world and held at least two influential positions. She was the Chair of the Board of B.C. Choral Federation, Performance Arts Committee at the Hycroft University Women's Club, as well as Chair of the Board of Vancouver Chamber Choir. In the latter case, she collaborated with Jon Washburn to form the British Columbia Choral Federation (BCCF).

Throughout her long and successful career, Jocelyn's most fulfilling teaching moments have been watching the faces of students light up when a suggestion makes sense to them . . . and when they realize you know something about the subject!

1. Jocelyn, tell us about your early life: your family, your community, and your involvement in music.

I grew up in a wonderful loving and musical family. My mother was my piano teacher from age 6 to 15. There were Music Festivals in Halifax (1941-1947) every spring. All the adjudicators were British, they started their work on the west coast. By the time they arrived in Halifax, they must have been exhausted. I entered the Festivals and always came second. But the one who came first – always – was Neil Van Allen, who became the Head of the Guildhall or one of those English music schools.

2. Was there any defining moment in your development as a musician?

During World War II, my parents had Open House for service personnel every Friday evening. On one of those nights, I was asked to play on the piano. I would have been 13 or 14. I played *To A Wild Rose* by Ed. MacDowell. When I finished, I turned around and there was a Naval Officer with tears streaming down his cheeks. That made me realize how music could affect a person.

3. Who were your role models and mentors in the field?

My mother was my role model. We lived in small towns when I was quite young. Later at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Professor Dick Eaton became my role model and mentor.

4. What leadership responsibilities have you carried in the music community?

Choir Leader at Highlands United Church, Knox United, Shaughnessy Heights United. I formed Jubilate Choir in Vancouver in 1984. I also formed Da Camera Choir in Edmonton in 1960.

5. Is there a project or particular piece of work that you've done that you're especially proud of?

The production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at Shaughnessy Heights United Church around 1980.

6. Has there been a low point or most challenging point in your career?

Yes, after moving from Vernon to Vancouver in 1975, I became a small frog in a big puddle – just the reverse from life in Vernon. But I got into music activities in the city and enjoyed them.

7. What is important to you about your life of teaching? What's been your main passion or the common thread throughout your career?

The important point in teaching is to 'speak a language' that makes sense to the student, and to know when is the time to give the appropriate information.

8. Can you offer a word of wisdom to future generations of music teachers?

It is important for the teacher not to get in the students' way. Let the students express themselves. Ask for their opinions at certain times. But, do not waste too much time talking!

**9. Is there anything I've missed that you'd like to tell us about?
(Perhaps your involvement in church music and the impact on you and future generations)?**

Two exciting times in my life occurred at different times. I was asked to play Grieg's *Piano Concerto* with the University of Alberta orchestra, and the Schumann *Concerto* with the Okanagan Symphony. Wonderful times indeed!

One of the most wonderful times was when a new choir member, after several years, became a member of our congregation. Music can do that!!

At the end of the interview, Jocelyn remarked: "What is missing now is the personal connection with a teacher. ZOOM can be made effective in some ways, but the human contact adds so much to the way we teach. Whether we can add the full emotional impact of music on ZOOM or streaming is food for thought for another day!!"

I wish all teachers the very best - be calm, be full of hope and love.