

Dorothy Monagin Bio



Dorothy Monagin was a lover of music, especially the piano and she gave her time, energy and talent to the performing arts all her life. Born Dorothy Barrett in 1917, she grew up in Hobson, MT, the daughter of pioneers. Living on the prairie with the mountains in the distance was harsh, but her mother made sure the family piano was brought from Illinois. Dorothy began lessons at a young age, cleaning the teacher's house to pay for them. She quickly became a prodigy in piano and voice winning top honors for her classical work at the State Music Festival at age 15. She then added playing the organ and accompanied church services and events at the local Methodist Church.

After graduating high school she attended college in Helena. Then while working in Stanford Dorothy found an opportunity to earn a living as a musician. She began touring as an actress and pianist first with the Rainbow Players and then in Happy Bill's Band and others including a sit in with the famed Woody Herman Orchestra. She played the circuit from Washington to Wisconsin, from major cities like Tacoma to the small farming towns of the plains.

In 1943 Dorothy married Everett Monagin and settled in Minot, ND, where they raised two daughters and a son. While living in Minot Dorothy was an active participant in the music community for productions throughout town from the university to community shows, the Junior Miss Pageants, local dance lessons and recitals and memorably as part of the quartet the Four Kernals. She taught piano and also worked at Northwest Piano Company which later became Northwest Music Company. As an avid volunteer Dorothy was involved with USO shows and played piano at the Veterans Hospital for services and the holiday seasons. She was president of the Schumann Music Club which provided instrumental music opportunities for kids. Dorothy especially enjoyed working with young people and making sure children of all socio-economic backgrounds got exposure to the arts. Often when community projects couldn't or didn't reach everyone Dorothy could be seen packing up crayons, papers and crafts from home and heading to the "other side of the tracks" to lead group activities and sing-alongs.

The 1970's saw Dorothy moving back to Montana, and again the community benefitted from her skill as a musician, teacher and leader through her work in Center Stage Inc, Miss Linda's School of Dance, Sunrise Presbyterian Church and PEO. In the spring of 2001 Dorothy suffered a severe stroke and could no longer play the piano. However, she never lost her love of music and could be seen at Miss Linda's productions, Community and Municipal Band concerts and also at baseball games. She loved the 7th Inning Stretch and singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

Dorothy was generous with her time and talents and in her lifetime played for hundreds of weddings, church services, funerals, receptions, productions and programs. She was a firm believer that the arts is a wonderful way to learn career skills and self-expression by developing imagination and creativity, discipline and commitment. But she mostly believed the arts were the best way to laugh and find real joy and appreciation for life. It is in this light and with the desire for everyone to experience all the performing arts have to offer that the Dorothy Monagin Music Endowment has been established. This endowment provides a scholarship each year for a student from Montana which covers tuition and offers a travel stipend to assist with expenses.