

Elizabeth Elliott, Musician

Her Legacy: Bringing high-quality musical performance to Fort Collins through starting Opera Fort Collins

As a performer, Elizabeth Elliott graced the stage in New York City, including choral performances led by Leonard Bernstein, studied under Robert Anderson, and performed in the Pulitzer-Prize winning play by Paul Green, *Sing All a Green Willow*. Trained for operatic performance, she started Opera Fort Collins in 1979 at a time when cultural offerings in Fort Collins were at a low ebb.

The original goal of staging an opera was to raise funds for the university radio station, which had a minimal budget. The event so successful and well received that she decided to bring opera to Fort Collins as an established organization; Opera Fort Collins was born. Elizabeth served as artistic director for several years and performed occasionally. From the beginning she was active in raising funds for the company.

Even after retirement, Elizabeth continued to sponsor and host fund-raising events. She is a lifetime member of the Opera Fort Collins board of directors. Of all the performing arts, opera is the most expensive to stage; Elizabeth laid the foundations for the group to survive and thrive here. Opera Fort Collins became a 501 (C) 3 nonprofit several years later and now has paid staff.

Elizabeth also initiated the Larimer Chorale. In 1977 she placed an advertisement in the newspaper inviting people who liked to sing to start a choral group; about 100 people came to the first gathering. Also an established performing group in Fort Collins now, the chorale

has paid staff and auditions potential members. Over 100 local singers are part of the chorale, which performs several times a year.

Through her passion, dedication and determination, Elizabeth gave Fort Collins the gift of music.

"I would advise anyone to find what they love and become involved. And, then, never give up."

Written by Barbara Fleming, Author, Coloradoan Columnist and Living Her Legacy Wordsmith