



a mural of Alice Gerrard at her home
**“AMERICANA WOMEN Movie + Music Night”
Benefit Event for MusicBox Project
Sat, Feb. 15, 2014
by Dyann Arthur**

[MusicBox Project](#), a Snohomish-based 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization run by Dyann and Rick Arthur of Mill Creek, is on a mission! Their charter states that they “document and preserve music history,” but MusicBox Project is way more than that.

“It matters to us that we see women musicians (players) overlooked in the history books, and if we don’t do something now, to change this, they’ll simply slip into oblivion. The real picture of our American musical landscape will be left

incomplete,” say Dyann and Rick.

It was a labor of love right from the start. Dyann’s been playing and performing all her life; she graduated with honors from the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston. When she and Rick - after a distinguished career in aeronautics -retired in 2009, they felt the urge to give something back to society.

“I literally woke up one day and said,” related Dyann “I know what I want to do – there are no women players in these history books, there are women out there – they deserve to be seen, they deserve to be heard, they have stories to tell and I want to see those stories in future history books.”

So, in April of 2010 the Arthurs made it their mission to save from obscurity some 80 contemporary women players across the country, spending seven months traveling and filming women playing traditionally based “roots” music. They compiled a huge digital collection from their fieldwork that started with eighty oral history interviews and over a thousand songs, all captured in HD video. They traveled 26,000 miles over seven months filming in 60 cities across 20 states. While they have a treasure trove of stories, music and video from their efforts, Rick and Dyann are still collecting like those early, legendary musicologists John Work and Alan Lomax. Some familiar names to Pacific Northwest Folklore Society members include Eleanor Ellis, Alice Gerrard, Ginny Hawker, Ann Savoy, Suzy Thompson, groups like The Stairwell Sisters, Red Molly – and too many others to list.

“People thought we were nuts – a husband and wife team in our ’99 Toyota 4Runner hauling a pop-up Coleman tent camper filled with video cameras, audio and lighting gear, computers, back-up storage drives and a bunch of musical instruments of our own,” they said.

Dyann and Rick recall her father saying “You’ll never make it – I’ll give you three months.” “We had a running joke,” they continued, “You’re breathing my air! We quickly learned to stay focused on what was important, and to keep a sense of humor. We were determined to learn about these “Americana Women” their lives, families and communities first hand... and we did that; in folk’s homes, kitchens and back porches; at festivals and street performances; little folk arts shops, back country juke joints and big festival stages.”

“We like to say we gathered music from “A to Z” – that’s Appalachian to Zydeco; recording women from as young as eighteen to as old as ninety three. We really tried to capture the broad spectrum of their diversity and contributions.”

“We wanted the project to be available as soon as it was filmed. Let me tell you, trying to upload video files to our YouTube channel from campground internet hook-ups was the pits! It put a whole new spin on ‘hurry up and wait.’ With everything being shot in HD, the files could take overnight to upload. We just didn’t want the videos to end up on some shelf somewhere, we wanted to make

them visible for people to see to enjoy.” (MusicBox Project’s YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/musicboxproject has garnered nearly a million views to date.)

“So, it was really interesting,” Dyann said. “Not long after they returned to the Northwest at the end of October in 2010, I got an email out of the blue from Steven Weiss who introduced himself as the Curator of the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He said he wanted to have the entire collection there at what is one of the largest archives in the country.” When she asked him how he heard about MusicBox Project he said he had been following the YouTube Channel, and cited the video quality and authentic content.

“We had already gifted the collection on behalf of MusicBox Project to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress,” they said. “And, in fact, we were written up in their 2011 Report to Congress as one of the “Key Acquisitions of 2010.”

“I didn’t know I was going to become a filmmaker, that wasn’t my goal,” Dyann conveyed, “But, I realized, by making a music documentary about these amazingly talented women, I could help the world see them, hear them and appreciate them the way Rick and I had. So I started editing the hundreds of hours of interviews & music we’d documented for a movie called ‘Americana Women: Roots Musicians – Women’s Tales & Tunes.’ There’s a short introduction on our YouTube Channel and a previous version that was shown during Centrum’s Acoustic Blues Festival in Port Townsend last July got a very positive reception.”

Centrum is where the Arthurs connected with the Washington Blues Society, who, along with The Salmon Bay Ballard Eagles, is sponsoring the “AMERICAN WOMEN Movie + Music Night” Benefit Event for MusicBox Project on Saturday, February 15, 2014 at the Salmon Bay Eagles. It’s open to the public and they’re inviting Pacific Northwest Folklore Society and “NW Hoots” readers to come enjoy the show and support the ongoing efforts of MusicBox Project too.

It’ll be a full night of entertainment starting with an optional \$10 dinner downstairs in the lounge hosted by the Salmon Bay Eagles, (the main entree will be smothered pork chops with smashed potato/yams, salad, bread rolls and a dessert) from 6:00 – 7:30 pm. Reservations need to be made before 2/12/14 by calling 206-783-7791. The entire event, including the optional dinner at one of Seattle’s longest-running performance venues, is open to the public.

“AMERICAN WOMEN Movie + Music Night” Benefit Event admission/suggested donation is only \$10 with plenty of seating and a full bar (21 and older please). The “Seattle Premiere” of the newly edited and mastered music documentary starts at 7:30, and the evening continues with live roots and blues by “The Shed Players” (Dave Douglas, Ken Dennis, Rick & Dyann Arthur), Marcia Kester, Chris Ferguson, Sergey & Julia Ignatov, Ilya Ignatov and Andre Zasytkin. Plus there’ll

also be an additional music video short – created just for the event. Things wrap up at 11 pm – or later if folks are still jumpin’ and jivin’!

Tickets are available at www.brownpapertickets.com event code #541950 and will be available at the door: Salmon Bay Eagles, 5216 20th Ave. NW, Seattle (Ballard), WA 98107.

“AMERICAN WOMEN Movie + Music Night” will surely be one of the “must-do” events of 2014! This benefit not only celebrates our local musicians, but it also celebrates some of the nation’s most treasured women in roots music from across the nation in a variety of traditional genres.

In addition to providing first-class experiences via film and live roots music, MusicBox Project will also debut for sale the new version of “Americana Women” on DVD, developed in partnership with Devin Rice Designs. The DVD includes not only many visual upgrades, bonus tracks and extras unique to the opportunities that DVD technology offers, but also 80 additional minutes of music videos.

For more information visit them at: www.musicboxproject.org