

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS: JUNE AND ROBERTO EYZAGUIRRE

In the mid-1940s a young woman named June Gallaher left her home in Huntington, West Virginia, to go to New York to study Opera at the acclaimed Juilliard School of Music. She found lodging in the International House, a haven for students in Manhattan, and at a dance there caught the eye of a brilliant young concert pianist

Roberto Eyzaguirre had come to New York from his native Peru to study with the legendary Claudio Arrau, one of the great pianists of the 20th century. Attracted by Roberto's Latin good looks and his prodigious talent, June was similarly smitten, and they were married within a year.

Their 1948 wedding in St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University was an international affair: the handsome Peruvian pianist and his beautiful American bride, joined in marriage by the Reverend Shunji Nishi, Japanese Christian clergyman. They



rented an apartment on Manhattan's west side and continued their studies.

Roberto played concerts at Carnegie Hall and Town Hall and received rave reviews from those toughest of judges, the New York music critics. Performances across Europe brought similar responses, with comments like "masterful

pianist..." "poetic...sensitive musicianship..." (Rotterdam Courant); "Great success. Eyzaguirre is

very gifted temperamentally and has an agile and (London Telegraph); brilliant technique..."Milan Corriere della Sera.

Meanwhile June, along with a few other vocal students at Juilliard had formed a little opera company (each one investing \$25.00) which performed in the courtyard of a Manhattan church. In recognition of the refreshments they sold at intermission they called the group the "Lemonade Opera," A New York Times' music critic even took notice

with a favorable review. “Only in New York,” June smiles, then adds “and only in the 1950s.

Even during those ultra busy days of concert tours Roberto continued his studies, and so when the days of travelling and concerts became too grueling he moved into the halls of academia. Armed with a Bachelor of Music degree from National Conservatory of Music in Lima, Peru, and a Master’s in Music in Piano plus a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from the University of Miami in Florida, he came to Texas to teach at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville while he completed work on his dissertation. Inspired by the opportunity to invest in promising young musicians, Dr. Eyzaguirre then came to Houston Baptist University, and Houston became his home base of operations as he continued to perform and teach on campus and privately as well as giving master classes internationally.

June and Roberto retired and moved to Treemont in 2012. Photo at left shows Dr. Eyzaguirre at the height of his concert career. **HAPPY NEW YEAR, ALL!**

