Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE3999

Bronhill, June

(1929 - 2005)

Born	19290626, Broken Hill New South Wales Australia
Died	20050124, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Opera singer, Performer

Summary

Internationally acclaimed soprano opera singer June Bronhill chose her stage name in recognition of her birthplace, Broken Hill.

Details

June Bronhill was the daughter of George Francis Gough and Maria Isobel Daisy Hall. George was born in Essex, England, in 1892 and spent five years at sea before settling in the Australian outback. By 1912 he was living in Broken Hill, where he met local-born Daisy. The pair were married in 1915. George worked as an engine driver on the Line of Lode and became a staunch unionist. From 1932 he was secretary of the Broken Hill and District Hospital. When June was fifteen years old, George and Daisy retired to Robe in South Australia. June's brother, John, stayed on in Broken Hill and became the librarian of the Charles Rasp Library.

June began singing at the age of four. In 1950 she won the *Sun Aria Vocal* competition. Local residents of Broken Hill raised money to help her further her career as a soprano, sufficient to send her to England to study, and she changed her name to June Bronhill in recognition of her birthplace.

In 1951 June married Brian Martin in Sydney. Brian had one daughter from his first marriage, Faith Josephine Margaret, who was just nine years younger than June. With Brian, June sailed for England and became the leading soloist with the Sadlers Wells Company. She performed in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and played the roles of Eurydice in *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Gabrielle in *La Vie Parisienne*. She was well known for her performance in the title role of Hanna Glawari in Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. June remained overseas for eight years, during which time she and Brian filed for divorce, but June retained a strong friendship with his daughter Faith and the two women lived together in London. In July 1960, she made her first homecoming visit and was greeted at the Broken Hill airport by the biggest crowd since the visit of Queen Elizabeth in 1954. In January 1963 she married Richard Milburne Champion de Crespigny Finny in Sydney, but this marriage too ended after a few years. June gave birth to her daughter Carolyn Jane (Biddy) Finny in May 1963.

June Bronhill performed not only with the Sadlers Wells Opera, but with the London West End theatres. She played Elizabeth in the musical 'Robert and Elizabeth' in 1964; she was Mother Abbess in 'The Sound of Music' in London, and Maria von Trapp in the Australian production. She appeared in dozens of Australian operatic productions, and played the role of Mrs. Crawford in the Australian version of the television comedy series, 'Are You Being Served?'

In April 1977, June Bronhill was awarded the OBE at Government House for services to the performing arts. In 1994, the Broken Hill Entertainment Centre was named in her honour.

Published resources

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Unbroken Spirit: Women in Broken Hill, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/bh/bh-home.html

Book
The Merry Bronhill, Bronhill, June, 1987

Some Outstanding Women of Broken Hill and District, Camilleri, Jenny, 2002

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Outback Archives, Broken Hill City Library
Bronhill, June

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