

THE HISTORY OF THE EASTERN MENNONITE HIGH SCHOOL
TOURING CHOIR: 1917-1981

by

Dwight Cornell Basham

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Kevin A. Fenton, Chair
C. Vernon Burnsed
Jesse L. Wilkins

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Abstract

For more than 35 years, the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir has provided concerts for choral enthusiasts throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. The present study documents the development, establishment, and growth of Touring Choir from its inception, through June of 1981: identifying (1) the events leading to the development of Touring Choir; (2) the philosophy and purpose of Touring Choir; (3) the directors of Touring Choir and their musical and professional backgrounds; (4) the contributions of each of the directors; and (5) the origin and development of the Senior Parent Weekend Concert, Tour Concert, Mennonite High School Music Festival, and Commencement Concert traditions.

The study reports that the history of the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir can be traced to the expressed desire of the school's founders in 1917 that vocal music be an integral part in the education of its students in order to enhance worship and singing in constituent churches. As touring choirs developed, the unique organization of Eastern Mennonite College and High School provided a basis for emulation by the high school when it became a separate organization during the 1960s, culminating in the establishing of Touring Choir in association with the Mennonite High School Music Festival. Marvin Miller's leadership as Touring Choir director established the Senior Parent Weekend Concert, Tour Concert, Mennonite High School Music Festival, and Commencement Concert traditions which became the foundation of Touring Choir's activities during the 1960s and early 1980s.

Implications of the study consider the importance of modeling for music education practitioners. The growth of the Eastern Mennonite High School music department and the success of the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir during the combined tenures of Annetta Wenger Miller and Marvin L. Miller were characterized by an enthusiasm for the subject matter of music, high expectations and motivation of students by challenging them to sing music of enduring value in a variety of styles by master composers, placing responsibility for learning on students, a positive approach in teaching, care and concern for students as individuals, and an emphasis on the expressive aspect of music study. In addition, the results of

the music program under Marvin Miller's direction may have been due in part to his overall philosophy of music curriculum design that each student would understand the place of music in his or her life experience.

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Finally, I am especially thankful to my wife Pepper for supporting, encouraging, and enduring this demanding, time-intensive project. It was only by her love and sacrifice that she tolerated “the other woman” in my life, the computer, until the thesis could be completed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSES AND PROCEDURES

The Touring Choir of Eastern Mennonite High School located in Harrisonburg, Virginia has maintained a strong choral tradition that began to develop more than eighty years ago with the opening of what was then known as Eastern Mennonite School. The founders of Eastern Mennonite emphasized vocal music as one of their primary aims for all students in an effort to enhance worship and singing in constituent churches. Current and former participants under the leadership of various directors have made significant contributions to establish the Touring Choir's heritage of excellence in music that is closely associated with the identity of the school itself. In addition to its superior reputation for choral singing in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the choir has gained recognition as a performance ensemble throughout the United States, Canada, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland. Achievements during the history of the choir have included consistently superior ratings at the Virginia Choral Directors Association District V Choral Ensemble Festival as well as appearances at the conventions of the Virginia Music Educators Association and the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association. In addition, individual members of Touring Choir participate annually in the Virginia Music Educators Association Honors Choir and the Virginia Choral Directors Association All-District and All-Virginia Choirs. Touring Choir continues to serve the original intentions of the founding organizers of the school while promoting the ideals and objectives of the school by presenting concerts in local churches en route to the Mennonite High School Music Festival each spring. Furthermore, a significant number of Touring Choir alumni embody the founders' aims by their continued musical participation after graduation from Eastern Mennonite High School. This study will endeavor to provide a comprehensive, systematic history of Touring Choir from its development following the opening of Eastern Mennonite School in 1917 to 1981.

Purpose of the Study

This study documents the foundation and development of Touring Choir from its origin through June of 1981, by focusing on the following research questions:

1. What events led to the development of Touring Choir?
2. What has constituted the philosophy and purpose of Touring Choir?
3. Who have been the directors of Touring Choir, and what were their musical and professional backgrounds?
4. What contributions have each of the directors made to Touring Choir?
5. How were the four annual concerts of Touring Choir established, and how have they developed?
 - a) Senior Parent Weekend Concerts
 - b) Tour Concerts
 - c) Mennonite High School Music Festival
 - d) Commencement Concerts

Sources of Data

The materials investigated are located in the Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simons Historical Library and Archives and the files of the Eastern Mennonite High School administrative, alumni, and music department offices. Primary sources for the study included university and high school bulletins, catalogues, newspaper clippings, photographs, concert programs, minutes from faculty meetings, audio recordings of Touring Choir, and tape recordings of personal interviews. Secondary sources included books and yearbooks.

Definition of Terms

The name "Mixed Chorus" refers to a mixed choral ensemble of college students and high school seniors who performed oratorios and church hymns from 1946 to 1950. The name of "Mixed Chorus" was changed to "Collegiate Chorus" in 1949, which remained a mixed

chorus of college students and high school seniors until 1955 when its membership became limited to college students.

“Junior Chorus” also indicates a mixed chorus, but membership was not as selective and music performed was of a simpler nature. It began to be responsible for the production of Butterworth and Root’s cantata entitled *David, the Shepherd Boy* on an annual basis beginning in 1943. The name of “Junior Chorus” was changed to “Vesper Chorus” in 1949 while retaining the same description. From 1956-59 students who were eligible to audition for “Vesper Chorus” included collegiate students and high school juniors and seniors. Beginning in 1959 and continuing through the end of the 1971-72 school year, “Vesper Chorus” consisted of high school junior and senior members. Thereafter, the name of “Vesper Chorus” was changed to “Senior Chorus” at the high school.

The name “Men’s Chorus” originally indicated the men’s chorus comprised of college students and high school seniors in existence from 1949 to 1957. A “Men’s Touring Chorus” also existed from 1954-56. This name was dropped during the 1956-57 school year, but “Men’s Chorus” made a spring tour that year. Beginning in the 1957-58 school term, only college students were eligible to audition for “Men’s Chorus.”

The name “Ladies’ Chorus” initially consisted of college students and high school juniors and seniors during the 1949-50 school year. From 1950-59, auditions were limited to college students and high school seniors. “Ladies’ Chorus” also made annual spring tours during the 1956-59 school years for which high school seniors participated.

The name “High School Chorus” refers to a mixed chorus selected from the high school sophomore, junior and senior classes occurring between 1956 and 1959, and from 1959 to 1963, “High School Boys’ Chorus” and “High School Girls’ Chorus” indicate separate high school choruses for sophomores, juniors and seniors. A high school “Men’s Octet” formed in 1957 subsequently became “Boys’ Octet” in 1958, and a “Girls’ Octet” became organized during the same year. Members for these octets were selected from the high school boys’ and girls’ choruses. These two octets were founded to promote Eastern Mennonite High School in local congregations and on tour.

“Touring Chorus” originally referred to a highly select chorus generally chosen from the collegiate “Mixed Chorus” beginning in 1947 and then from the “Collegiate Chorus” beginning

in 1950. The 1957-58 school year resulted in changing the name to “Alleluia Singers” while maintaining the same course description, which included a spring tour.

“Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus” and “Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir” refer to the touring chorus which began in the 1963-64 school term concurrent with the opening of Eastern Mennonite High School as a separate building in January, 1964. Following 1964, subsequent references to “Touring Chorus” or “Touring Choir” would indicate the Touring Choir of Eastern Mennonite High School. Consisting of approximately 40 members, “Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus” or “Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir” presents programs in constituent churches while travelling to the Mennonite High School Music Festival.

“Mennonite High School Music Festival” indicates an activity of the Mennonite Secondary Education Council composed of Mennonite secondary schools which is held on an annual basis at a different member school. Participating school choirs perform selections at the music festival before combining to form a mass choir under the direction of a guest conductor. Local churches host the school choirs, who in turn participate in the host church’s Sunday morning worship service. Many of the choirs tour to and from the Music Festival, giving programs in churches. “Vesper Chorus” participated in the inaugural “Mennonite High School Music Festival” in 1962, while “Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir” began participating in the second annual “Mennonite High School Music Festival” in 1964.

Delimitations

This study did not attempt to report the history of the Mennonite Church or the development of music in the Mennonite Church; Mennonite Church history has previously been documented by Friesen and the development of music in the Mennonite Church has been reported by Schmidt.¹

Furthermore, due to the restricted purpose of the present study as a comprehensive investigation of the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir, no attempt was made to document the history and development of Eastern Mennonite School, Eastern Mennonite

¹ Abraham Frisesen, “Mennonites,” vol. 3, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 50-55; Orlando Schmidt, “Music, North America,” vol. 5, *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, ed. Cornelius J. Dyck and Dennis D. Martin, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990): 610-612.

College, Eastern Mennonite High School, or the music departments of these organizations except as related to Touring Choir. Historical examinations of these institutions can be found in works by Pellman, Eby , Landis, and Seitz and Ressler.²

Need for the Study

Turrentine, Heller and Wilson , Abeles, Hoffer and Klotman , and Heller support the value of historical research in music education as a means of investigating the past in order to make decisions in the present about the future. Turrentine suggests that every music teacher should be knowledgeable of the heritage of music teaching “in order to gain a perspective of the historical foundation on which many of the techniques, methods, and practices in which he regularly engages are based.” Heller and Wilson further explain the significance of historical research as it relates to the decision-making process of music educators: “Methods and materials, techniques and literature, skills and concepts are the accumulate wisdom of many past labors. It is not necessary for teachers to reinvent the wheel at each moment of the instructional process. Trends in music education recur.”³

Acquiring a knowledge of the historical role of performance ensembles and the contributions of individual choral directors in music instruction would be valuable in serving members of the profession. For example, narration of past activities worthy of emulation provide an awareness of conditions that were available which may enable replication of similar activities in the present.

Finally, a comprehensive, systematic historical study of a performance ensemble, such as

² Hubert R. Pellman, *Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967: A History* (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite College, 1967); Omar Eby, “High School Gains Identity,” *Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin* 56, no. 6 (December 1977): 14-15; Jay B. Landis, *75 Years of Christian Education: Celebration Weekend, October 1-4, 1992* (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite High School, Eastern Mennonite College & Seminary, 1992); Ruth Hoover Seitz and Phyllis Augsburg Ressler, *The Way We Are* (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite College & Seminary, 1992).

³ Edgar M. Turrentine, “Historical research in music education,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 33 (Summer 1973): 1-7; George N. Heller and Bruce Wilson, “Historical research in music education: A prolegomenon,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 69 (1982): 1-20; George N. Heller and Bruce Wilson, “Historical Research,” In *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, ed. Richard Cowell, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 102-114; Harold Abeles, Charles Hoffer, and Robert H. Klotman, *Foundations of Music Education* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984); George N. Heller, “On the meaning and value of historical research in music education,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 6 (1985): 4-6.

the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir, is worth pursuing simply because it adds to the body of human knowledge and understanding. Specifically, historical studies have merit for music education researchers, practitioners, and curriculum developers by providing them with additional information on which to base personal philosophies and form knowledgeable opinions about the role and arrangement of such organizations. As Fenton suggests, documents “recording the history of such ensembles are needed, because the understanding of these organizations may aid choir directors and music administrators as they develop their own programs.”⁴

Procedures of the Study

The following procedures were employed:

1. preparation of a bibliography and collection of the data
2. organization and classification of the data into five categories:
 - a) events leading to the development of the choir
 - b) constitution of school’s founders
 - c) philosophy and its transformation
 - d) directors
 - e) annual concerts performed, and
3. organization and composition of the thesis.

Preparation of the bibliography was based upon (1) a survey of related research; (2) a survey of materials available in the Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives and Eastern Mennonite High School administrative offices; and (3) interviews with selected alumni, faculty, and with directors J. Mark Stauffer, Audrey Shank, Annetta Wenger Miller, Marvin Miller and Jay Hartzler.

The purpose of the research question about the events leading to the development of the choir was to document the choral activities that preceded the organization of Touring Choir. Archive files, university and high school newspapers, bulletins, yearbooks, and catalogues were examined to find this information.

⁴ Heller and Wilson, “Historical Research,” 102-114; and Kevin A. Fenton, “Friends University’s Singing Quakers: The Development of a Tradition,” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1994), 238.

The purpose of the research question about the constitution of the philosophy of Touring Choir was to document the guiding principles and motivations of the choir throughout its history. Information concerning the constitution and philosophy was obtained through an investigation of music office files, course descriptions in university and high school catalogues, and interviews with directors Stauffer, Shank, A. W. Miller, M. Miller and Hartzler.

The purpose of the research question about the directors and their musical and professional backgrounds was to discover the circumstances of the directors' appointments as well as to describe their backgrounds. Treatment of the musical background of the directors included their college preparation and highlights of their professional experience prior to accepting the position as director of Touring Choir. Information about the musical and professional backgrounds of directors was sought in university and high school files, yearbooks, student newspapers, alumni bulletins, and through individual interviews. Effort was made to locate information concerning the circumstances of appointments and resignations from such sources as administrative files, yearbooks, student newspapers, and interviews with past and present administrators and faculty members.

Documenting each of the director's contributions to the development of the choir was the purpose of the fourth research question. Information was gleaned from university and high school files, yearbooks, student newspapers, alumni bulletins, and interviews with present and former directors as well as former members of Touring Choir.

The purpose of the annual concerts research question was to document the beginning of Senior Parent Weekend Concerts, Tour Concerts, the Mennonite High School Music Festival and Commencement Concerts by describing their developments. Information was sought through investigation of concert programs and program notes, student newspapers and yearbooks, and personal interviews.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1. Introduction: Purposes and Procedures. In this chapter, the purpose, need for the study, delimitations, procedures, and organization of the study are presented.

Chapter 2. Historical Background: The Development of Touring Choir from 1917-1966. This chapter presents an historical overview of developments that led to the formation of

Touring Choir from 1917 to 1966, highlighting the contributions of Chester K. Lehman, J. Mark Stauffer, Earl M. Maust, Audrey B. Shank, Anneta Wenger Miller, and Reuben Yoder. Touring became established in 1947 and evolved in various forms until the building of the high school in 1964. Members of Touring Choir began to participate in district choral festivals and All-Virginia Choir toward the end of this period. The Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir became organized in 1963 in conjunction with the annual tradition of participating in the Mennonite High School Music Festival.

Chapter 3. Touring Choir from 1966 to 1981: The Contributions of Marvin Miller. This chapter documents the contributions of Director Marvin Miller. Miller's individual contributions are reflected in his extensive development of the music curriculum, designing the addition of the Fine Arts wing to the high school, and significantly increased enrollments in Junior Chorus and Senior Chorus during his tenure.

Chapter 4. Summary, Implications, and Recommendations. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, reports implications, and lists recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURING CHOIR FROM 1917-1966

Announcement is herewith made that the Eastern Mennonite School at Assembly Park near Harrisonburg, Va. will be ready, the Lord willing, for students to matriculate for the opening exercises on October 9, 1917 as previously announced.⁵

Despite this announcement which appeared in the weekly newspaper of the Mennonite Church known as the *Gospel Herald*, it wasn't until Monday, October 15, 1917 that Eastern Mennonite School "formally opened." The school's opening was the culmination of a movement that had begun nearly five years previously, which was to establish a school in the Eastern United States for Mennonites. Early proponents of the Eastern school movement had determined that there was a need for a school which would develop the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual needs of students. A constitution was adopted soon thereafter by initial leaders which presented an organizational structure for the school they envisioned.⁶

The framers of the constitution originally decided to call the school Warwick Mennonite Institute (so named for its location in what was then Warwick County, Virginia), but the name was changed to Eastern Mennonite School when the Board of Trustees applied for a charter for the school. The purpose of the school as outlined in the constitution was born out of a desire "to serve as a safeguard for the student life of our young people, and others who may be in sympathy with the institution in the acquirement of a practical education;" to develop "more fully and completely the mind of the student along religious as well as in moral and intellectual lines;" and to give "due attention ... to the peculiar doctrines of the Church, together with special training in vocal music – looking to the strengthening of that feature of divine worship in our congregations."⁷

The special emphasis given to vocal music was in part due to the "conservative" position of the Virginia Conference of the Mennonite Church, which at that time prohibited the use of musical instruments. This position was intended to preserve the Mennonite heritage of four-part,

⁵ "Announcement," *Gospel Herald*, 27 September 1917, 488.

⁶ Pellman, 48, 17.

a cappella congregational singing. This prohibition was further reinforced in the original constitution under “Restrictions” -- stating that “musical instruments shall not form any part of the equipment of this school.”⁸

The priority of vocal music continued to be emphasized by the founders as they prepared to open the school. The first announcement of the school’s opening, printed in *the Gospel Herald*, listed initial course offerings in four areas: Academy, Preparatory, Bible, and Vocal Music. The academy department represented a need recognized by the founders for a Mennonite high school as well as a Bible school at Eastern Mennonite School.⁹

The administration distributed a fourteen-page catalog containing the following description of the Vocal Music Department:

A vocal music course was one of the things under consideration when this school was organized, and it is the aim of the school to meet this need of the Church by training vocal music readers and Choristers, who may assist their home congregations in song services in the homes, the Church and all religious effort.¹⁰

Two general courses of study were offered as part of the curriculum: one a two-year teacher’s course and the other the option of a four or eight month Chorister’s training and sight-reading class. The teachers course consisted of “Rudiments, Notation, Major and Minor Scales, Keys, Dictation, Rhythmics, Dynamics, Practical Harmony, History of Music and the physical development of tone.” Chorister offerings included the study of “Songs, Song Interpretation, Sight Singing, Dictation, Drills,” and the directing of Church and Sunday School music. Tuition was \$10.00 to \$15.00 per semester respectively, and students who completed either of these general courses of study would receive certificates. Despite the ambitious program of studies outlined in the catalog, only a few of the courses were actually taught.¹¹

Noah D. Showalter, a native of Shenandoah Valley, was hired to teach vocal music courses for the inaugural school year. Showalter’s previous musical training included a certificate from the American Normal School of Music at Harrisonburg and he had also been a private voice student under J. D. Brunk, a widely known Mennonite music teacher. His resignation in March 1918 was typical of the high degree of faculty turnover during the early

⁷ Ibid, 17, 45; and “Constitution and By-Laws of Warwick Mennonite Institute,” *Gospel Herald*, 17 April 1913, 45.

⁸ “Constitution and By-Laws of Warwick Mennonite Institute,” *Gospel Herald*, 17 April 1913, 45.

⁹ “Announcement,” *Gospel Herald*, 5 July 1917, 272; and Pellman, 49.

¹⁰ *Announcements* [first catalog], (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite School, 1917-1918).

years of the school. George M. Hostetler was listed in the 1918-19 school catalog as Showalter's successor, but this did not materialize. Appearing for the first time in the 1918-19 catalog was a chorus class as part of the vocal music curriculum. New music faculty members arriving during the second year of EMS included Elizabeth Horsch and Henry B. Keener. Horsch directed the Ladies' Chorus during the two years she served on the faculty, and Keener was listed as the instructor for the vocal music department in the 1919-20 catalog. Keener directed a mixed chorus as part of the first public presentation of *David, the Shepherd Boy* at the 1921 Commencement: this became an annual tradition that lasted until 1973.¹²



Figure 1. Henry B. Keener (seated at the far right) directed the first public presentation of *David, the Shepherd Boy* at the 1921 Commencement. *From Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967: A History, 1967.*

Chester K. Lehman became director of Mixed Chorus and Men's Chorus in the fall of 1921. Prior to coming to Eastern Mennonite School, he completed the college course at Hesston Academy and Bible School that had developed a tradition of singing *The Holy City* by Alfred Gaul. In 1922 Lehman began this tradition at EMS, directing a performance of *The Holy City* with the Mixed Chorus. Lehman was also responsible for initiating the first chorus tour in the

¹¹ Pellman, 49.

¹² Ibid, 49,53; "Vocal Music Department," *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite School Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite School, 1919-1920, 29); Pellman, 37; "Community invited to join 'David' rendition," in *Windsock* 19 October 1973, 1. *David, the Shepherd Boy* has been revived periodically since 1973. See "Alumni Revive 'David,'" in *Windsock* 14 November 1977, 1. In addition, Chester K. Lehman, who would become the next music director at EMS, was suddenly drafted into singing the part of Jonathan while visiting Harrisonburg on his honeymoon in 1921. See "'David' Tradition Emerges," in *Windsock* 16 October 1968, 3.

school's history which occurred in 1937, when twenty-three members of Mixed Chorus traveled to sing in Mennonite churches located in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Not surprisingly, musical selections consisted chiefly of excerpts from *The Holy City*.¹³

C. K. Lehman's nephew, Harold D. Lehman, who was a member of the first touring chorus at EMS, described the first tour as a memorable experience because of the opportunity it provided him to visit other parts of the country and sing in different venues. A contemporary characterization of C. K. Lehman by another chorus member indicated that "he informed us at the start that we would get the best results when the director is 'hard-boiled': we found it to be so."¹⁴ Membership in the Mixed Chorus increased to nearly 100 in 1938 and the 1939 Mixed Chorus continued the traditions of singing *The Holy City* and *David, the Shepherd Boy*.¹⁵



Figure 2. Chester K. Lehman, 1923-24 faculty photo. *From Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967: A History, 1967.*

¹³ Harold D. Lehman, Eastern Mennonite School Touring Chorus member in 1937 and Director of High School of Eastern Mennonite College, 1957-1962, interview by author, 8 April 1999; Pellman, 73; and Elsa Yoder, "Chorus Good-Will Tour," in *Eastern Mennonite School Journal*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1937), 21-22.

¹⁴ "Mixed Chorus," *Eastern Mennonite School Senior Journal, Commencement Number* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1938, 36-37).

¹⁵ Harold D. Lehman, Eastern Mennonite School Touring Chorus member in 1937 and Director of High School of Eastern Mennonite College, 1957-1962, interview by author, 8 April 1999; and "Mixed Chorus," *Eastern Mennonite School Senior Journal, Commencement Number* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1938, 36-37 and 1939, 32).

Lehman's eventual successor, J. Mark Stauffer, began serving on the faculty of EMS in 1938 as Men's Chorus director. Son of EMS President John L. Stauffer, J. Mark had attended high school and junior college at EMS. He received his bachelor's degree in 1939 from what was then known as Madison College (now James Madison University) in Harrisonburg, and proceeded to spend several summers pursuing coursework at Madison College, Shenandoah Conservatory of Music, Bridgewater College, Juilliard Summer School, and finally graduating with a master's degree from George Peabody College in August of 1949.¹⁶

During his second year, Stauffer directed the Ladies' Chorus as well, and by 1940 he was directing the Mixed Chorus. The Ladies' Chorus and Men's Chorus were eliminated for eight years after the 1940-41 year, but a Junior Chorus of ninety voices was formed in the ensuing year largely from the high school classes. Mixed Chorus continued to be comprised primarily of college students as EMS had received state accreditation as a junior college in 1930. There was some intermingling of high school and college students in the various choruses from the founding of EMS until the late 1950s.¹⁷

It wasn't until ten years after the first touring chorus in the school's history that another tour occurred. In 1947 a representative group of twenty-four members selected from Mixed Chorus presented eighteen programs at various churches in New York, Pennsylvania, and Canada, where they were forced to cancel one of the evening programs as a result of a snow storm they encountered.¹⁸ Katherine Hertzler, a Junior College student, reported her excitement as the group embarked upon the tour:

¹⁶ "Men's Chorus," *Eastern Mennonite School Senior Journal, Commencement Number* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1939), 32; and *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite School Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, VA: Eastern Mennonite School, 1949-1950 and 1950-1951).

¹⁷ J. Mark Stauffer, Eastern Mennonite School/College choral director, 1939-1976, telephone interview by author, 15 April 1999; *Eastern Mennonite School Senior Journal, Commencement Number* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1939, 32; 1940, 32; 1941, 48-49; 1942); Pellman, 90; Harold D. Lehman, Eastern Mennonite School Touring Chorus member in 1937 and Director of High School of Eastern Mennonite College, 1957-1962, interview by author, 8 April 1999; J. Mark Stauffer, Eastern Mennonite School/College choral director, 1939-1976, telephone interview by author, 15 April 1999; and Jay B. Landis, Eastern Mennonite College Men's, Collegiate, and Touring Chorus member, 1950s, Eastern Mennonite High School Boys/Men's Chorus and Boys' Octet director, 1950s and 1960s, interview by author, 8 April 1999.

¹⁸ Katherine Hertzler, "Canadian Trip Highlights," in *Weather Vane* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 4 April 1947, 6; Katherine Hertzler, "The Mixed Chorus Trip," in *Eastern Mennonite School Journal* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, May 1947, 9-10); "Mixed Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1947), 68; and J. Mark Stauffer, Eastern Mennonite School/College choral director, 1939-1976, telephone interview by author, 15 April 1999.

When the wheels of the big white bus slowly rolled away from the E.M.S. campus, twenty-four chorus members with their conductor and bus driver knew that they were off for a lively trip. What cared we that there were twenty-three seats for twenty-five people? So many fellows wanted to stand that the driver was almost cramped.¹⁹

In the fall of 1947, the Virginia State Board of Education approved a four-year degree program and Eastern Mennonite School officially became Eastern Mennonite College in 1947. During the same school year, touring became an annual tradition with a ten day tour of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, and Michigan. That year also marked the first time that the ensemble was referred to as Touring Chorus.²⁰ One difficulty created by tours during this period was the problem of keeping uniforms neatly pressed. High school senior Clara Moyer described how J. Mark Stauffer resolved a uniform dilemma during that early tour:

One of our director's main worries was keeping the girls calm concerning pressing their dresses. It was quite a hectic time when all twelve of us had to – simply had to – press our program dresses in a half hour. He finally came to this decision – that we press only the front, the part the people will see most. We appreciated his advice because it did save valuable time.²¹

Touring developed annually as a result of the growth of the music program under Stauffer. As the choruses increased in size and became more proficient during the 1940s under his direction, the possibility of taking a tour improved. Consistent with the original aims of the school's founders, touring was viewed as a matter of contributing to worship in the church and to the development of the individual choristers. While the touring choirs didn't place an emphasis on public relations, the tours did serve to promote the school by virtue of the tour program presentations themselves.²²

Stauffer believed that touring was musically valuable because of the inherent challenges it presented his students in singing for a different audience at every program. The longer the choir traveled together, the more compatible the individual singers became. This compatibility

¹⁹ Hertzler, "Canadian Trip Highlights," 6; and "The Mixed Chorus Trip," 9.

²⁰ Pellman, 136; and Clara Moyer, "Touring Chorus," in *Eastern Mennonite College Journal* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1948), 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² J. Mark Stauffer, Eastern Mennonite School/College choral director, 1939-1976, telephone interview by author, 15 April 1999.

contributed to the cohesiveness of the ensemble as a whole which in turn was reflected in their musical presentations.²³

Stauffer articulated some of his philosophical views about music through various writings during his tenure. In his booklet *Mennonite Church Music: Its Theory and Practice* he discussed the importance of effective music selection and recommended hymns rather than the increasingly popular gospel songs – he believed that traditional hymns had an irrefutable value that had withstood the test of time. He also advocated the singing of classic western art music by master composers, believing it possessed enduring value. He preferred the classics in both hymnody and classical music because they utilized structural complexities that resulted in an expressive content that was effective over an extended period of time.²⁴



Figure 3. J. Mark Stauffer. From *Shenandoah*, 1951.

The music curriculum continued to be expanded by Stauffer during his father's thirteen-year administration at both the high school and college level. Additional courses in rudiments, private voice, and class voice were offered at the high school, while the college music

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ J. Mark Stauffer, *Mennonite Church Music: Its Theory and Practice* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), 5-7.

curriculum witnessed an increase to twelve course offerings. Due to the expansion of the curriculum, it became necessary for the school to hire Earl M. Maust in the fall of 1948 to assist Stauffer with the growing music program.²⁵



Figure 4. Earl M. Maust. From *Shenandoah*, 1951.

Like Stauffer, Maust was a product of EMS, having graduated from the teacher's training course in 1941. He received a B. A. from Bob Jones University in June of 1948 before joining the faculty at EMC. With an additional music faculty member on board, Men's Chorus and Ladies' Chorus were offered once again as part of the music curriculum. Maust assumed responsibility for directing Junior Chorus and Men's Chorus while Stauffer directed the Mixed Chorus and Ladies' Chorus.²⁶

The Mixed Chorus remained a primarily collegiate ensemble, although high school seniors were eligible to audition, and Stauffer continued the annual tradition of singing *The Holy City*, which had begun in 1922 under Lehman. Ladies' Chorus and Men's Chorus were also comprised of college students, but auditions were extended to both high school juniors and seniors. The Junior Chorus was essentially a high school ensemble which continued the tradition

²⁵ Pellman, 135, 137; and J. Mark Stauffer, Eastern Mennonite School/College choral director, 1939-1976, telephone interview by author, 15 April 1999.

²⁶ *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite School Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1949-1950 and 1950-1951); and Pellman, 121.

of singing *David, the Shepherd Boy*. Collegiate students did not receive academic credit for participation in these choirs. However, high school students did receive academic credit for their participation in any of the choirs.²⁷

Other curriculum changes occurred during this transitional period as increasing enrollments began to further separate high school and college departments. During Maust's second year of teaching, the name of Mixed Chorus was changed to Collegiate Chorus to reflect the predominant membership of the group, although high school seniors remained eligible for auditions. High school juniors were no longer eligible for the Ladies' Chorus and Men's Chorus, and while Junior Chorus became Vesper Chorus by name, it essentially remained a high school ensemble. In addition, Touring Chorus began to be listed in the student catalog for the first time beginning in the 1954-55 school year.²⁸

Touring opportunities expanded to include the Men's Chorus during this period as well. E.M.C's first Male Chorus tour occurred during Christmas break in 1949 with appearances in Eastern Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. One memorable highlight included singing Christmas songs to fellow passengers on the Cape Charles Ferry while crossing Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. Apparently the tour was successful because the group toured again during the spring of the same school year, venturing as far as Pennsylvania where they sang in high schools and gave a short radio program in Johnstown. A tour to Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario, Canada the following year established touring as an annual tradition for the Men's Chorus. Recognized as a viable ensemble, "Men's Touring Chorus" was listed for the first time in the 1954-55 annual catalog and subsequently listed in future catalogs as "Men's Chorus" which toured each spring.²⁹

²⁷ Pellman, 121; "Junior Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1949), 75; Carol Johnson, "Junior Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1950), 85; Mary Beyeler, "Vesper Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1951), 75; "Vesper Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1954, 93; 1955, 30); and "Music," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite School Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite School, 1949-1950), 100, 130.

²⁸ "Choruses," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1954-1955), 41-42.

²⁹ John Ruth, "Men's Chorus Tour," in *Weather Vane*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 5 January 1950); Paul Swarr, "The Men's Touring Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1950), 94; and Ruth, "Men's Chorus Tour," Bob Lehman, "Male Touring Chorus," in *Weather Vane*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 20 April 1950); J. B. Landis, "E.M.C. Presents Male Touring Chorus," in *Weather Vane*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 30 March 1951); Jay Landis, "The Men's Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1951), 76; and "Choruses," in

Maust was on sabbatical during the 1955-56 year and taught full time at the college upon his return in the fall of 1956 because of the growing music program at the college. Anticipating Maust's absence, EMC President John R. Mumaw hired Audrey B. Shank to teach music at the high school. An English major graduate of EMC in 1955, Shank had also taken courses in class voice and choral conducting. She promptly enrolled in the summer of 1955 at Madison College where she began to build up the equivalency of a music major as well as a master's degree in music education which she completed in the spring of 1960.³⁰

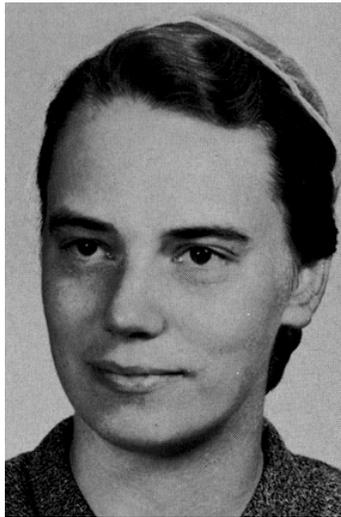


Figure 5. Audrey B. Shank. From *Shenandoah*, 1962.

Although Shank grew up listening to recordings of symphonic and choral classics, her home had no musical instrument. In addition, all of the music in her collegiate experience was performed *a cappella*. However, the Virginia Mennonite Conference gradually began to modify its position on the anti-musical instrument clause of the school's constitution during this period. In the late 1950s musical instruments were permitted in dormitories and by 1966 soloists were accompanied on a piano for the college's first performance of G. F. Handel's *Messiah*.³¹

Shank's lack of instrumental music experience was a contributing factor in the criteria she used for selecting music for her choirs. Aside from a musical selection's adaptability to a

Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1954-1955, 41-42; 1956-1957, 41-42; 1957-1958, 40-41; 1958-1959, 40).

³⁰ "Faculty," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1955-1956); Pellman, 202.; and Audrey B. Shank, to author, 5 April 1999.

cappella singing, she was concerned with teaching a variety of musical styles, the artistic value and beauty of the music, and communicating the meaning of the text. She was acutely aware of her lack of instrumental experience when she began to teach music, and became more comfortable as a classroom instructor only when she gradually moved from teaching music to teaching English toward the end of her career at EMC.³²

Increasing enrollments and Shank's arrival corresponded with several changes in the music curriculum while further distinctions were developing between high school and college departments. During this time of transition, the choral program redefined itself by providing meaningful musical experiences for the unique needs of high school and college students. Shank directed a new "High School Chorus" in 1955 that became Vesper Chorus in 1959 when membership was restricted exclusively to high school students. As a result, the high school music department became responsible for the annual *David, the Shepherd Boy* tradition. In addition, a "High School Girls' Chorus" was offered during this period and high school students began participating in the Virginia public school district music festival.³³

A high school boys chorus became organized for the first time during the 1956-57 academic year by high school English faculty member Jay Landis. An EMC graduate in 1954, he had participated as a member of the Men's Chorus, Collegiate Chorus, and Touring Chorus during his days as a student. When he came to teach at the high school, he recognized a need for more high school programmatic activities. He selected a "Men's Octet" from the high school all-male chorus in the 1957-58 year to sing in venues such as the student chapel services held regularly on campus.³⁴

³¹ Audrey B. Shank, to author, 5 April 1999; and Pellman, 198, 240.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Faculty," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1955-1956); "Choruses," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College Bulletin* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1955-1956, 41-42; 1956-1957, 40-42; 1957-1958, 40-41, 126; 1958-1959, 1959-1960, 40); "Chorus," in *Annual Catalog, Eastern Mennonite College: The High School* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1959-1960), 25; "Choruses," in *Annual Catalog and Handbook: The High School of Eastern Mennonite College School* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1958-1959), 25; "Vesper Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1957, 142-143; 1959, 152; 1960, 160-161); Audrey B. Shank, conductor, *The Girls Chorus and The Vesper Chorus Concert Program*, 4 March 1960. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*; and "Vesper Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1960), 161; and Judy Burkholder, "Girls' Chorus Rated No. 1/Give Evening Program," in *Windsock*, 17 March 1961.

³⁴ "Boys Chorus," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1960, 162-163; 1961, 154; 1962); and Jay B. Landis, Eastern Mennonite College Men's, Collegiate, and Touring Chorus member, 1950s, Eastern Mennonite High School Boys/Men's Chorus and Boys' Octet director, 1950s and 1960s, interview by author, 8 April 1999.

Not to be outdone by the young men, during the 1958-59 school year a Girls' Octet was formed with Audrey Shank as director. Both the Girls' Octet and the Boys' Octet toured during Easter break of 1959 as the ladies traveled to sing in churches in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio while the fellows went as far as Canada. These tours marked the first time in the school's history that exclusively high school choral ensembles went on tour. The "Eastern Mennonite College High School Girls' Octet" tour program of that year included fifteen musical selections consisting of hymns, seasonal carols from Germany, France, and Spain, and repertoire by Bach and Mendelssohn. The program also included text translations and program notes, which described the stylistic features of various selections. The choir would perform eleven concerts in nine days, with an offering at each concert to help offset expenses for the tour.³⁵

The octets continued touring during Shank's tenure as they traveled to sing throughout the Eastern United States and Canada. Touring provided the octets with the opportunity to represent the school while maintaining contact with constituent Mennonite congregations. The promotional aspect of touring was evident in the 1961 "Girls' Octette" tour program which included the following printed message from EMC president John R. Mumaw:

The High School of Eastern Mennonite College is glad to share its testimony with these, its host congregations. It believes that a significant part of the educational program on the campus is learning to sing in good harmony and with spiritual understanding. This program of sacred songs is intended to give you some idea of what is being done at E. M. C. with singing voices. It is designed to provide expressions of sentiment that speak of true Christian meanings. It is hoped that you will enjoy these renditions and find in them a good backdrop for a happy worship experience. Your cordial hospitality and warm fellowship is deeply appreciated. This is your invitation to visit E. M. C. at your convenience.³⁶

Aside from the activities of the octets, the high school music program continued to expand in the early 1960's. Opportunities for adjudication in the public school district music festival were extended to Vesper Chorus, Girls' Chorus, Boys' Chorus, and the Boys' Octet as they participated in the 1961 Spring Festival held at Broadway High School. Increasing

³⁵ "Choruses," in *Shenandoah* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1959), 152-153; and Audrey B. Shank, conductor, Eastern Mennonite College High School Girls' Octet Tour Program, 1958-1959. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*; and to author, 5 April 1999.

³⁶ Audrey B. Shank, to author, 5 April 1999; and Audrey B. Shank, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite College High School Girls' Octette* Tour Program, 1961. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

participation by underclassmen also began to occur during the fall of 1961, as yet another chorus was added to the music curriculum by Jay Landis when he responded to a need for a junior chorus at the high school.³⁷

On Friday, April 6, 1962, a significant event in the high school's choral touring history occurred when 59 members of Vesper Chorus left the campus for Belleville, Pennsylvania, on a trip which had long been anticipated. It was at Belleville Mennonite School that Vesper Chorus gathered with four other Mennonite school choruses from Christopher Dock (PA), Johnstown (PA), Central (OH), and Belleville (PA) to participate in the inaugural Mennonite High School Music Festival. After a Friday evening rehearsal in the Belleville Mennonite School gym, the five schools combined to form a mass choir for a concert held Saturday evening at Lewiston High School in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. Each individual school choir represented at the festival sang several selections also. Under Audrey Shank's direction, Vesper Chorus contributed Handel's "In Thee, O Father" and Lutkin's benediction, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You." On Sunday morning, Vesper Chorus sang at Hollinsville Mennonite Church and departed for Harrisonburg in the afternoon. This performance began a touring concert tradition that would be developed and expanded extensively in future years.³⁸

The five participating schools in the first Music Festival were members of the Mennonite Secondary Education Council which had been formed in 1948. One of the Council's goals was "to coordinate joint activities and programs beneficial to administrators, faculty, board members, and students of member schools," of which the Music Festival was one such activity. By 1998, the number of member schools had increased to thirteen and included participating choirs from Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The concert program for the "36th Annual Mennonite High School Choral Festival" held that year indicated the following goals of the Festival as established by MSEC:

- 1) to promote high standards of excellence in the performance of sacred music
- 2) to provide music students and directors the opportunity to share with each other musically as well as socially

³⁷ Judy Burkholder, "Girls' Chorus Rated No. 1/Give Evening Program," in *Windsock*, 17 March 1961; and Carol Weaver, "Landis Directs Junior Chorus," in *Windsock* 13 October 1961, 1.

³⁸ John Thomas, "Vesper Sings In Weekend Festival," in *Windsock* 6 April, 1962, 1; and Harold D. Lehman, Eastern Mennonite School Touring Chorus member in 1937 and Director of High School of Eastern Mennonite College, 1957-1962, interview by author, 8 April 1999.

- 3) to provide a setting in which students can grow spiritually and artistically
- 4) to provide the opportunity for students and directors to share with a community in a mutual experience of fellowship and worship³⁹

Audrey Shank spent the summer of 1962 in Kingston, Jamaica assisting with a missions outreach. When she returned in the fall of 1962, she joined the college faculty where she taught English Composition and directed the College Women's Chorus until she resigned from EMC in 1964 to pursue mission work full-time. Her replacement beginning in the fall of 1962 was Annetta Wenger, a graduate of EMC with a bachelor's degree in music in June, 1962. Wenger was a natural choice for the position as her student teaching experience was under the supervision of Audrey Shank.⁴⁰

Wenger was born and raised in Tanzania, East Africa and had dreamed of one day returning to Africa. She began her studies at EMC in the pre-nursing department, thinking that nursing was the only option available to her which would allow her a vocation in Africa. However, during her first year at EMC, she "became passionately involved in all the musical activities on campus." Music faculty members J. Mark Stauffer, Earl Maust, Catherine Mumaw, and Audrey Shank all sought her out, requesting that she consider becoming a music major. Wenger was still hesitant because of her desire to return to Africa. However, one of her music teachers told her, "You know, they might need music teachers in Africa." In Wenger's own words, "That did it. In my second year I switched to music."⁴¹

³⁹ Marles Preheim, conductor, *28th Annual Mennonite High School Music Festival Concert Program*, The Center in the Square, Kitchener, Ontario: 1 April 1990. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office files*; and Anton Armstrong, conductor, *36th Annual Mennonite High School Choral Festival Concert Program*, Sarasota Christian School, Sarasota, Fl.: 5 April 1998. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files*.

⁴⁰ "Good, Halteman, Wenger Join Faculty," in *Windsock* 18 May 1962, 1; Audrey B. Shank, to author, 5 April 1999; and Annetta [Wenger] Miller, to author, 26 March 1999.

⁴¹ Annetta [Wenger] Miller, to author, 26 March 1999.

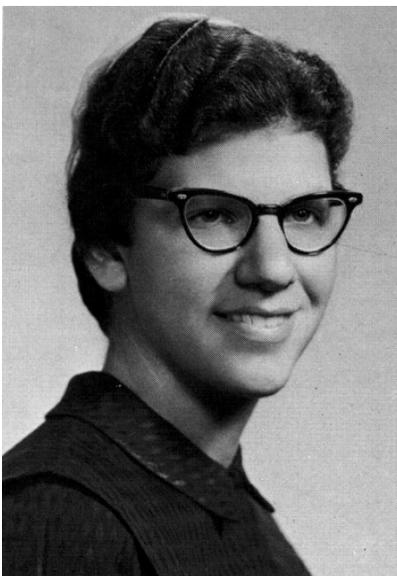


Figure 6. Annetta Wenger Miller. From *Ember*, 1965.

Wenger's initial responsibilities at Eastern Mennonite High School included conducting Vesper Chorus, Girls' Chorus, and the Girls' Octet as well as teaching class voice, private voice, choral training, music appreciation, and general music. Jay Landis continued to direct the Junior Chorus, the Boys' Chorus, and the Boys' Octet. The December, 1962 issue of the *Windsock* student newspaper contained the following brief descriptions of both Wenger's and Landis' rehearsal styles that year as they prepared their choirs for upcoming Christmas performances:

Miss Wenger solemnly shakes her head. "People, do you realize this program is Friday night? Absolutely no talking. We must get down to business or else . . ."

"O.K., do you want to have a chorus or do you want a gab session?" These are the words of Mr. Landis who is in charge of Junior and Boys choruses.⁴²

One disappointment for the choral program during Wenger's first year on the faculty was the cancellation of the Mennonite music festival for one year. During a faculty meeting held in February, 1963, high school director Jesse T. Byler "announced that for several reasons, there will be no music festival of Mennonite high school choruses this year. One reason may have been due to the costs of financing the festival that were discussed at administrative meetings. At a previous faculty meeting that same school year, Byler had given a report on plans for financing

⁴² "Choruses Give Programs," in *Windsock* 18 December 1962.

the music festival at Central Christian High School [Ohio]. He also reported on how finances were handled for the first festival at Belleville the previous year.⁴³

Nevertheless, the 55-voice Vesper Chorus presented its annual program of sacred music on March 8, 1963 in the EMC auditorium.⁴⁴ Despite the cancellation of the Mennonite music festival, Vesper Chorus and the octets did participate in the “District 5” musical festival held at Broadway High School in Broadway, Virginia on March 30, 1963. Singing “Oh, Sing Unto to the Lord” by Ralph Vaughan Williams and “In Thee I Trust” arranged by Leland Sateren, Vesper Chorus received an adjudication rating of “one” from the panel of judges as well as the following comments on their singing technique which were reported in *Windsock* :

The tone was “beautiful, warm, and rich.” About intonation – “excellent.” They said [sic] about diction and technique: “we heard your words, you are well trained.” “Splendid concept, nicely executed,” was said about the balance. Interpretation – “You have to understand and love your music to interpret it well. You do.” To most of our surprise they also said we were well disciplined.⁴⁵

In April, the Girls’ Octet went on an extensive tour in which they gave thirteen scheduled performances in ten days in Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee. The Boys’ Octet traveled to Pennsylvania, New York, and Michigan by way of Canada on a weekend tour. Accompanied by high school director Jesse Byler, he stated that “the purpose of the [Boys’ Octet] tour was to develop an interest in Christian education at the places where programs were given.” The conclusion of Annetta Wenger’s first year of teaching culminated in conducting Vesper Chorus in their annual rendition of *David, the Shepherd Boy* during Commencement Weekend on May 31, 1963.⁴⁶

During that summer, Miss Wenger became Mrs. Miller when she married fellow EMHS faculty member Harold Miller, teacher of government and social studies. When she resumed teaching in the fall of 1963, Vesper Chorus had grown to 72 members. There was also some

⁴³ Jesse T. Byler, Eastern Mennonite High School Principal, 1962-1964, “Faculty Meeting Minutes,” (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Faculty Meeting, 5 February 1963). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*; and Jesse T. Byler, Eastern Mennonite High School Principal, 1962-1964, “Committee on Administration Minutes,” (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Committee on Administration, 20 November 1962). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

⁴⁴ “Vesper Gives Program Tonight,” in *Windsock* 8 March 1963.

⁴⁵ “Vesper Rated No. 1,” in *Windsock* 5 April 1963, 1-2.

⁴⁶ “Girls Octet to Tour South,” in *Windsock* 5 April 1963, 1; “Fellows Tour New York and Michigan,” in *Windsock* 3 May 1963, 1-2; and “Vesper to Present ‘David’ Tonight,” in *Windsock* 31 May 1963.

anticipation of the renewal of the Mennonite Music Festival. Forty students were selected from Vesper Chorus and organized as Touring Chorus which would sing at the Music Festival to be held the following spring at Central Christian High School. The Girls' Octet and Boys' Octet were subsequently selected from Touring Chorus. Miller's criteria for selection of individual singers included vocal quality, range, and musicality.⁴⁷

Other changes to the curriculum that year involved giving academic credit for Vesper Chorus and the addition of an Eighth Grade Chorus due to the amount of interest on behalf of the students. Consequently, Junior Chorus was composed of freshmen and sophomores. Both of these ensembles were directed by Jay Landis. All of these changes were occurring as the high school prepared to move into its own building in January, 1964.⁴⁸

Touring Chorus gave programs throughout the year at area churches and began the Senior Parent Weekend Concert tradition that would continue for more than 30 years. Senior Parent Weekend was designed especially for visiting parents of seniors who were not local residents of Harrisonburg. Eventually, this concert in March would launch the Touring Choir itinerary each year. Touring Chorus also participated in the District V Music Festival to prepare for the Mennonite Music Festival. At the district music festival, Touring Chorus received the highest possible rating of "one" in their first year as an organized ensemble by singing two selections that they would sing independently at the Mennonite Festival: "In the Beginning Was the Word" by Moffatt and "Who Crucified My Lord?" by Belcher.⁴⁹

The second annual Mennonite Music Festival was held at Christopher Dock High School in Lansdale, Pennsylvania on April 18, 1964. Other participating schools included Central Christian, Bethany (IN), and Rockway (Ontario, Canada). Each school was allotted forty singers to form a mass chorus of 200. Selections presented by the mass chorus included "Psalm 100" arranged by Alice Parker and "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light" from J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. Continuing the tradition begun by Vesper Chorus during the weekend of

⁴⁷ "Faculty," in *Ember*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1964); "Vesper Organizes," in *Windsock* 20 September 1960, 1; "Boys' Octet," in *Windsock* 4 October 1963, 1; "Octet Chosen," in *Windsock* 18 October 1963; and Annetta [Wenger] Miller to author, 26 March 1999.

⁴⁸ Jesse T. Byler, Eastern Mennonite High School Principal, 1962-1964, "Committee on Administration Minutes," (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Committee on Administration, 15 September 1963). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*;

⁴⁸ "Choruses Organize," in *Windsock* 4 October 1963, 4; and Pellman, 223.

⁴⁹ "Touring Groups Give Programs," in *Windsock* 14 February 1964, 1; "Students To Sing Tonight," in *Windsock* 20 March 1964, 1; "Chorus Anticipates Festival," in *Windsock* 10 April 1964, 1; and Annetta W. Miller, director, *Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus Concert Program*, 1964.

the first music festival, Touring Chorus sang in a local church located in Harleysville, Pennsylvania on the Sunday morning following the completion of the festival. A final program that evening in Maryland concluded their weekend of singing before returning home. At these and other local venues in the spring itinerary, the concert program was organized around the themes of Christmas and the Crucifixion.⁵⁰

During the 1964 academic year, changes in tradition occurred as did the beginning of a new tradition: aside from the first high school commencement separate from the college for the class of 1964, Vesper Chorus presented *David, the Shepherd Boy* completely memorized and unassisted by college singers, and Touring Chorus performed two selections for their first Baccalaureate program, which was part of Commencement Weekend.⁵¹

Curriculum changes occurred in the coming 1964-65 year as the boys and girls choruses were dropped from the high school annual catalog and handbook while Touring Chorus was listed as an activity description for the first time. A statement of purpose for the octets was included for the first time as well, which indicated that “the purpose of the octets is to promote the ideals and objectives of Eastern Mennonite High School in local congregations and on tour.” In addition, Eighth Grade Chorus was dissolved as Junior Chorus once again became open to eighth graders.⁵²

More “firsts” were recorded that year as the annual Christmas music program was presented entirely by EMHS students for the first time. The Junior Chorus, Boys’ Octet, Girls’ Octet, Touring Chorus and Vesper Chorus were all represented on the program to reflect the expansion of the choral department. Additionally, Annetta Miller assumed responsibility for directing the Junior Chorus and Boys’ Octet which had been founded and formerly directed by Jay Landis.⁵³

These same choruses with the exception of Junior Chorus continued the annual program of sacred music for visiting parents on March 25, 1965 in conjunction with Parent Weekend.

⁵⁰ “Chorus Anticipates Festival,” in *Windsock* 10 April 1964, 1; and Annetta W. Miller, director, *Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus Concert Program*, 1964.

⁵¹ Eunice Seitz, “Vesper Chorus Presents Cantata,” in *Windsock* 22 May 1964, 1; “Seniors Await Graduation Weekend,” in *Windsock* 22 May 1964, 1.

⁵² “Choruses,” in *Eastern Mennonite High School Annual Catalog and Handbook*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1964-1965, 33).

⁵³ “Choruses Present Seasonal Program/All High School Singers,” in *Windsock* 11 December 1964; and Annetta W. Miller, *Eastern Mennonite High School Program of Christmas Music Concert Program*, 11 December 1964, 1. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

Similar to the previous year's sacred music program, some of Touring Chorus' selections were repeated at the upcoming Mennonite Music Festival, including "O Come, Let Us Worship" by Palestrina and the freedom song "We Shall Overcome," arranged by Miller herself.⁵⁴

Members of Touring Chorus left a day early for Easter vacation on April 14 as they sang at six churches while traveling to Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan via Canada and Niagara Falls, and at Central Christian High School in Kidron, Ohio to participate in the Music Festival. A highlight of the festival that year was the opportunity to sing in the mass choir under the direction of Alice Parker, noted collaborator with Robert Shaw.⁵⁵

As Vesper Chorus prepared to render the annual cantata *David, the Shepherd Boy*, an article in the school newspaper, *Windsock*, boasted that this was the second year that the EMHS chorus had performed the entire one and one-half hour program without any assistance from college soloists. However, the same article also cast some doubt on its continuation because the music was out of print and so few copies were available.⁵⁶

Annetta Miller's desire to return to Africa was finally realized in 1965 as she and her husband resigned from the high school at the conclusion of the school year to leave for East Africa. Once there, her husband would begin organizing and directing service projects for the East African Christian Council, while she would continue teaching music.⁵⁷

Annetta Miller made significant contributions to improve the quality of the music program during her brief tenure at EMHS. In addition to Vesper Chorus increasing in size to 100 members, students also began to receive academic credit for their participation. During her tenure, the choral program became more unified and received recognition for its achievements through the District V music festival. Most significantly, Touring Chorus was established as was an association with the Mennonite Music Festival.

Reuben Yoder became the head of the music department for the 1965-66 year. A Mid-West farmer, he had served as a minister of music in his home congregation in Harper, Kansas before coming to EMHS. With the exception of the Girls' Octet, which was delegated to Miss

⁵⁴ "Musical Talent Shown Tonight," in *Windsock* 25 March 1965, 1; and Annetta W. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Presents a Program of Sacred Music Concert Program*, 26 March 1965, Harrisonburg, Va: Eastern Mennonite College auditorium. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

⁵⁵ "Tour Begins Today," in *Windsock* 14 April 1965, 1.

⁵⁶ "Chorus Renders Annual Cantata," in *Windsock* 26 May 1965.

⁵⁷ "Nine Faculty Members Leave/Millers to East Africa," in *Windsock* 12 May 1965, 1; and Annetta [Wenger] Miller, to author, 26 March 1999.

Emily Turner, Yoder directed the same choirs that had previously been established. Junior Chorus, Vesper Chorus, and Touring Chorus gave a Christmas Music Program in conjunction with the EMC *A Cappella* Singers on December 10, 1965 to close out the first half of the school year.⁵⁸

After the Christmas break, Touring Chorus and Vesper Chorus resumed a busy schedule. Following a performance at the college chapel, Touring Chorus embarked upon its annual tour in March to perform eleven concerts in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan while en route to and from the Mennonite Music Festival held at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana on March 27. One of the memorable benefits of being a Touring Chorus member that year was described by Miriam King-Dagen as the “euphoria of singing under Alice Parker” as Parker conducted the mass choir for the second consecutive time. Yoder may have utilized instrumental music on a Touring Chorus program for the first time as Doris Cordell and Carol Weaver were listed as student accompanists for the 1965-66 Touring Chorus program. Touring Chorus sang at Baccalaureate again, and Vesper Chorus sang Franz Schubert’s *Mass in F* as a substitute for *David, the Shepherd Boy* during the Commencement program at the conclusion of the year. Another significant event relative to instrumental music that year included authorization by the high school committee on administration to use the piano for processional, recessional, and accompanying the Vesper Chorus program at the 1966 Commencement.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “New Personalities Slip Into Teaching Groove,” in *Windsock* 8 October 1965; “Ensembles Chosen, TC Offices Filled,” in *Windsock* 12 November 1965; and Reuben Yoder and Ira Zook, conductors, *Christmas Music Program, Eastern Mennonite High School Choruses and E. M. C. A Cappella Singers* 10 December 1965. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College Chapel. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

⁵⁹ “Chorus Programming In Full Swing,” in *Windsock* 4 March 1966, 1; Miriam King-Dagen, Touring Chorus member in the 1960s, to author, 11 April 1999; Alice Parker, conductor, *The Ninth Annual Mennonite High School Music Festival Concert Program*, 18 April 1971 program notes; Reuben H. Yoder, conductor, *The Touring Chorus, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Concert Program*, 1965-66; “Senior Schedule,” in *Windsock* 20 May 1966; and “Chorus,” in *Ember*, 1966, 57; and Jesse T. Byler, Eastern Mennonite High School Principal, 1962-1964, “Committee on Administration Minutes,” (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Committee on Administration, 13 May 1966). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

CHAPTER 3

TOURING CHOIR FROM 1966 TO 1981: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARVIN MILLER

Four directors had led high school choirs at varying degrees between the years 1959 and 1966 as Eastern Mennonite High School and College became separate units. This separation seemed complete when a high school alumni association was formed in 1965 and began planning its own homecoming for November 1966. Reuben Yoder's appointment as Assistant Dean of Boys at the high school in 1966 paved the way for the hiring of Marvin Miller who would make significant contributions during the next fifteen years as the chair of the music department and director of Touring Choir.⁶⁰

Born on April 8, 1938 near Hicksville, Ohio, Marvin Miller's formative musical experiences were influenced by his family, church, and high school music teacher. He grew up hearing his family singing four-part harmony at gatherings. Because the church he attended during this period never used any musical instruments, all of the music was sung *a cappella*, which further developed his ability to sing a harmony part during congregational singing. At the age of fifteen, he directed the church youth choir and it was apparent that he possessed unique musical abilities. During this time he was able to call on his music teacher at Bethany Christian High School in Goshen, Indiana whose influence was significant to his musical development. By the time Miller was a junior in high school, he directed the choirs as a result of his teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement.⁶¹

After high school, Miller attended Goshen College as a music major until he transferred to Eastern Mennonite College for two years. He ultimately returned to Goshen College to complete his undergraduate training. While at EMC, he sang in the choral ensembles, including the men's quartet that sang for the radio broadcast of "The Mennonite Hour." At Goshen College he took instrumental music classes and studied with Dr. Mary K. Oyer who became another influential instructor in his musical studies. After graduating from Goshen College, he

⁶⁰ Pellman, 224; and John H. Krall, "Committee on Administration Minutes," (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Committee on Administration, 10 February 1966). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*.

⁶¹ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999.

returned to his high school and directed the choirs during the music teacher's sabbatical. He then served for two years as principal and teacher at Sarasota Christian School in Sarasota, Florida before coming to EMHS in the fall of 1966.⁶²



Figure 7. Marvin L. Miller. From *Ember*, 1968

Upon his arrival at EMHS, one of his first responsibilities was to prepare Vesper Chorus for *David, the Shepherd Boy*, which had been chosen by the alumni association to be presented for the high school's first Homecoming. Fortunately, Miller was familiar with the cantata because he had sung the lead role of David when he attended EMC. Former chorus members in the school's history were also invited to sing *David, the Shepherd Boy* with Vesper Chorus. Previously, the *David, the Shepherd Boy* tradition had been threatened during Annetta W. Miller's tenure in 1965 when the copyright had expired and the music was out of print. However, EMC and EMHS sent out a plea to its alumni to return old copies of the music and they were able to gather enough books for the practice to continue. Park View Press in

⁶² Ibid.

Harrisonburg also printed more copies with special permission to ensure that the tradition would continue.⁶³

A Christmas program occurred just over a month later in which all the EMHS choruses participated, including Junior Chorus, Vesper Chorus, Touring Chorus, Ladies' Octet, Men's Octet, and a Combined Chorus which opened and closed the concert, concluding with "Hallelujah!" from Handel's *Messiah*. The concert program included a statement entitled "MUSIC AT EASTERN MENNONITE HIGH SCHOOL" that had been written by Miller to emphasize the importance of music at EMHS:

Music plays a very important role in the educational and spiritual development of students at E. M. H. S. We believe that music is a vehicle for expressing faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is an effective method of sharing the Gospel with others, as well as a means of uniting people in praise and worship.

At Eastern Mennonite High School, music is studied in the classroom in order to gain more proficiency in its use. This is done both privately, as in Private Voice, and in group situations, such as in General Music and Choral Training classes. Chorus, then, provides the opportunity to use the theory gained in these studies. It is there that students learn the art of expressing, in a unified manner, the message contained in a piece of music.⁶⁴

Aside from the Christmas program, Touring Chorus performed separately at a local church and gave a Christmas program at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville during the same month.⁶⁵

When school resumed in January, Miller turned his attention to planning for Touring Chorus and hosting the Mennonite High School Music Festival for the first time. Touring Chorus launched its spring itinerary at Senior-Parent Weekend in March, singing the *cantata My Redeemer Liveth*, a compilation of Easter songs from the works of Handel and Mozart. Senior-Parent Weekend was notable during Miller's tenure because a significant proportion of the students who attended EMHS at that time were from Mennonite areas of the country other than

⁶³ "Wertz, Rhodes Star in 'David'," in *Windsock* 11 November 1966, 1; and "History of 50 year Homecoming tradition explored," in *Windsock* 20 October 1972, 1.

⁶⁴ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Christmas Program in Song Concert Program*, 15 December 1966. Harrisonburg, Va.: *Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files*.

⁶⁵ "Variety Marks Chorus Year," in *Windsock* 16 December 1966, 1; and "Variety Characterizes Touring Chorus Year," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1967), 39.

Virginia. These students resided in a dorm on campus and were typically children of parents who had attended Eastern Mennonite College.⁶⁶

Singing in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware during Easter break, Touring Chorus and octet members experienced an acoustical benefit of touring:

One particular church was miles into the mountains, rustic, completely stone and vine covered, tumble down and used two pot bellied stoves for heat.

The Chorus nearly out-numbered the audience, but with the first chord of ‘O Come Ye Servants of the Lord’ they heard a tremendous difference.

Due to the high slanted ceiling and hard walls of the chapel, sound echoed throughout the building and reminded one of an ancient cathedral.⁶⁷

Similar to the theme format begun by Annetta Miller in 1964, Marvin Miller selected music categorized by “Songs of Praise,” “Songs of Easter,” and “Songs of Testimony” for the 1967 Touring Chorus program. This was a practice that he continued throughout his tenure at EMHS. Because touring programs were primarily sung in churches, the presentations themselves were organized according to the order of a worship service. This structural plan helped Miller in planning and choosing repertoire for Touring Chorus.⁶⁸

Two hundred and fifty students from seven choruses converged on Eastern Mennonite College auditorium in April to participate in the fifth annual Mennonite Music Festival. Mary K. Oyer, Miller’s former professor at Goshen College, directed the mass chorus in selections that would appear in the *Mennonite Hymnal, 1969*, of which she was the executive secretary. Miller himself led the chorus and an overflow audience of 1,000 in singing “Lift Your Glad Voices” from the aforementioned hymnal to conclude the 1967 Festival.⁶⁹

Miller’s second year at EMHS began similar to the previous year. Eighty-nine Vesper Chorus members combined with an estimated 200 alumni in singing *David, the Shepherd Boy* at Homecoming. A former student commented on the work by indicating that while it is not part of the standard choral repertoire, it is “part of the spirit expressed at EMHS.” Following *David, the*

⁶⁶ “Touring Chorus to Present ‘My Redeemer Liveth’,” in *Windsock* 4 March 1967, 1; and Jay Hartzler, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1981-1999, interview by author, 6 November, 1998.

⁶⁷ “Touring Chorus Discovers Deeper Purpose,” in *Windsock* 5 May 1967, 1-2.

⁶⁸ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The Touring Chorus Concert Program, 1966-67*. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files.

⁶⁹ “Seven Choruses Participate in Annual Music Festival,” in *Windsock* 5 May 1967, 1; Mary K. Oyer, conductor, *The Fifth Annual Mennonite High School Music Festival Concert Program*, 16 April 1977 and Mary K. Oyer, *21st Annual Mennonite High School Music Festival Concert Program*, 10 April 1983 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files).

Shepherd Boy, the annual Christmas program was presented by the same choruses as the preceding year except for a Ladies' Chorus and a Men's Chorus formed from Vesper Chorus in place of the octets. Miller's determination to challenge his students musically was evident in his selection of a Spanish carol, "Pastores a Belen": "This song is difficult, but I think we have gotten satisfaction out of difficult songs in the past, as we will this one."⁷⁰

Wearing new gold and white stoles on their choir robes, Touring Chorus extended its performance schedule for the second semester, taking a six day tour in conjunction with the Music Festival at Iowa Mennonite School and a weekend tour through Southern Virginia. The Ladies' Octet and Men's Octet also sang on the touring program. Songs that were to be included in the new *Mennonite Hymnal* were performed as well as Johann Pachelbel's "Motet for Double Chorus." For each tour, Miller included a double choir selection in which Touring Chorus divided into two choirs of twenty singers each, singing antiphonally. By doing this, he provided his singers the opportunity to develop independence in their vocal ability.⁷¹

Miller also required touring choirs to sing music from memory. As Touring Chorus prepared for its weekend tour of Virginia that year, Miller remarked: "We plan to add several numbers to our program and have all our songs [memorized]." Susan Hertzler, a Touring Chorus member in the early 1970s, recalled that "by having our music memorized, we were able to give Mr. Miller our full attention during performance. As a result, he could shape the musical phrase any way he liked. Because students learned to keep their eyes on the director, each performance was unique." For Hertzler, this ability proved valuable as she performed with several different choral ensembles at Eastern Mennonite College and the Metropolitan Chorus in Washington, DC.⁷²

To assure that each student had memorized their music, Miller assigned students to quartets and the members of the quartet would work together to learn the song to be memorized for a particular day. On that day, Miller called out the numbers of quartets who would sing in front of the choir from memory. Students needed to be prepared because they did not know ahead of time which quartet he would ask to sing. As a result of this process, individuals

⁷⁰ "Vesper Chorus to Sing David," in *Windsock* 13 October 1967, 1; and "Choruses to Present Diversified Program," in *Windsock* 15 December 1967, 1.

⁷¹ "Touring Chorus Travels to Iowa," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1968), 37; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The 1967-68 Touring Chorus Concert Program*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999.

developed a responsibility for learning the music and gained experience in working together as a small ensemble. Students encouraged and supported each quartet as they sang and by the time they sang the song as a choir, the notes were learned, allowing Miller to work on the expressive elements of the piece.⁷³

Choral music activities at the end of the 1968 spring semester included the selection of two Touring Chorus members by regional audition for All-Virginia Chorus. Mr. Miller accompanied these students to Charlottesville, Virginia, where they sang under guest conductor Weston H. Noble, longstanding professor of music and choral conductor at Luther College. In May of 1968, Miller organized a Commencement Concert that included Vesper Chorus, Touring Chorus, and Junior Chorus as well as the Chamber Singers, which was the name given to the octets when combined. As a result of its success, the Commencement Concert became a tradition that continued every year of Miller's tenure at EMHS.⁷⁴

As head of the music department, one of Miller's priorities was to develop a cumulative music curriculum for students in grades eight through twelve. He desired for students to possess a solid understanding of music so they would develop an appreciation for the "place of music in one's life experience." This philosophy enabled Miller to make significant contributions in developing the music department curriculum during his tenure.⁷⁵

Curriculum changes were evident at the start of the 1968-69 year. Touring Chorus began to receive academic credit, as Vesper Chorus had, and an advanced music class of music theory and history as well as an orchestra were offered for the first time. Miller recognized the fact that students enrolling at EMHS from grade schools had beginning instrumental experience and/or private lessons. Because of the school's strong *a cappella* tradition, Miller was concerned that these instrumentalists be given equal opportunity to develop their musical experiences. Although the orchestra had a meager beginning of fourteen instrumentalists, in March the orchestra rendered their first performance in conjunction with Chamber Singers, Vesper Chorus, Junior Chorus, and Touring Chorus. A harpsichord was also featured on the program that

⁷² "Chorus Tours Virginia," in *Windsock* 26 April 1968, 1; and Susan Hertzler, to author, 14 April 1999.

⁷³ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999.

⁷⁴ "Rhodes, Kraus Participate in State Chorus," in *Windsock* 26 April 1968, 1; "Whirlwind Weekend Slated for Seniors," in *Windsock* 24 May 1968, 1; and "Vesper Chorus, Chamber Singers Blend Musical Talents," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1968), 38.

⁷⁵ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 5 April 1999.

evening which had been financed and built by the 1967 Choral Training Class. Further acceptance of musical instruments that year was reflected in that *David, the Shepherd Boy* utilized complete piano accompaniment.⁷⁶

Other improvements in the music department occurred when Miller served as chair of the Physical Plant Committee for EMHS. Because of this appointment, he was able to encourage improving the music facilities which had existed prior to his arrival at EMHS. When the new high school building opened in January of 1964, there was no music room in the new building. Although a room was used to teach private voice lessons and small music classes that could accommodate twelve to fifteen students, the choirs and orchestra were required to rehearse on stage in the auditorium. As EMHS filed reports for its ten-year accreditation process in January 1969, Miller reported that “plans are being laid for remedying current lack of private instrumental instruction in the music department. Larger classrooms and more rehearsal space are needed, as well as a number of small practice rooms for voice and piano students.”⁷⁷

In response, the visiting committee representing the Virginia Committee of the Secondary Commission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools recommended the following changes in the music department:

- 1) That a large room be used as the music classroom
- 2) That attention be given in long-range plans to provide a large rehearsal room
- 3) That group instrumental instruction be added to the music program
- 4) That the school plan include additional space for music⁷⁸

⁷⁶ “Music,” in *Eastern Mennonite High School Annual Catalog and Handbook*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1968-69), 25; and “Music Groups Tune Up, Sing,” in *Windsock* 26 September 1968, 1; Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 5 April 1999; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School in Concert Performance Program*, 7 March 1969. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files; and “Miller Directs ‘David’; Vesper, Alumni Sing,” in *Windsock* 16 October 1968, 1.

⁷⁷ Jesse T. Byler, “Committee on Administration Minutes,” (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Committee on Administration, 22 October 1963). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*; Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999; “EMHS to Host Accreditation’s Sherlock Committee,” in *Windsock* 22 January 1969, 1; and “In-Depth Course Probe Reveals Pluses, Gaps/Music Dept. Holds Breath,” in *Windsock* 22 January 1969, 3.

⁷⁸ “Fund Drive gets underway/Goal is set at \$40,000,” in *Windsock* 16 December 1971, 1; and “New addition opens for use; Culmination of years of planning,” in *Windsock* 13 April 1973, 1.

Miller drew up plans for a fine arts addition to the existing school, including music and art classrooms, choral and instrumental rehearsal rooms, practice rooms, and offices for music and art instructors. EMHS students and alumni began a fund drive in December 1971 to raise half of the proposed \$80,000 necessary for construction to begin the following spring. Miller participated in the groundbreaking ceremony on May 12, 1972, and the fine arts addition officially opened for use on March 15, 1973.⁷⁹

Other signs of varying growth in the 1968-69 school year included the participation of Junior Chorus members at District V Junior High Regional Chorus and the gifts of a piano and metronome from the EMHS class of 1968, a stereo system from music department funds, and several new audio recordings to supplement the growing record library.⁸⁰

Miller organized the 1968-69 Touring Chorus program around the themes “Peace in Our World” and “Peace in the World to Come.” Similar to the previous year, the program contained promotional information about Eastern Mennonite High School. Audience members were also provided the option of requesting further information about the school by contacting Principal John H. Krall at the school’s mailing address. Touring Chorus’ participation in the seventh annual “Mennonite High School Fine Arts Festival” held in Kitchener, Ontario that year was unique in that it included an art and creative writing contest, as well as the concert.⁸¹

Other performances for Touring Chorus during second semester included singing at district music festival and Commencement Weekend. At that time, the rating that a choir received at district music festival would determine the number of students from each school who would participate in All-District Choir the following year. Eleven members of Touring Chorus were allocated to be sent to the District V Choir for 1970, a dramatic increase over the two students who had been allotted in both 1968 and 1969.⁸² These eleven students learned their music outside of regular school hours as Miller prepared them for the 1970 District Choir:

⁷⁹ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999; “Fine Arts addition planned/EMS enters phase II,” in *Windsock* 16 December 1971, 1; “EMHS fund drive is success/Ground breaking held Fri.,” in *Windsock* 19 May 1972, 1; and “New addition opens for use; Culmination of years of planning,” in *Windsock* 13 April 1973, 1.

⁸⁰ “Quartet Journeys to Meet,” and “Music Dept. Plans Growth,” in *Windsock* 19 March 1969, 1.

⁸¹ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The 1968-69 Touring Chorus of Eastern Mennonite High School Concert Program*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and Abner Martin, conductor, *The Seventh Annual Mennonite High School Fine Arts Festival*, *Rockway Mennonite School*, 13 April 1969. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files.

⁸² “Choruses Rate at Music Fete,” in *Windsock* 23 April 1969, 1; and *District V Chorus Concert Program*, 1968, 1969 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files).

If you happened to be within “watching distance” of the school at about 1:30 on Saturday afternoons, you may have witnessed eleven kids, each carrying [music] folders, trudging down the sidewalk to the school. These were the students chosen to go to Regional Chorus.

. . . Even Mr. Miller would agree that the sounds issuing from the music room after several weeks of rehearsals were heartening in comparison to our initial efforts.⁸³

Samuel O. Weaver became principal at EMHS beginning in the fall of 1969. During that same year, the high school curriculum committee granted Touring Chorus additional credit from a half-unit to a full-unit, while orchestra received a half-unit of credit for the first time in planning for the 1970-71 academic year. Touring Chorus continued to sing at the annual Christmas program, while the spring touring itinerary increased to fifteen different appearances to constituent churches throughout the South and to Pennsylvania for the Mennonite High School Music Festival. Following the tour, another Touring Chorus tradition began when Miller decided to record their program after returning from tour: “. . . four hours of concentrated effort in a Bridgewater, Virginia Brethren Church produced a near-perfect stereo album.”⁸⁴

Miller always waited until after the tour to record because he felt that the students would be able to concentrate best immediately after having sung the tour program every day or twice a day for a period of ten days to two weeks. The idea of recording the tour programs developed because the students themselves wanted to have a way of remembering their experience in Touring Chorus. Eventually Touring Chorus programs included an order blank to purchase the recordings for those who were interested.⁸⁵

⁸³ “Regionals sponsor joyful noise-making,” in *Windsock* 18 February 1970, 1.

⁸⁴ “Weaver to Fill Krall’s Chair,” in *Windsock* 14 May 1969, 1; Grace B. Lefever, secretary, “High School Curriculum Committee Minutes,” 12 December 1969 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School). *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*; and “South sees choir,” in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1970), 61.

⁸⁵ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999.



Figure 8. Marvin Miller and 1970 Touring Chorus members. From *Ember*, 1970.

In the fall of 1970, *David, the Shepherd Boy* was presented as a musical drama for the first time, complete with costuming and scenery. Miller initiated these innovations in an effort to add freshness to a tradition that was “quickly becoming stale.” The dramatic format breathed new life into *David, the Shepherd Boy* for a few years. However, re-vamping *David, the Shepherd Boy* into a musical forced Miller to exclude alumni from the mass chorus. Alumni were invited to sing along during the choruses once again in 1973 when a scaled-down version of *David, the Shepherd Boy* was presented.⁸⁶

Ultimately, the fifty-year tradition of *David, the Shepherd Boy* was discontinued after a brief revival by alumni in 1977 because Miller believed the musical value had diminished and he found himself without the time needed to focus on some of the more important musical

⁸⁶ “‘David’ Changes Face,” in *Windsock* 14 October 1970, 1; and “Community invited to join ‘David’ rendition,” in *Windsock* 19 October 1973, 1.

experiences that he felt students needed to have: “There was so much other music out there that the kids needed to work with and learn.”⁸⁷

The 1970-71 Touring Chorus planned five programs during the Christmas season in which they featured Benjamin Britten’s *Ceremony of Carols* and Kirke Mechem’s *The Seven Joys of Christmas*. The chorus toured ten days over Easter as they sang under Alice Parker once again at the Mennonite Music Festival at Christopher Dock High School in Pennsylvania. The touring itinerary increased to a total of eighteen scheduled performances during second semester and the group performed a program divided into traditional songs of praise, contemporary selections, and spirituals. A highlight of tour that year was singing at the Catholic National Shrine in Washington, D. C.⁸⁸

Other spring activities for Touring Chorus included receiving a “one” rating at the District V High School Chorus Festival and the selection of three members for Virginia All-State Chorus. Aside from giving the choir the experience of being judged, the contest rating at district festival continued to determine the number of representatives that each participating school would be permitted to send to Regional Chorus the following year.⁸⁹

As Touring Chorus, Vesper Chorus, and Junior Chorus prepared for the 1971 Christmas concert, the following student article in *Windsock* provided insight into Marvin Miller’s rehearsal demeanor:

Even though practice on Christmas music began right after the October Homecoming, time is passing much too quickly. Parts have to take shape, songs must be memorized, and notes have to be learned correctly. This takes plenty of work from students, but the one who really has it rough is Mr. Miller, the director.

There are plenty of problems that keep things from going too smoothly. But you wouldn’t know this just by watching Mr. Miller. He seems so calm and collected that everyone feels a little more confident. Even when a song is completely unraveling everyone’s knowledge of music, Mr. Miller somehow brings the group through with a

⁸⁷ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999.

⁸⁸ “Chorus trills Christmas cheer,” in *Windsock* 16 December 1970, 1; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *1970 Christmas Concert Program*, 17 December 1970, Harrisonburg, Va., Eastern Mennonite College Auditorium. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files; “Chorus tours over Easter,” in *Windsock* 24 March 1971, 1; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus Concert Program, 1971* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and “Activities highlight tour,” in *Windsock* 12 May 1971, 1.

⁸⁹ “Chorus receives ‘1’ rating,” in *Windsock* 14 April 1971, 1; and “We sojourn,” in *Ember*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1971), 56.

decent sound. Afterward he gives words of encouragement so that the song goes better the next time through.⁹⁰

Miller's positive approach in rehearsal was also observed by Miriam King-Dagen, a Touring Chorus member during Miller's first year at EMHS. She described him as a director with "an abundance of patience and optimism, a great sense of humor, and one who placed more emphasis on affirmation than criticism. When he did offer suggestions for improvement, he did so in a positive manner."⁹¹

Miller believed in a well-planned rehearsal and typically began rehearsing with a brief warm-up period which consisted of stretching and breathing exercises to develop posture and breath support; singing ascending and descending scales on differing vowel sounds while emphasizing a relaxed, open tone; and then ending with a chordal harmonic exercise to develop ear training and intonation. Following the warm-up, Miller spent time developing music reading skills using solfege syllables, and then the rehearsing of songs in a variety of styles, historical musical periods, and languages.⁹²

Touring Chorus increased their performance schedule for the fourth consecutive year by making twenty appearances in addition to their regular performances between March 18 and May 21, 1972. The concert program also included a statement that year that emphasized the integral role of music at EMHS by indicating that over fifty-percent of the students were actively engaged in musical activities. Some of these activities included superior ratings for both Touring Chorus and Junior Chorus at district music festival. Also, eleven students participated in Senior High Regional Chorus and three were chosen for All-Virginia Chorus.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Christmas concert by choirs and orchestra," in *Windsock* 16 December 1971, 1.

⁹¹ Miriam King-Dagen, Touring Chorus member in the 1960s, to author, 11 April 1999.

⁹² Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview by author, 22 March 1999; Miriam King-Dagen, Touring Chorus member in the 1960s, to author, 11 April 1999; Sherrill King Hostetter, Touring Chorus member, 1969-1970, telephone interview, 9 April 1999; Mike Shenk, Touring Chorus member, 1970-1971, telephone interview, 11 April 1999; and Susan Hertzler, Touring Chorus member, 1971-1972, to author, 14 April 1999.

⁹³ "Senior-Parent Weekend is coming; tentative event plans are given," in *Windsock* 10 March 1972, 1; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus, Spring 1972 Concert Program* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); "Eleven singers picked for regional chorus," in *Windsock* 15 February 1972, 1; and "Four students receive state honor for voice," in *Windsock* 10 March 1972; and *All-Virginia Chorus Concert Program*, 1972 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and "Chorus meets judges approval; sends three to All-Virginia," in *Windsock* 19 May 1972, 1; and "EMHS hosts contest; Jr. Chorus fares well," in *Windsock* 19 May 1972, 1.

The addition of Senior Chorus replaced Vesper Chorus in the fall of 1972. A non-auditioned ensemble, this course was offered only during first semester to any junior or senior and became a prerequisite for Touring Chorus which was only offered the second semester. That year Senior Chorus was composed of ninety-three members, which involved one-half of the student body. Touring Chorus auditions were held at the beginning of second semester. Miller's audition process consisted of determining each student's vocal range and quality in the extremes of that range, listening to a prepared song by the student, and evaluating student ability to sightread musical excerpts.⁹⁴

Due to limited time, members of the newly-formed Touring Chorus gave many of their evening hours to prepare and memorize twenty pieces for their first spring program at Senior-Parent Weekend in March. In addition, fourteen students from the chorus participated in Regional Chorus and three advanced to All-Virginia Chorus. Touring Chorus completed its first year as a semester course by singing repertoire from the spring tour at the Commencement Weekend choral program and at Baccalaureate. A representative Commencement Choral Program for that year included selections by Pachelbel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, contemporary sacred music, and spirituals.⁹⁵

The success of the music program under Miller's direction continued to be identified in various ways during the 1973-74 school year. As a result of the increased popularity of Senior Chorus, membership grew to 109 participants in fall semester. This number of students combined with the 76 members of Junior Chorus constituted 73% of students enrolled at EMHS. Another significant statistic that year included a 100% successful audition rate for 24 EMHS students at the Virginia District V Regional Chorus auditions hosted by EMHS. This dramatic increase from the 14 students selected the previous year was perhaps due in part to the new auditioning system that year. Unlike the previous selection process based upon a school's rating

⁹⁴ "New courses to be added to curriculum," in *Windsock* 21 April 1972, 1; "Music," in *Annual Catalog and Handbook*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1972-1973), 30; "Newly-chosen chorus to travel west in annual spring tour," in *Windsock* 17 January 1973, 2; "Sr. Chorus Involves One Half of EMHS," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1973), 88; Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, interview by author, 22 March 1999; and "Try-outs cause anxiety," in *Windsock* 17 January 1973, 2.

⁹⁵ "Special weekend arrives; alumni-parents featured," in *Windsock* 9 March 1973, 2; "Fourteen advance to regional chorus," in *Windsock* 19 February 1973, 1; "Three advance to All-State," in *Windsock* 9 March 1973, 1; and "The end is near!," in *Windsock* 31 May 1973; and Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Choral Program*, 2 June 1973, E.M.C. Auditorium. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files.

at district music festival, each school could send a maximum of 24 students to audition. Two students also advanced to All-Virginia Chorus. Furthermore, the success of the EMHS choral program was recognized by Miller's choral colleagues when they elected him to serve as the Virginia Choral Directors Association District V Chairman from 1974 to 1976.⁹⁶

The 1974 Touring Chorus sponsored a benefit concert in March to offset the cost of the trip for individual members. Although some money was annually budgeted by EMHS for tours, students were required to pay remaining expenses to finance their participation both on tour and for the Mennonite High School Music Festival each year. A unique aspect for raising these funds continues in that students participating in the Music Festival pay the same fee, regardless of what Mennonite school they attend or where that school is located in North America. For example, students from Puerto Rico pay the same fee as students from Canada. Even students from the host school pay one-half of the fee determined by the travel costs of each participating school.⁹⁷

Singing over twenty-five performances that spring, Touring Chorus traveled throughout Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida in addition to hosting the Mennonite High School Music Festival, which was attended by 300 students. Miller believed the annual festivals to be educationally valuable because they provided students the opportunity to listen to other school choruses and sing under a guest conductor. They also provided the opportunity to sing repertoire composed for a large choir.⁹⁸

The 1974 tour program included nearly thirty selections organized by themes of "Praise," "Christ's Death and Resurrection," "Potpourri," and "Spirituals," including works by Tallis, Gibbons, Mozart, and Brahms. The spring touring itinerary continued to expand in 1975 when Touring Chorus made over thirty appearances between March 16 and June 8: a significant

⁹⁶ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Christmas Concert Program*, program notes, 12 December 1973. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files; "24 honored in regional trials," in *Windsock* 4 February 1974, 1; and Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *26th Annual High School Music Festival*, program notes, 10 April 1988, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Sarasota, Florida. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files.

⁹⁷ "Touring Chorus sponsors concert," in *Windsock* 22 March 1974, 1; Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview, 22 March 1999; and Jay Hartzler, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1981-1999, interview by author, 6 November 1998.

⁹⁸ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The 1974 Touring Chorus of Eastern Mennonite High School Concert Program*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and Doyle C. Preheim, conductor, *The Twelfth Annual Mennonite High School Music Festival Concert Program*, 21 April 1974, Eastern Mennonite College Auditorium. (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and "300 take part in festival," in *Windsock* 24 May 1974, 1.

increase from the eight performances presented by Miller's first Touring Chorus in 1967. When Miller went on sabbatical at the conclusion of the 1975 school year, he returned to Sarasota Christian School part-time and taught middle school choir and Bible classes. The rest of the time he worked with Mennonite churches in the area directing men's, women's and mixed choirs as the host conductor for the Mennonite Community Choral Festival.⁹⁹

Louis A. Lehman became the EMHS music director during Miller's sabbatical year. Lehman had toured abroad with the Sarasota Mennonite Men's Chorus prior to his appointment at EMHS. He conducted a unique Psalmatic Choral Festival at Homecoming that fall that consisted of Psalms set to music by composers from the sixteenth century to the present. Junior Chorus and Senior Chorus sang the majority of the program, and EMHS staff members joined Senior Chorus at the finale to form a mass mixed chorus. The 1975 Touring Chorus also participated that weekend in singing at the alumni worship service.¹⁰⁰

Spring semester activities for seventeen juniors and seniors included singing in the Bicentennial Regional Chorus, while the 1976 Touring Chorus sang a program of thirty-three songs in twenty-four appearances, including the Mennonite High School Music Festival in Lemington, Ontario. Lehman also maintained the thematic programming format, organizing repertoire by "Praise and Thanks," "Cry of the Pilgrim," "Jesus Said," "Sacrifice of Love," and "Until He Comes."¹⁰¹

Upon Miller's return in 1976, he followed Lehman's initiative and conducted the Junior Chorus and Senior Chorus in a Fall Sacred Choral Concert. As a result, the Fall Concert became a tradition during Miller's tenure at EMHS. An Eighth Grade Guitar Class and an Introductory Guitar Class for tenth through twelfth grades had also been added to the music curriculum by that fall. At the beginning of the second semester, approximately ninety students auditioned for

⁹⁹ Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *The 1974 Touring Chorus of Eastern Mennonite High School Concert Program*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus Concert Program*, Spring 1975, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview, 22 March 1999.

¹⁰⁰ "EMHS Hosts 10th Annual Homecoming," in *Windsock* 9 October 1975, 1; Louis A. Lehman, conductor, *Psalmatic Choral Festival Concert Program*, Harrisonburg, Va.: EMC Chapel-Auditorium, 25 October 1975 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); and "New Teachers Join Faculty," in *Windsock* 9 October 1975, 3.

¹⁰¹ "Regional Chorus Memories . . .," in *Windsock* 29 February 1976, 3; "Chorus Tours," in *Windsock* 6 April 1976, 1; Louis A. Lehman, conductor, *The 1976 Touring Chorus of Eastern Mennonite High School Concert Program*, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files).

forty-three available positions in Touring Chorus, from which nineteen Chamber Singers were selected who also sang on touring programs.¹⁰²

Touring Chorus resumed an appearance schedule of thirty performances in 1977, including singing in what one member recalled as “the awesome majesty of the Washington [National] Cathedral.” Sixteen EMHS students participated in District V Regional Chorus and two were selected to sing under Paul Salamonivich at All-Virginia Chorus. Marcia Augsburger described the encounter of singing under a guest conductor of Salamonivich’s caliber as the most significant musical privilege she had experienced to that point in her life: “He has mastered the art of communication vital as a conductor. He directs with every part of himself and breathes music. He pulled sounds out of us we didn’t know we could make.” Evan Lehman, the other All-Virginia Chorus participant from EMHS, continued his all-state experience that summer as a member of the Virginia Chorale. Under the direction of Robert N. Stamback, the chorale was a forty-voice chorus comprised of members of the 1977 All-Virginia Chorus who toured Europe for three weeks during the summer.¹⁰³

The Fall Concert tradition was interrupted briefly in 1977 when *David, the Shepherd Boy* was revived for one year by alumni. The music department could continue to boast that year as 248 students at EMHS, or nearly 85% of the student body, participated in the music program at a record number. Junior Chorus and Senior Chorus had 116 and 132 members, respectively. During the second semester, Chamber Singers was granted academic credit, and twenty-two students participated in Regional Chorus with one advancing to All-Virginia Chorus. For the first time, the 1978 tour program began to list Touring Chorus as Touring Choir, a practice which continues today. The choir was selected to sing at Disney World in Florida and was also the featured guest choir of the Sarasota Mennonite Sacred Choral Festival in April.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Sacred Choral Concert Program*, Harrisonburg, Va.: EMC Auditorium, 22 October 1976. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files; “Music,” in *Curriculum Planning Guide for Students and Parents, 1976-1977* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School). Eastern Mennonite High School Administrative Office Files; “Touring and Chamber Choruses Selected,” in *Windsock* 18 February 1977, 1; and Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Spring 1977 Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files).

¹⁰³ “Touring Chorus Memories,” in *Windsock* 17 May 1977, 1; “Regional Chorus Means . . .,” in *Windsock* 25 March 1977, 3; “State Chorus Brings Fulfillment,” in *Windsock* 14 April 1977, 1; and “Student to Tour Europe This Summer,” in *Windsock* 17 May 1977, 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Alumni Revive ‘David,’” in *Windsock* 14 November 1977, 1; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Eastern Mennonite High School Christmas Choral Concert*, 15 December 1977, Harrisonburg, Va.: EMC Auditorium (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School Music Office Files); “Music,” in *Eastern Mennonite High School Curriculum Planning Guide for Students and Parents*, 12 (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High

The 1978-79 school year began with a special gift for the music department. In December, 1977, Mr. Richard Martin, pastor of Pinto Mennonite Church and part owner of Shenandoah Equipment, sought Principal Weaver to donate money to any special project EMHS was presently developing. Weaver informed Martin of the school's need for a grand piano, and Martin and his wife agreed to finance the entire project. As a result, on August 30, 1978, a dedication recital was given by 1978 Touring Choir member Zonya Horst and Mrs. Carolyn Sachs on the Baldwin grand piano in the choral rehearsal room.¹⁰⁵

The music department received another significant instrumental gift the following year. Miller had become increasingly interested in handbells after hearing handbell choirs in the area, and he began to consider how the school could acquire a set. He knew the cost was formidable, so he approached an individual within the community who was also interested in bells of various kinds. The eventual net result of that conversation was the donation of a three-octave set of handbells to the school. Chamber Singers had the unique experience of learning how to play handbells that year during rehearsal and performance. Ultimately, Miller hoped to offer a course for those interested in learning the skill of handbell ringing.¹⁰⁶

The 1979-80 academic year also witnessed further refinements to the music curriculum. Advanced Music was granted three hours of college credit to students who completed the course with at least a "B" average and who requested transfer credit after they began attending EMC. The addition of Sightreading as a new class brought the course offerings to a total of thirteen in the music department.¹⁰⁷

Miller's work at the high school as head of the music department and director of Touring Choir ended after the 1980-81 school year. Miller accepted the position of Minister of Music, Youth, and Christian Education at Bahai Vista Mennonite Church of Sarasota, Florida, where his responsibilities would include working with adults and youth in music and Christian education.

School, 1977-1978). Eastern Mennonite High School Administrative Office Files. "20 Make Regionals," in *Windsock* 16 December 1977, 1; "Students Return With Excitement," in *Windsock* 13 March 1978, 1, 3; "Destination: Florida," in *Windsock* 13 February 1978, 1; Marvin L. Miller, conductor, *Fourth Annual Sarasota Mennonite Sacred Choral Festival*, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Sarasota, Fl., 15 April 1978; and "Tour Brings Joy," in *Windsock* 17 May 1978, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Zonya Horst, "Music Dream," in *Windsock* 25 September 1978, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview, 22 March 1999; "Donation Offered for Handbells," in *Windsock* 28 February 1980, 1; and "Chamber Singers Enjoy Variety," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1980), 45.

¹⁰⁷ "Music," in *Curriculum Planning Guide for Students and Parents* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1979-80), 14-15. *Eastern Mennonite High School Administrative Office Files*.

The 1981 Commencement Concert ended Miller's fifteen years of service to Eastern Mennonite High School.¹⁰⁸

During his fifteen years, Miller conducted Touring Choir in over 300 concerts and built an outstanding program rich in tradition. Perhaps Miller's most notable contributions were his development of the music curriculum and his involvement in planning the fine arts addition to the school.



Figure 9. Marvin Miller receiving a gift from Touring Choir at the 1981 Commencement Concert. From *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*, 1999.

To express their appreciation, the Eastern Mennonite High School Alumni Association honored Miller by planning a reunion for all former Touring Choir members at the 1981 Fall Homecoming. Approximately 180 voices from Miller's 1966-81 touring choirs combined to form a mass choir and sang at the Sunday morning worship service during Homecoming weekend. In what Miller called one of his most thrilling moments, he conducted the mass choir in singing three perennial Touring Choir favorites: "If Ye Love Me," by Thomas Tallis,

¹⁰⁸ Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-1981, telephone interview, 22 March and 5 April 1999; "Faculty Faces Change," in *Windsock* April 1981, 1; and "... And Good Luck In the Future," in *Ember* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite High School, 1981), 7.

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” arranged by Miller, and the spiritual “Ain’t Got Time to Die.”¹⁰⁹



Figure 10. 1981 Homecoming Touring Choir Reunion Mass Choir. From *Eastern Mennonite University Menno Simmons Historical Library and Archives*, 1999.

Ruel Burkholder, a 1972-73 Touring Choir alumnus and a participant in the Touring Choir Reunion, spoke of Miller’s influence on his musical development, much like Miller himself had been influenced by his high school choral director:

Mr. Miller’s support proved vital in my getting involved in music and desiring to develop my abilities. Mr. Miller gave me opportunities to sing solos and a chance to direct the Touring Choir. He also gave me verbal support. This was very important to my development in music.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ellen P. Hartman, Eastern Mennonite High School Alumni Association President, to former Touring Choir members, 18 August 1981, Alumni Office Files, Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Virginia; Marvin L. Miller, Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir director, 1966-81, to former Touring Choir members, 23 July 1981, Alumni Office Files, Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Virginia; and “T. C. Reunion Featured,” in *Windsock* October 1981, 1, 3.

¹¹⁰ “T. C. Reunion Featured,” in *Windsock* October 1981, 3.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to document and present the development, establishment, and growth of the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir from its inception through June of 1981. Accomplishing this task involved identifying (1) the events leading to the development of Touring Choir; (2) the philosophy and purpose of Touring Choir; (3) the directors of Touring Choir and their musical and professional backgrounds; (4) the contributions of each of the directors; and (5) the origin and development of the Senior Parent Weekend Concert, Tour Concerts, Mennonite High School Music Festival, and Commencement Concert traditions.

The value of the study is to provide music department supervisors and choral directors an example for developing and promoting their own choral programs. This study also endeavors to add to the body of knowledge available to music education researchers, practitioners, and curriculum developers by providing them with additional information on which to base their personal philosophies and form knowledgeable opinions about the role and arrangement of such organizations.

Summary

Chapter 1. Introduction: Purposes and Procedures. This chapter presents the purpose, need, delimitations, procedures, and organization of the study, as well as a definition of terms.

Chapter 2. Historical Background: The Development of Touring Choir from 1917-1966. This chapter presents an historical overview of developments that led to the formation of Touring Choir from 1917 to 1966, highlighting the contributions of Chester K. Lehman, J. Mark Stauffer, Earl M. Maust, Audrey B. Shank, Anneta Wenger Miller, and Reuben Yoder.

Before Eastern Mennonite School officially opened its doors in 1917, the founders of the school had clearly defined goals and objectives, including the intention that training in vocal music would be an integral part in the education of its students. Noah D. Showalter was the vocal music instructor until 1918, followed by Henry B. Keener, who directed a mixed chorus in the school's first public presentation of *David, the Shepherd Boy* in 1921.

Faculty turnover was high during the early years of the school, but beginning in 1921, Chester K. Lehman provided stability to the fledgling music department. As director of the Mixed Chorus, he maintained the tradition of singing *David, the Shepherd Boy* and began the tradition of singing *The Holy City*, both of which he would continue for the next nineteen years. His leadership initiated the first chorus tour in the school's history in 1937, and enrollment in Mixed Chorus increased to nearly 100 members in the late 1930s.

In 1940, J. Mark Stauffer became head of the music department. During his second year as department head, he temporarily eliminated the Ladies' Chorus and Men's Chorus while forming a mixed Junior Chorus of primarily high school students. This ensemble eventually became responsible for continuing the tradition of singing *David, the Shepherd Boy*. Stauffer also directed the collegiate Mixed Chorus in a performance of *The Holy City* for nearly thirty years. Touring became established as an annual tradition at the college under his direction beginning in 1947, and he was responsible for the expansion of the music course offerings at both the high school and college.

Due to the growing music program, it became necessary for Eastern Mennonite School to hire Earl M. Maust in 1948 to assist Stauffer. Maust's addition to the faculty enabled the music department to offer Men's Chorus and Ladies' Chorus once again. As a result, Stauffer directed Mixed Chorus and Ladies' Chorus, while Maust assumed responsibility for Junior Chorus and Men's Chorus. In 1949, touring opportunities increased when Maust led members of the Men's Chorus on their first tour.

As student enrollment increased during the 1950s and early 1960s, high school and college departments became further delineated. In 1955, Audrey B. Shank began teaching music at the high school. Transition was evident during the seven years she served on the high school faculty: a newly formed "High School Chorus" began in 1955 only to be replaced by Vesper Chorus in 1959, a "High School Boys Chorus" in 1956 and "Boys' Octet" in 1957 were founded and directed by Jay Landis, while Shank began directing the "High School Ladies' Chorus" and "Girls' Octet" in 1956 and 1958, respectively. The octets that were formed marked the first time in the school's history that exclusively high school choral ensembles went on tour. They served to promote the school and offerings were collected during tours to offset expenses. Choirs under Shank's direction began participating in public school music events in 1961, and in 1962 she was responsible for directing Vesper Chorus in the first annual Mennonite High School Music

Festival held at Belleville, Pennsylvania. Shank began a touring concert tradition that would be developed extensively in future years when Vesper Chorus sang at a host church the Sunday morning immediately following the Mennonite High School Music Festival. Under Shank's direction, Vesper Chorus also continued the annual *David, the Shepherd Boy* tradition. At the conclusion of the 1962 academic year, she joined the college faculty for two years before resigning to become a missionary to Jamaica.

In 1962, Annetta Wenger Miller became head of the high school music department. By 1965 she assumed responsibility for directing all the choral ensembles in addition to teaching class and private voice, choral training, music appreciation, and general music. Several inaugural events occurred during her service on the faculty as a result of the new high school building which opened in 1964: the first Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Chorus was organized in 1963 and participated in the second annual Mennonite High School Music Festival held in 1964, the Senior Parent Weekend Concert tradition began, Touring Chorus sang at the first separate high school Baccalaureate Service, and Vesper Chorus continued its annual presentation of *David, the Shepherd Boy* at the first high school Commencement. Vesper Chorus had increased to 100 members before she and her husband resigned from the high school to begin missionary service with the East African Christian Council.

Reuben Yoder became head of the music department for one year following Miller's resignation in 1965. He sustained the choirs and traditions which had been previously established, with the exception that Vesper Chorus sang Schubert's *Mass in F* instead of *David, the Shepherd Boy* that year. One significant change in tradition that occurred that year included the use of instrumental accompaniment during Touring Chorus performances and for Commencement.

Chapter 3. Touring Choir from 1966 to 1981: The Contributions of Marvin Miller. This chapter documents the contributions of Director Marvin Miller. Included in this chapter is a description of Miller's extensive development of the music curriculum as well as a description of his involvement in designing and planning the Fine Arts addition to the high school.

A former student at Eastern Mennonite College and a graduate of Goshen College, Marvin Miller came to Eastern Mennonite High School after teaching at Bethany Christian High School in Indiana and at Sarasota Christian School in Florida. Soon after he arrived at EMHS, he began preparing Vesper Chorus to sing *David, the Shepherd Boy* at the school's first

Homecoming. In the ensuing years, he would vary the production by adding costuming, scenery, and drama before discontinuing the work on a yearly basis in 1973 due to time constraints and its comparative musical value.

During Miller's second year, he organized a Commencement Concert which became a tradition that continued throughout his tenure. At that concert, the newly formed Chamber Singers ensemble sang for the first time in a public performance. Other opportunities for music study and performance occurred in 1968 when an advanced music class and an orchestra were offered for the first time.

In 1969, Miller served as chair of the Physical Plant Committee for the high school. He reported the need for larger music classrooms and additional rehearsal space. The Virginia Committee of the Secondary Commission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools agreed, and Miller began drawing up plans for a fine arts addition to the existing facility, including music and art classrooms, choral and instrumental rehearsal rooms, practice rooms, and offices for music and art instructors. EMHS students and alumni began raising funds in 1971, and the fine arts wing opened for use in 1973.

1970 witnessed a significant increase in the number of Touring Chorus members who were selected for Virginia District V Chorus. Eastern Mennonite High School would continue to be well represented in public school music activities at All-District Chorus, All-Virginia Chorus, and District Music Festival during Miller's years at the school.

Under Miller's direction, the music department continued to expand in varying ways during the early 1970s. Following the 1971 tour, Touring Chorus began recording its tour program on an annual basis. In 1972, Senior Chorus replaced Vesper Chorus as a first semester class while Touring Chorus became a second semester course in 1973. Recognition of the EMHS music program continued to occur in 1974 when Miller was elected chair of the Virginia District V Choral Directors Association.

Touring Chorus appearances consistently increased on a regular basis from eight in 1967 to over thirty in 1975. Following the end of the 1974-75 school year, Louis Lehman became music director while Miller was on sabbatical. Aside from the regular duties previously established by Miller, Lehman organized a Psalmatic Choral Festival during Homecoming Weekend in place of the discontinued *David, the Shepherd Boy*. When Miller returned from sabbatical in 1975, he began a Fall Concert tradition at Homecoming which he maintained – with

the exception of a brief revival of *David, the Shepherd Boy* by alumni in 1977 - until his resignation.

Upon Miller's return, Touring Choir would continue to average nearly thirty appearances each year from Senior Parent Weekend in March until the Commencement Concert, including participation in the Mennonite High School Music Festival. The 1978 Touring Choir was invited to sing a thirty-minute program at Disney World after submitting an audition tape recording as part of the application process.

Miller's remaining years at EMHS saw further changes in the music department at his initiative. The introduction of two guitar classes, sight-reading, the granting of college credit for Advanced Music, and the donations of a grand piano and a set of handbells by community individuals continued to attest to the visible success of the music program.

Miller resigned from Eastern Mennonite High School in 1981, after serving as head of the music department and director of Touring Choir for fifteen years. During his years he expanded the music program significantly through supplementary course offerings and the addition of the fine arts wing to the school while establishing the Touring Choir recording and Commencement Concert traditions.

Implications

The contributions of both Annetta Wenger Miller and Marvin L. Miller resulted in increased student participation and consistently expressive Touring Choir performances at Eastern Mennonite High School during the 1960s and early 1980s. Their influence as music educators in the growth of the music program and in maintaining superior performance ensembles imply the significance of modeling for music education practitioners. Both directors challenged their students to sing music of enduring value in a variety of styles by master composers and to aspire to achieve quality performances. In particular, Marvin Miller emphasized diligence in rehearsal and placed responsibility on Touring Choir members for learning their music. Students responded to his expectations because of his enthusiasm for expressive musical experiences and his positive affirmation of students as individuals.

In addition, the results of the music program under Marvin Miller's direction may have been due in part to his overall philosophy of music curriculum design that each student would understand the place of music in his or her life experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Related literature indicates that there is limited documentation of the histories of choirs and choral programs at the college and university level throughout the United States. However, even fewer studies exist which document the histories of high school choirs and choral programs. Studies of a similar nature would permit the possibility for historical analysis and comparison. Documents recording the history of high school choral ensembles are necessary, because an understanding of the development of these organizations may aid choir directors and music department supervisors in developing their own programs.

APPENDIX:
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VITA

A native of Christiansburg, Virginia, Dwight Cornell Basham is the son of Eva Howell Basham and the late Amherst Sheridan Basham, Jr. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Virginia Tech in 1990 with a B. A. in Music. As an undergraduate, he was a Virginia collegiate division winner of the National Association of Teachers of Singing Competition and a recipient of the Liberace Foundation Fine Arts Scholarship Award. Upon graduation from Virginia Tech, he served as the choral director at Carroll County High School and Carroll County Intermediate School in Hillsville, Virginia from 1990-95, and at North Surry High School in Mount Airy, North Carolina from 1995-97. His choirs consistently received superior ratings at state and national choral festivals, while a significant number of his students were selected for the Virginia Choral Directors Association Junior and Senior High School All-District Choirs, Virginia All-State Choir, the North Carolina Junior and Senior High School All-State Choirs, and the Virginia Music Educators Association Honors Choir and North Carolina Junior and Senior High School Honors Choirs. During this period he was twice recognized as a Virginia Governor's School Outstanding Educator and was invited to be a guest conductor for various choral festivals in Virginia.

Dwight held a graduate assistantship in the music department at Virginia Tech while pursuing a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from 1997-99. He assisted with the Meistersingers and served as a graduate teaching assistant of Class Piano. In addition, he directed the Women's Glee Club at Roanoke College from 1997-98 and served as the choral clinician for the 1998 Virginia Tech Music Camp.

He is married to the former Pepper Dawn Williams from Carroll County, Virginia, and they are the proud parents of their first child, Benjamin, who was born in February, 1998.