

THE CHOIR SCHOOL has been touring since Centennial year, in 1967, when a three-choir group of boys and men visited Quebec City, Ste Anne de la Pocatiere and Trois Rivieres in Quebec; Ottawa and the Martyrs' Shrine near Midland, Ontario. Although financing for this (and indeed, for later tours as well) was a bit shaky, it was a great success, as the later tours were also. The concept of tours by the Choir School led Monsignor Peter Somerville to say that they served to bind the group together by giving the boys an ambition to achieve excellence in their music in settings other than St. Michael's Cathedral. This was especially true of the older boys, who tended to stand somewhat in the shadow of their younger (and sometimes more appealing, colleagues). Now the Tenor and Bass Choir could stand front and centre to perform by themselves.

Monsignor Somerville also felt that the tours, whether within or outside Canada, helped to put the School "on the map" in a way that had not been possible before, even though it was recognized for the excellence of its liturgical work in the Cathedral. He even went so far as to say, on one occasion, that the School would not have "made it", had it not been for the tours.

Whenever possible, arrangements were made for the boys to stay with local families, and this experience not only broadened their horizons, especially in foreign countries, but allowed them to become ambassadors for Canada, a task which they took in their stride.

The first overseas tour was to Rome, London and Cork, Ireland, in 1971. This venture was code-named "Operation Bottletop" (because of the visit to Cork, where the Choir sang in an International Choral Festival, coming first in one category and second in another). It was ironic that while the Coca-Cola Company in Canada decided it could not support the tour financially, its Italian counterpart in Rome,

hearing the boys sing, offered the group 14 million lire (about \$1,000 Canadian at the time), to do a singing commercial. This was not possible, as engagements in London and Ireland awaited.

On this tour, the Choir sang in St. Peter's during a general audience with Pope Paul VI (including Monsignor Ronan's *Tu es Petrus*), as well as giving a formal concert at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music.

As Bursar of the Choir School, Joseph (later Father) Murphy was the chief organizer, a role taken over later by Brian Rae.

The tours within Canada have, over the years, been to all provinces in the country. The Yukon and Northwest Territories only are still to be visited. Monsignor Somerville long dreamed of being able to take the boys into every corner of Canada.

In 1972 the Choir went to Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, and 1973 saw the boys in St. John's, Corner Brook, Sydney, Antigonish and Charlottetown.

While most tours last about two weeks, and are usually held just after the Easter celebrations at St. Michael's Cathedral, the Choir sometimes goes on short trips early in December, to sing Christmas music in cities and towns within about 100 miles of Toronto.

In 1974 it was back to the West, taking in Calgary, Vernon, Victoria and Nanaimo in British Columbia, as well as a short stay in Edmonton on the return journey.

1975 saw the Choir in eastern Canada again, visiting Halifax, Truro, North Sydney, Corner Brook, Grand Falls and St. John's. By 1976 the School felt that it was ready for another overseas tour, and arrangements were made to take a group of boys and men to Switzerland and West Germany. A concert was given in the Notre Dame Basilica in Geneva, and later the Choir moved to Montreux, where they were con-

The Tours

testants in the annual International Choral Festival. Then it was off to Emmenbrucke and Lahr, to give a series of concerts for the Canadian Forces personnel. A visit to Cologne and a concert at the Cathedral in Aachen, West Germany followed, and the tour ended at the Benedictine Abbey in Einsiedeln, in northern Switzerland.

In 1977 the Choir was off to Drumheller, Medicine Hat, Vancouver, Victoria, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Prince George and Fort McMurray. The same year a short tour was made to Ottawa, where, among other places, the Choir sang in the Rotunda of the House of Commons. They also visited Alexandria and Montebello, Quebec.

An important visit to the Province of Quebec was on the roster for 1978, which saw the Choir visiting Montreal, Magog, Quebec City, Ste

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During the 1971 tour to Europe, the Choir School sang a concert at The Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. The conductor, Father Armstrong, studied at the Institute.



every corner of Canada. East to West, North to South. Since 1970 we have sung in 74 centres in the country, and 43 of these on more than one occasion.

The Choir School has also been known over the years through many radio and television appearances and through the production of high-quality recordings of the choral repertoire. It is no accident that these musical offerings have been an important source of revenue for the School. Truly a matter "Singing for our supper".

All of the work planned for the future will need a place to happen. Our home of 37 years at 66 Bond Street, built through the hard work of Monsignor Ronan and the generosity of the people of Toronto, is beginning to show its age. Through the kind assistance of the Archdiocese of Toronto and the Metropolitan Separate School Board, we have been able to refurbish little by little in recent years, but the time is not too far distant when major work and reconstruction will have to be undertaken.

Finally, I must return to the beginning. The Cathedral Schola Cantorum was born from a sincere and fervent desire to serve God through the liturgical life of St. Michael's Cathedral. No matter what we dream, no matter what we attain, we must always remain faithful to that first call of service.

It is not just a voice and training that make a choirboy. It is also the child-like acceptance of a vocation first recognized and accepted on his behalf by his parents and teachers. As he grows, it is his decision, willingly taken, to make those earlier choices his own. It is his willingness to follow that call for 40 or more Sundays, and for many other special occasions each year, in good weather and in bad, through Christmas and March breaks, and even sometimes during the Summer vacation. It is his wonderful ability to keep "an experience of music for the praise of God" at the centre of his young life and to share this experience for others. This is the taproot that extends into the past, that gives nourishment to the present, and the wings to fly us into the future. It is the choirboy's psalm refrain in action:

"Here I am Lord. I come to do your will".

— Harry Hyde Hodson

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Anne de la Pocatiere, Rimouski and the Gaspé. On the way home the boys also sang in Cambellton and Saint John, New Brunswick.

A choir of boys and men visited Washington, D.C. in 1978 to sing, at the request of a major benefactor of the School, at the International Slovak Congress. Several music selections had to be learned in the Slovak language. A sacred concert was also presented at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in the U.S. capital.

Another European tour came in 1979, this time to Brussels, where the Choir sang at the celebrations of the Brussels Millenium. They also appeared in concert in Wales, in Chester, Liverpool, Darrow and Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Birmingham and London, England. In between they squeezed in a short visit to Kilmarnoch, Scotland.

In 1980 the first tour involving a contingent of boys to a city in the United States was made, as part of a western Canada swing. The boys sang in Windsor, Ontario, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Saskatoon, Humboldt, Meunster and Regina in Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, and on the way home Thunder Bay, Ontario.

1981 saw the Choir appear in Pembroke, Ontario, Winooski, Vermont, Worcester, Massachusetts, Brooklyn and Newburgh, New York, before returning to visit Kingston, Ontario.

Another Maritimes tour came in 1982, with visits to Fredericton, Halifax, Truro, An-

tigonish, Sydney, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Gander, Grand Falls, St. John's, and, for the first time, Labrador.

More United States cities were visited in 1983. After a concert in Elliott Lake, Ontario, the Choir moved on to sing at Midland and Bay City in Michigan; Chicago and Peoria in Illinois; Madison, Manitowok and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In 1984 the Choir went west again, this time visiting Vancouver, Kelowna, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Port Hardy and Courtenay, British Columbia.

April 1985 saw the Choir head east again for concerts in Montreal, Cambellton, Bathurst, Chatham and Moncton, New Brunswick, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, back to St. George, N.B., and for three concerts in Quebec City.

Last year, 1986, the Choir completed its first all-U.S. tour, singing in Cincinnati, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Orlando, Florida; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Richmond, Virginia; and Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

This year's tour, which began on April 24, got off to a terrific start with the boys singing O Canada in English and French, as well as The Star Spangled Banner, prior to the Expo's baseball game at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal. They then sang at Dorval, Que. and travelled to Worcester, Massachusetts, Newburgh, New York, Morristown, Linden and Orange, New Jersey, and had the honour of singing at St. Patrick's Cathedral and the United Nations in New York.



A tour Choir at the Martyr's Shrine near Midland, Ontario. This photograph was taken in 1967.