

THE COLUMBUS BOYCHOIR

The Columbus Boychoir of Princeton, N.J., originated as a community enterprise in Columbus, Ohio, led by Herbert Huffman, then minister of music at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church. Assisted by the Kiwanis Club and the Broad Street Church, he founded the Columbus Boychoir School in 1940 with an enrolment of 30 boys from the city. Almost at once the choir attracted attention far beyond the city limits and after local and then national radio performances, the boys captured the hearts and critical praise of New Yorkers as their metropolitan debut in Town Hall in 1943.

Annual sell-out tours, which carried the choir to packed houses throughout the United States and Canada, endeared the boys to millions. Concerts were given in Carnegie Hall, the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and virtually every principal auditorium in the country. The boys have sung with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia orchestra, the NBC Symphony under Toscanini, and the Bach Aria Group. They made a film for RKO called "America's Singing Boys" which told the story of the Boychoir and its school in 8,000 theatres at home and abroad. The State Department included the Boychoir School in one of its films for distribution around the world.

In 1950 the school moved to Princeton, N.J., to occupy the former Lambert estate known as "Albemarle". Here, in a lovely spacious residential environment, the school offers an opportunity for combined musical and academic training of high standard to qualified boys regardless of religious or social background.

Even while on concert tour, the 26 selected singers from the student body of 70, accompanied by teachers, have a nearly normal school routine. Their specially outfitted bus, the "Schoolhouse on Wheels", besides a five-octave piano and a kitchenette, contains desks at the seats and a public-address system so that regular school classes can be conducted while under way.

In the spring of 1956 Herbert Huffman decided to turn his attention to other pursuits and his mantle fell on the shoulders of his accompanist and associate director Donald T. Bryant. In 1957 the Boychoir was chosen by the State Department and the American National Theatre and Academy to be the first group to represent the United States under President Eisenhower's International Programme for Cultural Presentations. Travelling by plane, the choir toured 17 South and Central American countries, singing to over 40,000 people not counting radio and television audiences. In the winter of 1958-59 a group of 30 Boychoir singers performed in the Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall for an engagement that ran for seven weeks.

Everywhere they go these "cherubs without wings"—as a Boston critic called them—present their audiences with an exquisitely musical programme and "some of the prettiest singing within memory".

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OVERTURE CONCERT ASSOCIATIONS



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