

**Choral Society  
Concert Slated**

A Bicentennial Celebration Concert, one of a series, will be presented by members of College of The Albemarle's choral organizations Tuesday at 8 P.M. in Christ Episcopal Church. Selections will be of considerable historical significance and influence in the development of our nation's music.

Though limited to Christmas music performed in America just prior to, during and shortly after the revolution, the program will include several "firsts" in American music composition and performance.

Many hours of research and travel were involved in selections for the concert through the cooperation of music division chiefs of the N.Y. Public Library, Library of Congress, Dr. Frank Campbell, Dr. William Lichtenwanger, COA librarian Don Lee and Dan Webb, local manager of J. C. Penny Company, whose foundation donated several music scores.

The opening number is the first American version of a small parish church anthem from England as sung in New England churches during the great religious awakening period (1734-91). Adopted also by the newer Methodist and Baptist churches whose missionaries carried it to the Southland, this evangelical kind of music became a basic ingredient in the rise of the livelier kind of Negro spiritual.

A fugal tune setting from "The New England Psalm Singer" by William Billings (1746-1800) which follows represents beginning attempts at independent voice choral writing in this country. Billings also wrote a number of patriotic songs supporting the cause of the American Revolution.

An air for soprano, flute and organ from an Advent Cantata by J. S. Bach, copied by Rev. Immanuel Mitschmann for the Bethlehem, Pa., Moravian Church Choir in 1768, is the first example of cantata music sung in America. This will be followed by selections from the Christmas portion of Handel's "Messiah". The Messiah is the first oratorio music heard in America and was performed during December, 1770 in concerts presented at N. Y. City's Old Trinity Church and by the Bethlehem Collegium Musicum (Musical Society).

Christmas anthems by composers identified with the Moravian Church settlement of Salem, N. C., which will conclude the program, represent the first concerted music (for voices and orchestral instruments) composed and performed in America.

The first one by Johannes Herbst (1735-1812) was written for soloist, chorus and string orchestra. Like many of the early American Moravian composers, Herbst was a minister and became bishop of the Southern Province Churches shortly before his death in Salem.

The closing anthem by the best-schooled of the 18th Century American composers, J. F. Peter (1746-1813), was composed for solo, chorus and an orchestra of classic symphony proportions, the first vocal music with full orchestra accompaniment written in America. While at Salem (1779-89), Peter also produced the first chamber music composed by an American, six quintets for string instruments.

Solo passages for the concert, directed by Dr. Clifford Blair, will be performed by Gwen Bell, Pattie Chappell, Norma Dirom, Mevin Jones, Harold Knight, Pamela Matthews, Mary Millard, Betty Miller, Julia Pritchard, Gene Sawyer and William Thorn with Kathryn Painter, flutist and The Rev. Donald Downing at the organ.

The people of the Albemarle will have the opportunity to make these American music concerts a part of their own Bicentennial Celebration.



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