



B. R.

(Bev)

Henson

Material prepared by Brad Bouley

Biographical Sketch of Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson 1929 – 1998

In Kerens, Texas, June 9, 1929, just four months before the stock market crash which ushered in the Great Depression, Ruth (Noble) Henson and John Henry Henson gave their two children, John Noble and Shirley Ann, a gift of twin brothers. Only one of the twins survived. Who can imagine what the choral music climate of the State of Texas would have been had there been two, the likes of Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson!

He was born into a family of musicians. His great aunt, Willie Hines, taught piano lessons and coached singers. His aunt Golder Noble and his mother Ruth Noble, were graduates of the Chicago Conservatory of Music. Golder studied violin and piano and Ruth studied trumpet. After completing their musical education in Chicago, Golder and Ruth returned home to teach in the family school of music, which was in their home, in Kerens. As an infant and young child, Bev sat in the lap of his aunt Willie as she taught her music students. One might predict that in those very early, formative years, the young Beverly Ray learned a lot of music by osmosis.

It is difficult to say when Bev first began playing the piano. Given the circumstances of his youth, he probably “played the piano” (at some level) all of his life. Circumstances allowed the family music school to expand and take on a dancing teacher who added ballet and tap dancing to the curriculum. Since Bev weighed only three pounds at birth, when he was old enough to move about on his feet, the doctor suggested that the youngster would benefit from dance lessons to improve his strength and agility. In 1942 aunt Willie retired from her position as organist/choir director at the First United Methodist Church and was replaced by 13 year old Bev. Few 13 year old youngsters (even precocious youngsters) have the opportunity to play for formal church services and to train the singers.

In the early ‘40s’ the majority of men from 18 to 30, volunteered, or were drafted into military service. When the band director of Kerens High School was called to serve, the band directing chore was assumed by Bev’s older brother, John Noble Henson. When Bev entered the band, there was a decision to be made. What instrument should he play? Since the band needed a tuba, and since Bev was strong

enough to carry the giant instrument, he became a tuba player. Legend has it that he was a “tuba virtuoso”.

Following high school, he registered at Navarro Junior College. Since all college students have the burden of tuition, books and supplies, food, transportation and incidental expenses, Bev opened his own dance school, and maintained it for two years. Television had recently reached Dallas and fledgling TV stations were looking for talent. Bev was happy to help fill air time with his dancing.

From Navarro Junior College he went to Southwestern University in Georgetown where he majored in piano, organ and music education. It is always fortunate for a student to find gainful employ which will hone the skills of his chosen profession. Bev became the organist for the First United Methodist Church in Austin. Along the way he had become quite expert at playing jazz piano which put him in demand for a band that played for dances on the weekend. Add these extracurricular activities to regular college studies and keyboard practice and interesting situations can occur.

On a regular basis, the dance band would play for Saturday night dances in Georgetown and about the surrounding countryside. Sometimes the band would be employed far from Georgetown and play into the early morning hours. It was not unusual for Bev to arrive at his organ console at the church, just in time to begin the prelude. He really did intend to practice the ambitious prelude, offertory and postlude he had posted in the order of worship earlier in the week. However, as activities unfolded, he really didn't have time to get to the church and practice. REAL talent, coupled with a creative boldness, can get one by on the spur of the moment. One Sunday morning, his musician fiancée Evelyn Deschner, froze in her pew when she heard, coming from the organ, the offertory, (listed in the order of worship as from J.S. Bach) an embellished, improvised version of “Pennies from Heaven” which the band played for the dance the night before. On another occasion, for a postlude, the exiting parishioners were treated to strains of a well disguised “Anchors Aweigh”!

While attending Southwestern University his intelligence, talent and charm earned him many positions of leadership. While there he was president of the student body, president of his fraternity, president of his music fraternity, selected by his teachers to represent Southwestern University in Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities, selected to be a member of Blue Key Honor Society and received the Pearl Neas Award for Excellence. During his senior year, he was employed by Georgetown High School to direct their choral classes. This

extraordinarily well prepared young musician was ready to burst forth and take on the world of school music.

In the summer of 1952, following his marriage to his college sweetheart, violinist and singer, Evelyn Deschner, he was hired by the school board in McAllen, Texas, in the lower Rio Grande Valley, to take over their “choral program” which consisted of eight students. Six months later he carried a choir of fifty one singers (24 boys and 27 girls) to the UIL contest. Of the eight original students, all eight became choral directors.

He was also hired as choir director for the First United Methodist Church in McAllen. In a very short time reports of the excellent choral work coming from McAllen spread throughout the Valley. Not only was the town suddenly aware they had a special choir director, but the members of the First United Methodist Church began to hear their choir sing outstanding liturgical music from the great masters. If two jobs were not enough, he invited excellent adult singers from all over the Valley to form the Valley Civic Chorus. Their several concerts a year included works like Handel’s Messiah, Brahms’ German Requiem, Ernst Bloch’s Sacred Service etc. In 1957 the Valley Civic Chorus performed Howard Hanson’s Drumtaps with the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra on a Community Concert Series in Weslaco. This was the genesis of the San Antonio Symphony’s Valley Festival which lasted for years and gave the high school choirs of the Valley opportunity to sing major choral works with the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra.

After five successful years at McAllen, (and the production of two daughters, Evelyn Ann and Nora) he joined the music faculty at Trinity University in San Antonio. Following a pattern, begun when he was 13 years old, he also secured a position as choir director at a Methodist Church in the Alamo Heights section of San Antonio. The choral program at Trinity flourished. Victor Alessandro, conductor of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra and Opera Festival, who had heard his choir work in Weslaco when the Valley Civic Chorus sang the Howard Hanson Drumtaps with his orchestra, hired him to become chorus master for the Opera Festival. For a 28 year old boy recently from Kerens, via Georgetown and McAllen, this foray into the world of professional music was heady stuff and required a “quick study”. There was no room for incompetence when dealing with International singing stars like George London, Richard Tucker, Beverly Sills and scores of equally impressive vocal artists. Adding opera to his repertoire was exciting, but having Maestro Alessandro, a conductor from the “old school” as a mentor, was not always comfortable. At one rehearsal, following an abusive tirade which included cursing the orchestra, the Maestro slammed the baton on the stand,

bolted from the podium and yelled, “Mr. Henson, take over”! Bev had a strong feeling that Alessandro designed this situation to test the metal of his young protégée.

Since Bev was, at heart, a “choral man”, as he rehearsed the opera chorus, he heard them performing the great choral literature like Brahms German Requiem, Verdi’s Four Sacred Pieces, his grand Manzoni Requiem, the great Bach Passions, et. al. From this dream was born the Meistersinger Chorale. A “boy” still in his 20s had to walk a fine diplomatic line to convince a dyed in the wool opera festival conductor to allow his opera chorus this radical expansion. It worked, for to this day, The Meistersinger Chorale serves as the choral instrument for the San Antonio Symphony.

When Bev’s academic mentor, Frank Hughes, head of the Music Department at Trinity University, accepted a position as Dean of Fine Arts at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, he convinced Bev to move with him. By the time they arrived in Fort Worth, he had successfully built an outstanding high school choral program at McAllen, developed a fine choral instrument at Trinity University and had a hands-on experience with the real professional music world.

With firm backing from the Dean of Fine Arts, Bev was more than prepared to build an outstanding choral program at TCU. Building on the reputation he had established at McAllen and San Antonio, he had little difficulty in building an outstanding choral program at TCU. The music they made, as they toured about Texas and throughout the United States, inspired eager young choral directors to come to TCU.

Bev became the choir director at the University Christian Church and uplifted the congregation with great liturgical literature. Continuing his “two jobs is not enough” philosophy, he auditioned adult singers and founded Schola Cantorum of Fort Worth. With this choral instrument at hand, he no longer just prepared the chorus for the maestro, but became the maestro himself and hired the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra to make music with “Schola”.

He founded the Institute for Advanced Choral Studies and imported outstanding pedagogues like Julius Herford to come work with the young aspiring conductors as they prepared works like Bach’s Passion according to St. John. Both the TCU choir and Schola Cantorum learned a vast amount of literature and performed to critical acclaim.

An opportunity arose for Bev to go to Norman Oklahoma and establish a doctoral level curriculum for choral directors at Oklahoma University. Upon the announcement of his arrival, there was no lack of applicants for the choral program. True to form, he also began an adult choir for the area; the Oklahoma Chorale. To know about his accomplishments in Norman, read the above. It happened yet a fourth time.

Circumstances arose which led him to a decision to return to Texas and take the position of Director of Choral Activities at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville. The success he had accomplished at all his other appointments were repeated in Huntsville. He spent a time as choir director at the First United Methodist Church in Huntsville. He formed the Bev Henson Chorale which performed in Houston. He continued to imbue young men and women with a passion for choral music which inspired them to spread the good news to the whole world.

Not all of this inspiration came from the classroom or in rehearsals. Bev and Evelyn, the perfect hosts, built a large house in the woods on a lake just west of Huntsville. Bev drew the plans which were a reflection his personality. The centerpiece was a very large living room with a vaulted (really vaulted) ceiling. The room was furnished with a grand piano, dining table and comfortable living room furniture without being crowded. On one side of the room was glass revealing the woods and the lake. Opposite the glass windows was the kitchen, which not only overlooked the living room, but had an opening into the big room so that as Bev prepared his famous gourmet meals, he would not miss any activity or conversation. Students were always welcome. Many declared that they learned as much music and philosophy at the house as they did in the classroom.

His Alma Mater, Southwestern University, honored him as Outstanding Alumnus and bestowed upon him an Honorary Doctorate degree. On their campus he established a summer choral conductors institute where he continued to teach, even after his formal retirement from SHSU.

Perhaps the most outstanding tribute to his life and work was evident at his funeral. The sanctuary of the First United Methodist Church in Huntsville was filled with his family, his faithful companion Evelyn, his two daughters Evelyn Ann Bouley, her husband Brad and Nora Henson (his student of which he was most proud), his beloved grandchildren Nicki and Noel Bouley, and a host of friends and students. Proper eulogies were given. His son-in-law Brad Bouley conducted a hundred+ of

Bev's former students in "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place O Lord" from Brahms German Requiem which they sang with proper fervor, accuracy and style. The entire congregation was moved. But beyond the biblical text which Brahms so marvelously set to music, came the hymn singing. As fervently and artfully as "How Lovely" was performed, by his instructions of "piano", "forte", "crescendo" and "decrescendo" etc., Brahms held the singers hostage to his will. That's as it should be. On the other hand, as the organ introduced "All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and let us sing Alleluia!", the entire congregation, most of whom, in one way or the other had been influenced by Bev Henson's music making, were given license to pour forth heartfelt praise to God in tribute to a friend and teacher who, during his life had contributed so much to music making.

Through the progression of verses each singer fed on the energy of his neighbor until all were singing with full heart and full throat with an excellence born of years of vocal study and musical understanding. The combined endeavor was not inhibited by instruction from the composer or conductor. The product was far greater than the sum of the parts. That moment expressed the result of a life spent in pursuit of musical excellence. Following the hymn singing, the Pastor's first words were, "This sanctuary has never heard such singing". Indeed, it may never again hear such singing. Bev Henson did not invent choral music, nor was he the only extraordinary talent to devote his life to the propagation and perpetuation of singing, but to those whom he taught, he was an inspirational ambassador of the art and the world is better off because of his life and work.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered
by Alan Hightower, Director of Choral Studies
Sam Houston State University

What a great privilege it is to share with you my personal recollections of the profound influence Bev Henson was upon my life as a musician. As a member of the Livingston High School Choir, I first knew Dr. Henson by his amazing reputation and through several clinics he lead at our school. Those early exposures to Dr. Henson made my choice for undergraduate school quite easy. In fact, I only applied to one university...the school where Bev Henson was the choir director.

I attended Sam Houston on a scholarship that designated me as his choral accompanist. You can imagine the sense of awe and fear that an 18 year old might have, sitting at the piano to accompany the legendary Bev Henson. Those four

years were for me an amazing time of growth. I have never worked with a choral musician that was more instinctively musical than Bev Henson. His natural gifts were quite remarkable. Five days a week, for nine semesters I watched and listened as he took an enthusiastic group of young singers and molded them into an amazingly expressive ensemble.

I occasionally felt that Dr. Henson was especially hard on me. It is only with 15 years of retrospect that I can truly appreciate what I believe he must have seen in me at that tender age. I have vivid memories of him scooting me off the piano bench to demonstrate what he wanted from me or from the choir. His innate sense of line, understanding of structure, sensitivity to musical groupings, and commitment to the score became my role model for professionalism. His passion to make complex concepts understandable to everyone serves as a model for my own teaching. He was above all a master teacher.

Many knew Bev Henson as the choir man with great baton technique. Truly he was a man with outstanding conducting skills. I shall forever be grateful for the conducting skills that he imparted to me, skills upon which I continue build. I often share with my own students at Sam Houston the fact that during my freshman year I took more notes in choir than in any other class. (I have the grades to prove it!) To complete this letter of gratitude, I'd like to include a few of the quotes that I recorded during those years as his student. I'm sure they'll ring familiar and true to many of you.

I am enormously grateful that he chose to invest in me and that he demanded the very best from me. His legacy lives on through countless former students who continue to strive for choral excellence.

Quotations from Bev Henson

- No two notes are alike.
- Dynamic change occurs with the pulse, not the pitch change.
- The most beautiful distance between two points is a curved line.
- Always approach a rehearsal as building on the previous one.
- All art has contrast and balance.
- No two sections are alike, just like no two notes are alike.
- No singer in an ensemble can hide. Each singer must participate in the decrescendo, or he sticks out because he didn't change.
- Technique must come before talent.

- An ensemble should have an ensemble memory of dynamic levels, and must stay within the composer's dynamics.
- After an inner grouping relaxes, the next phrase must move in tempo.
- Sing sounds of words, not words.
- Unlike notes make music happen.
- Vibrato must confirm, not confuse the pitch.
- A conductor must get every individual to the same place in the ensemble before he can move the entire ensemble to the next level of artistry.
- I want to hear your intelligence, not just your voice.
- Change colors as often as the composer gives you an opportunity to change.
- A ritard is one of the most expressive devices at your disposal, therefore do not start it too soon.
- Control your own voice. Never let tone or sonority drag the tempo.
- Every piece has a heartbeat, just as every person has his own heartbeat.
- Use your technique to serve the score.
- The bigger the ensemble, the less emotion needed...more attention to accuracy.
- If a composer can write a crescendo, he knows enough not to write one.
- It is better to be vulgar than non-existent.
- Sing Brahms off the principle, not the interest.
- No note is isolated, but has relationships.
- Absence of thought is absence of color in the voice.
- Soft does not mean puny.
- You must sing a text as if it were set exactly the way you would have set the text yourself.
- Pitch is mental.
- Sonority must fit tempo and rhythm.
- Impressionistic is not imprecise.
- Save the word for the grandest of musical instructions...put it in the hands.
- You must forget what you know about Brahms and Mozart in order to perform Palestrina.
- Frame the marking, the note before and the note after it have to be different.
- Obligate your brain to the rehearsal.
- When a note is foreign to the tonality, one leans into the dissonance.
- Blend is a matter of quality and vowel.
- Music undulates, not marches its way across the page.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Nora Henson

When I think about my father I remember a story teller, dog lover, gourmet cook, avid fisherman, and a man who loved to spoil his daughters rotten. My sister and I loved for him to sing and play his jazz rendition of "The Three Bears" for us. He also loved to entertain large groups of people in our home, so I probably learned as much about choral music from that environment as I did in my college coursework.

Our home was usually filled with choral directors and college students, and there were too many lively conversations to count. Now that I look back on my childhood I realize it was quite an unconventional home in which to grow up. How lucky I was to have such colorful parents!

I was also fortunate to study with my father at the University of Oklahoma and Sam Houston State University. I was so proud of him as a teacher. He felt very strongly about the depth of literature future choral directors needed to learn, so we sang incredible amounts of music of all genres. We loved to sing in choir under his direction - the music we made in those college choirs created unbelievably artistic experiences for us. He knew how to make the complex simple and the simple profound.

I remember him saying, "You've just got to know how it goes." He said it in a very simplistic way to prove his point. From his work with Julius Hereford he had gained a total conviction to integrity of style, and that was what mattered above all else. After I graduated and began teaching he was very supportive of my work. Even when I struggled as a beginning teacher I would hear how he had been bragging about my choirs. During our many long distance phone conversations, when I would doubt my abilities as a choral director, he was always encouraging and assured me that things would get better. He was able to come and work with many of my groups through the years, completely entertaining and charming my students. He coached me through my orchestral conducting experiences and helped my choirs through convention performances.

It was so amazing to be able to call him and ask him musical questions about literature, style, or instrumentation and he was able to answer off the top of his head (usually while watching a Western on television.) Who needs Groves or Google when you can just call your father? In his later years he became forgetful of little things, but still had razor-sharp answers for musical questions.

I miss those conversations and singing under his direction. I miss his jokes and the stories which got more elaborate through the years. But I am fortunate to have many reminders of him in my life - my mother's love of people and dogs, my sister's clever wit, and my brother-in-law's masterful conducting all help to keep his memory fresh in my mind. People come up to me and reminisce about my father all the time. He would have liked that a lot, to know that his light is still shining.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered
by Terry Eder
In honor of my teacher and friend.

I will never forget the first time that I heard the TCU A Cappella Choir sing. It was astoundingly beautiful and artistic. I knew at that moment that I had to find a way to study with the director of that choir, Mr. B. R. Henson. Going to TCU was the best decision that I ever made and it began what was to become a lifelong friendship for me with one of the great choral musicians of our time. The years at TCU were full of wonderful music making with the TCU A Cappella Choir and the Fort Worth Schola Cantorum. We all learned to love Brahms and no one could show us better how to do it than Bev, who had a special affinity for the style and character of the music of Brahms. I cannot begin to recount all the great choral music that was heard in those days at Ed Landreth Auditorium—Brahms Requiem, Bach B Minor Mass, Brahms Liebeslieder Walzer, Mozart C Minor Mass, Haydn Lord Nelson Mass, Stravinsky Symphony of Psalms—just to mention a few. I will never forget the performances of the St. John Passion with Ira Schantz singing the Evangelist and Charles Nelson the part of Jesus.

I followed Bev to the University of Oklahoma and continued to study with him as I worked to develop my skills and talents as a choral conductor. At OU Bev trained some of the top choral students in the country in my opinion. Many went on to become fine choral conductors and teachers and the great tradition of choral music that Bev began there has continued with them. Because of Bev we were all fortunate to have the opportunity to come in contact with other great teachers like Julius Herford and Robert Shaw.

Bev loved to have people around all of the time and we all were so lucky that he and Evelyn were so willing to share their lives with us. I probably spent as much time in the coffee shop with Bev as I did in the classroom and the teaching and

learning that took place was unbelievable. I knew in my heart that I was getting the opportunity to be around a great teacher and choral conductor. I literally lived to be around Bev to learn everything I could from him. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to go with him on some of his choral clinics—in Oklahoma, West Texas, the Valley, and all over, just so I could observe how he rehearsed and conducted choirs of all types and kinds. He could absolutely mesmerize kids as he molded them into a beautiful choir.

Sometimes others probably thought that those who spent so much time with Bev were really part of some kind of a cult or something, but it was not a cult—we just knew that Bev was a great teacher and musician, a down-to-earth person who was willing to give us whatever he had to give. We had so much desire to learn what he knew, always with the hope and dream that somehow we would be able to do what he could do with a choir. Bev always treated us as his equals even though we weren't. He was always extremely proud of the successes of his students and he left a real legacy to the choral art through those students who continue to touch other lives through choral music.

I was always amazed at Bev's phenomenal artistry as a teacher. Even in his last years when his health began to fail, when he would stand before a choir or a group of choral directors and start teaching, he would absolutely come alive. Teaching was his "shot-in-the-arm" and for those moments it was as if time had stood still. In the spring of 1973 a group of students and friends honored Bev with a commissioned work composed by Daniel Pinkham. The occasion was conceived to honor a great teacher during his lifetime rather than waiting until he had passed on.

The front page of the score of the work, "To Troubled Friends," bears a dedication that was read and presented to Dr. Henson at the premiere performance of the work in 1973. It continues today to eloquently capture the essence and greatness of Bev Henson, a beloved teacher and friend:

- To a teacher who has taught us by example to make the complex appear deceptively simple;
- To a musician whose commitment to humanitarian ideals has wrought a civilizing force in all of us;
- To a friend who has given us encouragement and faith when we did not deserve it;
- To a man whose art has touched our lives and through us so many other lives.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Charles Nelson

The TMEA Region meeting convened in Weslaco September 1952. Having just moved to Harlingen, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, an area I knew very little about, I was anxious to meet my colleagues from other schools. Little did I expect to meet anyone whose friendship would last a lifetime.

Among those who introduced themselves that afternoon was a young, newly married couple, Evelyn and Bev Henson, who had just been hired as music teachers in McAllen. If I recall correctly, Bev was twenty three years old, tall, thin with plenty of red hair. I don't remember just how it all came about, but it wasn't long until the Nelsons and the Hensons were spending many Sunday evenings together in Harlingen or McAllen.

Soon "The Valley" began to hear that great music was coming from the McAllen High School Choir, the First United Methodist Church Choir and the Valley Civic Chorus. It was obvious that Bev Henson was putting his stamp on the McAllen community.

Before long I was driving round trip (60 miles) from Harlingen to McAllen each Monday night to sing with the "Valley Civic Chorus". It may have been a busman's holiday but I found it refreshing, after a long day of working with high school students, to join a choir of mature, competent singers. Bev was able to assemble and retain most of the best singers in the Valley.

When we were together we always dreamed and planned to make our music better and more beautiful. We visited each other's classes and rehearsed each other's choirs. We even planned a TV program where he would play and I would sing hymns on Sunday morning. We were sure we could do a better show than George Beverly Shay. Of course, it never came about, but it was still a good idea. If either of us had any business sense, we could have pulled it off and at doubled the money we made teaching. One of our early schemes paved the way for the San Antonio Symphony to establish the "Valley Festival" which lasted for years and gave Valley high school choirs multiple opportunity to sing with a professional orchestra.

After a five year tenure in McAllen, Bev accepted a position as Choral Director at Trinity University in San Antonio. Because of our association with Victor

Alessandro (SASO conductor) performing Howard Hanson's "Drumtaps" in 1957, he hired Bev as the chorus master for his Opera festival. When Mrs. Alessandro suggested that Victor didn't know enough about this young man, still in his twenties, to assign him such responsibility, he said, "Anyone who can successfully assemble and conduct his peers (the Valley Civic Chorus) is good enough to do this job". He was right. It was not long until the "opera chorus" became the "Meistersinger Chorale" and expanded beyond the Opera Festival, to include performances of most of the major choral works in the repertoire. Forty five years later, the Meistersinger Chorale is still in active. Victor Alessandro became his mentor and offered him opportunity for significant growth.

After several years at Trinity University, Bev was offered the choral position at TCU in Ft. Worth. To no one's surprise, the success he demonstrated in McAllen and San Antonio was repeated in Ft. Worth. By this time news of his prowess as a choral director had spread throughout the area and serious students of choral music wanted to come to TCU and study conducting and sing with Bev Henson. In Ft. Worth he founded another mature choral group, "Schola Cantorum" which still exists as "The Schola Cantorum of Texas".

At the University of Oklahoma in Norman OK and at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville he continued to do outstanding work. Four of the five community choral organizations he established are still active, bringing their respective communities outstanding performances of great choral literature. It speaks well for his ability to infuse a community with such high choral standards that the tenure of those organizations span generations.

Bev had an unusual ability to attract and retain those choral students who were serious about bringing choral music alive. His passion for making music was infectious and inspired us all to greater heights. He nurtured his students and never ceased to bring them inspiration to help them become better musicians and better conductors.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Roger Bryant

Bev Henson was a true "Artist-Teacher". I regard him as one of the three most significant positive influences on my musical life.

Sometimes Mr. Henson (as he shall always be known to me) made you feel rather

"small" -- imposing, at times intimidating figure that he was, he could do that. BUT... sooner or later you would realize that he knew how much "BIGGER" you could be -- musically and artistically -- if only you were willing to combine discipline and hard work with whatever degree of talent you "brought to the table". I shall be forever thankful for the opportunities for learning and musical collaboration with our mentor, Mr. Bev Henson, during years spent at Texas Christian University (1967-71) and beyond, always remembering him with deep appreciation.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Tammy Charles Patterson

Bev Henson changed my life. I was a soprano who could not count and he taught me how. He entered my life at Sam Houston State University my junior year, and taught me that "vibrato should confirm the pitch, not confuse it", and so much more. He provoked thinking that I never knew existed and I remember thinking how lucky I was to be in the right place at the right time. I was in awe of him as he worked Schubert's Mass in G, on a visit to our choral rehearsal. Later, I learned how students traveled from all across the country to study with this master, and yet, he chose to be a part of the faculty at Sam Houston State University. What a life-altering experience his decision was for me. I knew that I had to stay and continue my study of conducting with him in graduate school.

He insisted that we look at music with integrity and with the composer's intent in mind, both through score study and performance practices. He said that the performer was there to serve the music, not the other way around, and making music was not about me, but was about the music. Now, that was a new concept for a budding "prima donna"!

Dr. Henson saved me from my ignorance and taught me to hear and analyze music in a completely different way. His passion and drive has influenced me throughout my career and his voice is always near as I prepare a score or solo performance.

Some of my fondest memories are of his home in Huntsville at stick-making parties, where we ate his delicious food, (I learned to make great cobbler), and sat around the living room talking of music. Of course, Dr. Henson was doing the talking and we were doing the listening. He never tired of our questions and we never tired of his stories. We were happy to be in his court.

I remember the first Brahms piece I taught, "Der Abend," and debating over the decisions I was making, wondering if they would meet with his approval. I felt secure because I had sung and studied so much Brahms with him. Being careful not to "over-Romanticize" it to death, my choir sang with great depth and understanding of the composer's intent, just as my mentor had taught me. I know that my success as a choral director is due to Dr. Henson's profound influence on my life and I will always be grateful.

Dr. Henson made me what I am today, and I hope that he would approve of the musical decisions that I have made with hundreds of students. He provided a knowledge base that has allowed me to teach with confidence and always "flock with the eagles." He always said to avoid the buzzards, and I have.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Dee Ann Gorham

Most memorable and meaningful phrases from Bev's mouth to my tympanic membrane:

Reference: Baroque melismatic phrasing-"These three go here"
Beauty of Sound - :Sing Sounds, Not Words
Music & Life - "What must be precedes the How to"

Bev Henson was particularly remarkable at both of the preceding. It was always a joy to sing in TCU A Cappella choir, something to which I looked forward with great anticipation every occasion. Bev always seemed to know exactly "what must be" (regarding sound and bringing the beauty to silent notes on a page in particular) and the "how to" was always an exciting and soul-deepening adventurous journey. The day is rare that I do not think of Bev, in my teaching, in my life's journey, and reflect and remember "Bev's Kitchen Hints" and be grateful for the journey.....meeting and working with such dear people as Charles Nelson, Julius and Hannah Herford, Robert and Caroline Shaw, Bill Gorham, and Roger Melone; and meeting and knowing people such as Brahms, Bach, Handel, Bruckner, and so many other masters; and having such magnificent experiences such as singing with the San Antonio Symphony as chorus in the Tales of Hoffman and being on stage with the young Placido Domingo, and Beverly Sills, and Norman Treigle. My life is so much richer because of Bev Henson, for whom I am eternally grateful.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Jerry Perales

The year was 1967 and I was this skinny necked-tied tenor at Del Mar Junior College in Corpus Christi, Texas when I first met Dr. Henson. Ron Shirey, my director at Del Mar, set up an audition for me with Dr. Henson and that was the beginning of many wonderful opportunities along my travels and pursuit of musical knowledge.

Little did I know at that time how wonderful those opportunities would be. After spending three fantastic years at Del Mar College, I transferred to Texas Christian University in Fort Worth to study with Dr. Henson. Mike Gallagher, Tim Collins, Terry Eder, Bill Gorham plus myself and many others from Corpus Christi moved to Fort Worth to study with one of the finest music directors in the state of Texas. At that time, there were three names that were tossed around as the three top directors in our state. Dr. Lloyd Pfautsch, Dr. Gene Kinney, and Dr. Bev Henson were known as the Big Three! They were certainly that and so much more. I was privileged to know and work with all three as a youngster. It just doesn't get any better than that or at least that is what I thought.

At Texas Christian University, I was afforded the opportunity to sing great literature, learn conducting techniques, and most of all, have a second family away from home. La Senora Henson took me in as well as others from Corpus. I would get to practice my very poor Spanish with her and she in turn would speak to me in her very articulated Spanish. She made wonderful snacks for those of us who frequented Dr. Henson's home.

Dr. Henson took a real interest in me and my career and made me feel more than just one of his students. There were many opportunities to visit with him as he invited students to his house so we could pick his brain and continue our musical education. I realize how fortunate I was to have a teacher who was willing to give of himself so much to me and others.

There were several of us students who would pool our money so we could go watch Dr. Henson do region workshops. We would pile in someone's car and drive to McAllen or Brownsville or wherever he was so we could watch him clinic groups. That was really educational!

I could go on and on about my days in Fort Worth and what Dr. Bev Henson meant to me. Suffice it to say that I considered myself the luckiest student in the world. Whenever I think of Bev Henson or hear his name, I immediately think, my mentor, my Teacher, and my friend.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Terry Morris

As a high school student of Mike Ware at Conroe High School, my first experiences with Dr. Henson came in the clinics he often provided as a service to his former students. This was the first time I heard Dr. Henson use the term "grandstudent."

I was fortunate enough to have sung in Dr. Henson's church choir at the First United Methodist in Huntsville starting the end of my senior year. I commuted to Huntsville every Wednesday and Sunday to sing in my first Messiah, with Charles Nelson singing the Bass Solos. I was looking forward all spring to singing in the Chorale and studying voice with Al Autrey the following fall. Unfortunately, Mr. Autrey passed away that spring, but I was still excited about singing for Dr. Henson every day.

For a freshman, walking into the SHSU Chorale was a daunting task. The Chorale had already begun to prepare for Henson's last TMEA Honor Choir performance. We didn't know that at the time. Handel's Dixit was on our plate, and that was a full plate. After nearly twelve years of chorale and solo singing, I still have never sung anything else so difficult. I did learn the importance of preparing for choir rehearsal and not just my voice lessons.

I continued to sing in his church choir and I was honored to sing a brief solo on his last concert at SHSU. After he retired in the spring of my first year at SHSU I began to immediately look for another school to attend. His advice and guidance was invaluable and I landed at Stephen F. Austin State where I had the great opportunity to learn from David Jones, Ric Berry, Terry Eder, Jan McDaniel, Ron Anderson, Tim King, and many other wonderful teachers. Dr. Henson was brought over by Terry Eder to clinic our choirs before we sang at TMEA and the Southwest ACDA conventions.

I have always wished that I could have had more time to study directly with Dr.

Henson. The reason I am writing is to recognize the effect that he had not only on his students, but on his grandstudents and great grandstudents.

As a graduate student, you have to be nearly obsessed with the citation of resources. This habit has crept into my everyday teaching. There are few sentences that I begin that don't start with "my teacher used to say..." When I say "my teacher" that could mean any one of the aforementioned masters of the singing art, as well as a few others that I was fortunate enough to learn from at Michigan State like Meredith Zara, Charles Smith, and Jonathan Reed. But with few exceptions, everything I ever paraphrase could find its way back to something Henson taught. Someone taught him as well. I seem to remember the name Julius Herford being cited by Dr. Henson on a number of occasions.

Henson's legacy will continue as long as we remember his teaching and pay him the honor of recognizing him as one of our great original resources. His legacy will continue through his students that are committed to instructing the teachers of the future. I count myself as very fortunate to have the opportunity to be judged, cliniced and taught by men like Mike Ware and Brad Bouley and women like Nora Henson. I hope that Henson students, grandstudents and great grandstudents will continue to help one another as we look to the future of Music Education. Encourage your current high school students that hope to major in music education to audition at universities with former Henson students.

I want to thank Mr. Nelson for taking on such a huge task. I hope that the compilation recordings will be made available for purchase. Maybe their sales could go to benefit a scholarship in Dr. Henson's honor. Bev Henson deserves a lasting remembrance that will forever connect him to choral music education in the south.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Gene Holcup

I did not take the time to carefully craft each sentence, rather, I am speaking from my heart. Hopefully, that will be enough to convey the love and respect that I have for Dr. Henson.

The first time I met Dr. B.R. Henson he made a lasting impression. I recall being charmed by his Southern wit, drawn to his charismatic storytelling, and amazed by his incredible musicianship. I knew after that first meeting that Dr.

Henson understood music on a deeper level than I had ever known (and most likely ever will know). Dr. Henson was a master musician and a master teacher. I was truly blessed to have the privilege of studying with him.

Dr. Henson opened the door to the world of music for us. He showed us musical form in a way that made sense--always reminding us to learn to master the art of making the complex simple (rather than the other way around). He was sure to introduce us to fine musicians and educators--either bringing them to teach us in the classroom or inviting us to learn from them at his home. I learned more about the world through two European choir tours with Dr. Henson (one behind the iron-curtain just prior to its demise) and from hearing Dr. Henson talk about his travels. Dr. Henson taught us style, class, and an appreciation for fine music and fine cuisine. (He was a master chef.) I can recall many graduate school round-table discussions during an exquisite dinner at the Henson home. Dr. Henson was a kind and gracious man who was genuinely concerned for the well being of his students.

Dr. Henson introduced us to a circle of musician-teachers who would grow to become our extended choral family. He always told us to seek out advice from our colleagues. (That lesson has saved me countless times!) Dr. Henson showed us the power of being a skilled communicator. He showed us how to conduct music in a way that reflected the way the music should sound. He modeled the art of story telling...albeit, I doubt any of us will ever rival his talent for telling a tale. He was able to hold a choir's attention in so many ways. He reminded us that we were to teach from the "interest" and not the "principal" of our knowledge. He taught us so much.

On the lighter side...who could forget his laugh? Remember his filing system--in a pile on top of the stereo speakers? (Okay, it works... I use it too...) How many of us learned to appreciate (if not like) strong coffee with chicory? Or the scent of the ritual cleansing of the coffee pot as he brewed the steaming vinegar in it. (He had another name for it... you know!) Remember the times when no one prepared their conducting assignment... so we would try to "talk him into telling us stories", thereby avoiding the shame of being slackards. He somehow always knew when we were stalling.

I recall an instance when I was Dr. Henson's page-turner. I have no idea why or how I was selected for this honor, since at that time, I had no piano skills and possessed severely limited score reading skills. I simply followed the vocal-line and

ignored the piano score. During a long piano interlude I was completely lost...foolishly, I decided to turn the page only to discover I was completely wrong. Dr. Henson didn't miss a note and kept playing! Afterwards I apologized to Dr. Henson. His gracious reply was a nonchalant "don't worry about it." Another fond memory, seeing Dr. Henson grinning ear to ear while wearing a little "beanie" hat bearing the words "Ich bin ein freundlicher Wiener". (I guess you had to be there.)

Several years after graduate school, I saw Dr. Henson at TMEA. He called me over, gave me a big hug and asked how everything was going. The last time I saw him was when he was honored by TCDA. He was just as kind and cordial as he was the time before. His affirmation still means so much to me today. I know that I am the musician I am because of all I have been taught by my teachers. I am proud to have known and learned from Bev Henson.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Rob Seible

How to describe Bev Henson and even scratch the surface of the impact he had and continues to have on my life - a daunting task. As a young student at TCU, I was constantly in awe of, and at the same time, intimidated by his extensive musical knowledge, his intense passion for music and the intensity with which he taught on a daily basis. The musical "highs" I experienced singing in his choirs became the addicting, driving force that has kept me going for nearly thirty years of teaching.

His teaching extended well beyond the classroom, however. Some of my fondest memories of Bev are from times spent with him and Evelyn at their homes in Fort Worth, Norman, and Huntsville. For innumerable evenings, the Hensons opened their homes to many, many students, offered us some great food and drink (Ah, Bev - the gourmet chef and "beverage" connoisseur) when most of us couldn't afford to eat. But the best part was sitting around and listening to his countless stories – most of which I imagine were true (although the stories seemed to "expand" over the years).

They were stories about his life in this profession, about students he had taught, and about legendary conductors he had known and with whom he had the privilege to work. There are so many things he taught us, it is impossible to even attempt a list. There are, however, three things I live by that I attribute to Bev Henson -

1. Always give credit where credit is due. He was the first to name the source of his many musical truths.
2. Always be humble before the great masters of music and not impose one's self on something that has already withstood the test of time.
3. Don't envy the gifts of others. Take the gifts you have been given and develop them as far as you are able.

Of the plethora of Henson quotes, my favorite is "It's better to be vulgar than non-existent."

I have had such a wonderful life. I could die tomorrow with no regrets. Many people have contributed to my happy existence - Bev Henson is one of my top one or two. Upon graduation, I said to Bev, "How can I ever repay you for all you have done for me?" He responded, "You have the rest of your life to do it." I hope Bev is looking down on me and is proud of my work and proud that I was his student.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Mike Ware

Bev Henson: Master Teacher, Conductor and Friend.

I first met Bev Henson in 1978 while in my first year of teaching at Magnolia High School. Al Autrey contacted me about dog sitting for Dr. Henson while he was in Aspen teaching at a choral institute. Little did I know that this was the beginning of my life being changed as a person, musician, teacher and conductor.

Over the course of the next 20 years, I would have the opportunity to sing under his direction with the Bev Henson Chorale, study privately with him as graduate conducting student at Sam Houston State University, sing under his direction with the TCDA Director's Chorus and work extensively with him over a course of ten years at the Conductor's Institute at Southwestern University. In addition to all these opportunities, I was fortunate to have Dr. Henson visit my classroom and work with my choirs almost yearly. Words are inadequate to express how I have been shaped as a person, musician, teacher and conductor by the privilege of all these experiences. Bev inspired me with his passion for music, for teaching and for conducting music in a way that always looked exactly as the music sounded.

The standard he set for his students and his choirs was the same standard he

demonstrated on the podium time after time. Bev's legacy is living on in the hundreds of his students who are teaching across the nation, in public schools, churches and colleges. Many of my former students who are teaching today still comment about his visits to our choir rehearsals and the passion and dedication he had to choral music and to teaching students how to teach and conduct music for music's sake.

I will always be grateful that I had the opportunity to be mentored by Bev. I know that my success as a teacher and person are directly related to his influence.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Kathy L. Hackett

MY FRIEND, BEV.....

I recall the day—ending the rehearsal in total frustration. Did we even tune one chord the entire day? Out of desperation and feeling defeated, I swallowed my pride, picked up the phone and called Dr. Bev Henson at Sam Houston State University. “How do I ‘fix’ these vowels in Southeast Texas TODAY?” After a long pause on the other end of the phone, he responded, “Well, it would take me a few years and a college degree to teach you to do that.” Thank goodness he could not see me blush. I answered with “I only have until tomorrow....these are smart, talented kids who deserve more than what I can give them...you are the expert...help me!” The next day the choir and I started all over! On his advice they learned WITH me and it was the best year ever.

At that point my friend, Dr. Henson, was a regular consultant. He ridiculed, made me laugh at myself, but was sincere in making me a better teacher. I introduced him to my choirs from the picture on the front of his editions which were frequently on my music stand. He graced my choir room and shared music with my students. He brought his marvelous choir to sing for us so my kids could hear a vowel. The greatest compliment of all was when he sent one of his best students to work with me as a co-director knowing that I would learn from her every day of my life, and she soon became my very dearest friend.

I attended his workshops at Southwestern and watched as his students sat at his feet indulging every word of his stories in an unusual worshipful atmosphere and absorbing every word of wisdom in the genius of his music. Soon, I too, was at his feet listening carefully and pursuing a unique conducting method.

Visiting with Nora, I asked if it was awesome growing up in the home of the master--- always listening to great music, gathered at the piano—all that I envisioned. “Heck no. We fought over the remote just like everybody else”! Not what I hoped to hear but a humorous perspective in the life of this great musician. Now I look back at the wonderful musicians in the State of Texas over the years. What a wonderful time to be a part of the music world in our State. Great musicians who were there for you and willing to help even if you were not a student in their school...just a student from a distance. Bev shared music, stories, laughter and intensity. The music and legacy live on as his students continue to teach the style and share the expertise that he instilled in them----in all of us.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Julie Birkner

As I end my 26th year of teaching Choir, I know, as I did in the beginning that Bev Henson has been the greatest single influence on what I actually teach. He has touched my life both directly as my professor during my Master's Degree, but also indirectly as I continue to learn from his many other students in the field of Choral Music. I sometimes marvel at the sheer numbers of musicians who have benefitted from his legacy----in the thousands, I am sure.

We all have our favorite "lesson". Mine is taken from his ability to reduce every musical idea to its simplest form, thus putting the tools for success in the hands of every student. His exceedingly sharp intellect was not displayed in trying to overwhelm us with the complexity of music, but rather with its elemental simplicity, and the way in which these elements could combine and change in infinite ways. When I am stuck as to what to do next, I always can hear him saying, "Remember, Julie, music ONLY moves in two ways---in 2's and 3's!" Seems to solve a world of problems. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in his tribute----as I am grateful to have had him in my life.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Rosemary Heffley

Bev Henson was such an inspiration. What an understatement considering that the literally hundreds of students and the thousands of choristers who gained artistry and knowledge from him over his career! Many had opportunity to actually

enrolled in the course of study with him. My experience was just peripheral, observing his choral rehearsals, seminars and workshops at various venues, enjoying that amazing hospitality he always conveyed, no matter the hour or place. . . . (in fact, the later the better!!) But, in some ways, that almost meant more than the actuality of being that formal student.

He was such a continuing source of enlightenment about style, phrasing, well, any of the essential elements of creating communication in music, actually. And, always seemed so effortless to him, which of course, it is never the case in reality. But the essence of music, any period or style, seemed to flow from him and engaged the ensemble with incredible focus.

Make no mistake he was totally serious and committed to perfection, but goodness, what humor he processed. The “Dr. Henson stories” are legendary and his students, friends and family have an abundance of them. We have no doubt these tributes will be filled to the brim with them!

It was Dr. Henson who delivered one of those “moments-of-truth” experiences for me and it continues to influence my work and thought to this day. He was discussing Robert Shaw’s theory on time and change in music. Simply put: that the essence of music is time and the essence of time is a change. Therefore, the essence of music is change. Then, Dr. Henson quietly but emphatically went on to say: “Would this also means that lack of indicated change in music could make a performance UNmusical and NON musical?”

From the simple comes the profound, I suppose. What a concept! Artistry in musical expression is predicated on realizing the inherent “change” and “inflection” factors in musical conversation and it’s my responsibility as a conductor to accomplish such! I’m sure many of my teachers had attempted to stress this truth to me. Yet, it was Bev who did and I will forever be grateful.

Julius Hereford, Bev’s mentor and teacher, often commented about the difference between “learning about things” and “learning things” just as there is a difference between “speaking about music” and “speaking music”. It is an indisputable fact that Bev Henson spoke music!

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered
by Paul T. Vickers
May 22, 1957

Gentlemen:

You are addressed in the impersonal fashion, because I do not know who was the smart man on the board that employed Bev Henson for your music faculty. Bev Henson is a modest man, and may be embarrassed when he gets a copy of this letter I am sending you.

I have been associated with high school work for about 40 years as a newspaper man, principal, and Chamber of Commerce manager, and have never seen a director of music who even approached having the ability of Bev Henson. Not only has he developed the best choral group that Mac Allen ever had, but he has done outstanding musical direction for a Valley choral group, outside the schools, and he has taught the school students more than mere singing. He has helped to develop them as young ladies and gentleman, and has been a good moral influence on them.

He has high qualities of leadership, executive ability, and a pleasing personality, as well as being an expert technician in the field of music. His wife is also an accomplished musician. His fine community spirit will make him asset to San Antonio, as well as Trinity University. I regret very keenly to see him leave McAllen, but rejoice in his advancement.

Yours truly,
Paul T. Vickers

Henson's Kitchen Hints

1. Involved the first and last note in a phrase. They must relate to the whole rhythmically and dynamically.
2. Isolate and expose (at the proper dynamic level) the motive of a section. This is at the grass roots of establishing relationships which begets musical ensembles. If it is visible to your eye, be sure you make it audible to the audiences ear.

3. After motive is discovered, let it “motivate” the phrase or section to the next climatic point. Achieve direction. Music moves across the page in time, it does not jump up and down in place.
4. After phrases are discovered, relate them to one another. One phrase is climax to the others. Find it and move toward it with an inevitability that is audible to the ear.
5. Most music has a metric beat. All music has a pulse. Keep the pulse but always in the right proportion.
6. Consider alteration and balance carefully. To make the craft and art. What goes up comes down; what speeds up slows down; what gets louder becomes softer.
7. Dynamics follow the pulse of the music, not the pitch change. Music grows, it changes, becomes through time . . . constantly, steadily. (Just as you do!)
8. Work for musical reaction of static parts. Relate them to moving lines dynamically. (Another step toward ensemble,)
9. Examine the score carefully for “written in” retards. It is very common through the Baroque to use longer note values to slow music down. Do not retard more than is written.
10. Guard against retarding too soon and too much. Retard means “retard later”.
11. Avoid following one retard by another. Instead, return to the original tempo. (tension - relaxation - tension also means movement - rest - movement)
12. Avoid slowing tempo in soft sections, or with the diminuendo. Likewise, an increase in the tempo of the crescendo is not always desirable.
13. Train your choirs to sing pure vowels. Then train them to find these sounds in the words they sing.
14. Vigorous consonants. Releases should match attacks. Study rhythmic diction. Learn where to sing consonants as well as how !!

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Roger Melone

Bev Henson was my teacher, mentor, and finally one of my closest friends. In the fall of 1964, I stayed with Bev and Evelyn Henson while I was transferring from Del Mar College to TCU. Almost from the beginning they treated me like a son in their family.

I still remember my first TCU A Cappella Choir rehearsal; the gorgeous sounds of the choir as well as the number of graduate students who possessed superior vocal equipment were amazing to me. “Mr. Henson” was soon trying to draw me into one-on-one discussions about choral music. I listened respectfully until he finally insisted I discuss and even disagree. Those discussions began with one of the richest learning periods in my life. I told him that I would not have put my voice alongside those forces in the top choir. He replied “Anyone who studies with me to be a choral director is going to sing in the top choir!”

I often reflect on his observations and insights, which I was fortunate to hear for many more years. After our only major disagreements and arguments, Bev opined, “There is a larger grace than being right.” How often that statement has come back to me. When Bev conducted choral clinics, he sometimes requested me as his accompanist. Again, I got to observe and learn. He recommended me to replace him at the University Christian Church in Fort Worth. Then, through his close association with Victor Alessandro he got me the job of chorus director for the San Antonio Symphony, which in those days included grand opera. I owe my career in professional music to Bev Henson.

When I met Bev Henson my choirs were well-regimented, consonant slot machines, and they sounded ugly. Bev taught me when to ease up on the regimentation and shape a fluid phrase. He taught me how to make an ugly sounding ensemble make pretty sounds, or at least prettier sounds.

Every day, I use what Bev taught me about music as well as what Bev taught me about life.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered
by Dede Duson
One of a kind!

When thinking of Bev Henson one's mind goes to Bach and Brahms and how extraordinarily beautiful their music was under his baton' Those of us who had opportunities to play for him at workshops and other occasions were thrilled to attempt to follow that baton, and therefore were challenged to hold his high expectations. He would remind young groups especially that if need be, a phrase might have to be practiced at least 100 times or more to get it right and then to be sure of it every time!

He was Dr. Henson when rehearsing and performing, and very serious when the tux or tails were donned. His musicianship was sound and scholarly, yet it seemed also to come from within in such a natural way. When telling a story and relishing the company of students, family and friends, he was the highly entertaining Bev that we all loved to be around. This personable manner was so magnetic and gave everyone an opportunity to approach and speak, and laugh, and be a part of it all.

One summer a group of us was gathered in this way at Mo Ranch. Bev was at TCU at the time, and I bravely approached him for advice about a couple of pieces I had written. Lo and behold, he said that if I'd add a third piece to make it a set, he would sing it with the TCU choir. Thus the TRILOGY ON GWEN FROSTIC TEXTS was completed, named (by him) and sung! This was encouragement beyond belief for a then young composer and that interest and support from him was extended to so many students and colleagues throughout his distinguished career. Bev truly was one-of-a-kind.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered
by Gloriana Tadlock

Those of us who experienced a relationship with Bev Henson belong to a unique clan, and we know that words are unnecessary. We just understand.

Bev Henson's very soul flowed with the "music of the spheres", and he honored

that God-given gift with his never-ceasing quest for knowledge. The integrity of style and composer's intent were never compromised, his personal dedication was never inconsistent.

His passion was to share, to pass on the essence of all he knew and felt. He was compelled to teach those who had ears to hear and the spirit to receive. We received not only in our souls and spirits, but also in our practical lives. Years after the fact, I learned that Dr. Henson had secured my first job even before I interviewed.

He, himself, conducted a clinic for my Junior High choir! He arranged an assistantship for my master's degree. He counseled me through eighteen years of choral conducting. I was not unique! I simply understood that my responsibility was to continue the process, to accept my part of the mantle, and to pass it on.

Those of us who received knew our responsibility from the first chord with Bev Henson, and we knew that we were changed forever. I am eternally grateful.

B. R. (Bev) Henson Remembered by Sheryl K. Murphey-Manley

Bev Henson is my musical father. He taught me how to phrase, how to conduct, how to teach, and how to create music. The hundreds of rehearsals and dozens of performances under his direction are engraved in my innermost being. He was the musician who showed me my first real musical encounters. His insistence on musical accuracy and expressiveness has benefited my own approaches to teaching both in the classroom and in the studio.

Everything that he taught his choirs could be applied to instrumental, vocal, solo, or ensemble performance. His conducting gestures were inspiring to us as students as we strove to look and move exactly as he did. We were amazed at the ease with which he demonstrated his musical genius. It seemed at times supernatural, as if he were connected in some unseen way with the great composers of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Nobody knew Bach or Brahms as well as he, and generations of musicians now benefit from his selfless and unending giving of his experience, time, and knowledge. He was generous in his profession and also in his personal life. Which one of us can forget the incredible meals that he so graciously cooked for us? And,

which one of us can forget the stories of conductors and performers that he shared, hoping to make a lasting impression on our young minds.

Well, Bev, you have made an impression: one that is lasting and unending. We owe our musical experiences and successes to your patience with us in our musical training. You have hundreds of musical children who miss you and yearn for your presence and approval. You must know how we still aim to meet your standards and extend your legacy into following generations.

We love you, and always will.

B.R. (Bev) Henson Remembered by David Kates

I already loved choral music when I met B.R. Henson. While studying with him, I grew to love it much more.

His teaching opened up new worlds to me. Dr. Henson helped me to see more deeply why I was drawn, not only to choral music, but to great art in general. As his student, I learned to understand the beauty in many things: orchestral music, poetry, fine art, and even the culinary arts. His interdisciplinary approach to music and life gave depth and meaning to the world of choral literature as he taught it, and it shaped me into the choral musician I would become.

After my time with Dr. Henson, I was equipped share my growing understanding and love of choral music with others. It was from him that I learned to teach. He brought passion and energy to musical details that others seem to miss or treat as mundane, all the while approaching the monuments of our art with humility. His ability to reduce choral techniques to their essential components, and to teach these components to amateur singers was uncanny and delightful. To this day, I rely on at least one choral method that I learned from him in every rehearsal I conduct.

As a teacher of choral music, B.R. Henson was an artist driven to bring out the best in those around him. He would do anything to help his students succeed. I miss him as a friend and teacher, but his legacy lives on, if in only a small way, in my own teaching and music making.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Conan Wood

When Evelyn and Bev Henson landed in McAllen, circa 1950, the music scene in the Rio Grande Valley was moribund. In almost no time, dynamic Bev had charged the local atmosphere with live music of high quality. About the same time the high schools of Brownsville, Harlingen, and Edinburg brought in excellent choir directors. It was like a contagion. Marvin Pollard to Brownsville, then to PSJA; Bob Buchanan to Brownsville; Charles Nelson to Harlingen, then to Edinburg; Al Autrey to Harlingen. (Later when Bev moved to Trinity University in San Antonio, Autrey came to McAllen and Bob Irby came to Harlingen.)

Soon Bev had a thriving high school choir program. He started rehearsals at 7:30 a.m. with the rationale that the student must really want to be in the program to come that early. He also had a fine choir at the First Methodist Church in McAllen where he was also the organist. Bev naturally attracted most of the better singers. He could uniquely play and conduct with total efficiency. He was not above having fun with it.

One of the church sopranos couldn't help snorting when she laughed, and Bev delighted in making faces at her during a performance to hear her loud snorting. Another lady was prematurely wrinkled. She accepted her looks and made sport of it. Once she was talking during rehearsal and Bev said "Nan, if you don't stop talking I'm going to pin two of your wrinkles together!"

Bev had a wide swath to circle. He organized the Valley Civic Chorus, with the incomparable Dr. Robert Osborn as accompanist. He brought in a representative of Columbia Artists Management to organize the McAllen Community Concerts Association, now in its 51st year. After moving to Trinity University he became conductor of the the San Antonio Mastersingers and had a very close working relationship with maestro Victor Alessandro. This led to the birth of the Rio Grand International Music Festival and grand opera and various San Antonio symphony concerts here every Spring. Until cigarettes took Victor down (and who is to say that Bev might not still be with us, enriching the music scene all over the country had he stopped smoking twenty years sooner) what terrible losses of two true giants of music!

As it is, Bev's contribution is incalculable.

Beverly Ray (Bev) Henson Remembered by Margaret Mathis

Real epiphanies are so rare that when we experience one even the setting comes to mind as we reflect on it. Such is my recollection of a sunny room at Southwestern University in Georgetown some twenty-five years ago as I listened to Bev Henson make the complex simple as he spoke of musical phrasing, ritards, crescendos and such so that my entire approach to things instinctive regarding musicality became intellectualized and therefore able to be taught so much more clearly. Isn't that what a real teacher does - - pass on his art?

Bev chose to turn his formidable intellect to teaching and passing on that which we all know instinctively to be true musically. Bev was also willing to effusively praise that which he admired and by which he was moved. So many musicians are content only to be revered for their own personal work but they hesitate to acknowledge the work of their own students. I suppose it is fear of being eclipsed by gifted underlings. Bev was not like that. Not that he couldn't be highly critical of things he did not like but when he liked it he could say it in glowing, excited and sincere terms thus making on the student an everlasting impression.

A brilliant, charming, sensitive, amusing TEACHER. That was Bev. He used to say in praise of this or that musician that they "knew how the music ought to go." Bev knew how the music ought to go and we who experienced it with him in turn learned better how it ought to go and how to enhance its power to communicate and move others. Isn't that why we are all musicians?

What better epitaph for a musician and teacher than to say he helped us show others how the music ought to go.

B.R.(Bev) Henson Remembered by Beth Baldwin Casey

In the course of our lives we have people who shape, influence and completely change our direction. B.R. Henson was one of those people to me. Hearing about Julius Hereford and Robert Shaw, singing a measure where every note had a nuance, and actually learning how to make a musical phrase were the things that Dr. Henson taught me.

Of course, away from the university, he also taught us music while in his kitchen

- making pancakes for all of his graduate students at midnight after an exhausting discussion of the Bach B Minor Mass. We enjoyed listening to him play jazz piano and sing The Three Bears or talk about the Brahms? Liebeslieder waltzes . He was a master teacher. He touched people's lives and influenced their music making. He was a hard-headed man who, thank goodness, never gave up on us. I can still hear his voice in my mind during my own rehearsals saying "Better to be vulgar than nonexistent!" "No two notes should be the same unless indicated." Those who studied with him share stories about ". . . remember when....." and they all have a central theme of great teaching and great learning.

When we lost Dr. Henson we lost a true mentor and master in the art of music making. I feel blessed to have been one of his students and a part of his musical family.