



BEHIND THE SCENES AT EMCC ...

MASS CHOIR FESTIVAL

BY WENDY K. SMITH, DIRECTOR OF CHORAL AND VOCAL MUSIC INSTRUCTION

The East Mississippi Community College Concert Choir and Reflection Singers climbed aboard the big, white bus and drove down to Meridian Feb. 25-26 for the Mississippi Community and Junior College Mass Choir Festival. This year's festival was at the MSU-Riley Center in downtown Meridian, and it was a real privilege to perform in such a beautifully restored, turn-of-the-century theatre.

The EMCC Choir was one of many community college choirs that performed Thursday, Feb. 25, for an audience of students and choral directors from all over the state. The EMCC Choir presented three selections: "Festival Sanctus" by John Leavitt, "The Silence and the Song" by Mark Patterson and "Shout Glory" by Byron Smith.



In addition to this performance, EMCC students participated in a mass choir made up of about 400 students from all over the state. This choir was led by guest director Dr. Jamie Meadors of Mississippi College. The selections performed by this choir were: "I am in Need of Music" by David Brunner, "Salmo 150" by Ernani Aguiar, performed in Spanish, and "Psalm 23" by Paul Basler. A second mass choir under guest director Dr. John Flanery of the University of Southern Mississippi also performed. And, finally, the festival featured performances by two guest choirs – The Spirit of Southern men's ensemble and the Mississippi College Singers.



A funny thing happened when The Spirit of Southern men's ensemble sang "Calendar Girl." They chose a lady at random to serenade and, this time, it ended up being LaDonna Davidson, who is a member of our choir. Here's a photo ... I can't tell if she's really flustered, or if she's play-acting ... what do you think?

EMCC's choirs, accompanied by Katey Kingsbury, received several compliments from other community college choral directors across the state. I was very pleased with their performance, and I know all the hard work paid off. We have something here to be proud of, and I hope to build and continue what has been established.

Just the other day, we received notification that Carla Caldwell, from Columbus, will be receiving a music scholarship from the University of Mississippi. Carla is a member of both the EMCC Concert Choir and the Reflection Singers. And, if this year is anything like past years, other choir members will also receive scholarships to four-year colleges and universities. And, of course, all of our choir members receive scholarships from EMCC for their hard work performing at college and community events.

EMCC students attend the Mass Choir Festival every year, and it always makes for some good memories. The first day of this year's festival, we were early, so we stopped the bus at Bonita Lakes Park and sang our selections a cappella, with just a pitch pipe. Even so, we were still early when we arrived. The brochure said registration was supposed to begin at 11 a.m., but we were the first ones there and it was a little while before anyone else arrived. So, the students took some photos. And then several of them said, "Hey, Ms. Smith, come take our picture!" So, I did ... here it is:



I'm not quite sure how I did it, or what the camera settings were, but the photo looks like it was taken at night, under a streetlight. And the students just naturally fell into that arrangement and they all have very focused, intense looks on their faces. They kind of look like professional models. The students in this photo are, from left, Brittney Brown of Macon, Anthony Brown of Columbus, D'Angela Davis of Columbus, Kiarre Gates of West Point, Akedra Ross of Columbus, Whitney Harris of Starkville, Charmagne Hoskins of West Point and Tommie Sanders of Brooksville. The director of public information here at the college told me it was a great photo, and that I should enter it in contests – I assured her it was a complete accident!

It was a fun, challenging time and I think we all learned a lot. Here's one more photo. This one is of me, at the end of the festival. Whew!

**-- Wendy Smith,
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Vocal Music Instruction**

