

Emma L. Ashford Papers

1890's-1930

Collection Number: MSS 027

Size: .92 linear feet

Arranged and Described by Beverly Lee

Special Collections and University Archives

Jean and Alexander Heard Library

Vanderbilt University

Nashville, Tennessee

Emma L. Ashford Papers

Scope and Content Note

The Emma L. Ashford collection is comprised mostly of music composed by Mrs. Ashford, as well as by others. Mrs. Ashford's music is in both manuscript and printed form. Most of her works contained in this collection pertain to Vanderbilt University. All the printed works of other composers in the collection relate to Vanderbilt.

The collection consists of one box, covering approximately .92 linear feet. It is arranged in three series.

Series I is made up of Mrs. Ashford's music. It includes many of the pieces she composed for occasions at Vanderbilt. In addition, there are some examples of her other work, such as children's song cycles and piano voluntaries for church services.

In Series II, the work of Mabel Lee McFerrin is represented. Ms. McFerrin was a contemporary of Emma Ashford at Vanderbilt.

Series III is a collection of printed sheet music and song books pertaining to Vanderbilt University. There is also a 45 RPM phonograph recording.

Biographical Sketch

Emma Louise Hindle was born March 29, 1850 in Newark, Delaware to a musical family of English ancestry. She was musically precocious and by the age of twelve was organist at the Episcopal Church in Kewanee, Illinois. Her family moved frequently and at one of their musical evenings in Connecticut, when she was seventeen, she met John Ashford, a young engineer and amateur singer from Bath, England. They married soon after and moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she became the solo alto at St. John's Episcopal Church as well as a church organist and teacher of harmony.

In 1884, the couple moved to Nashville, where Mr. Ashford became the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds at Vanderbilt University. Mrs. Ashford began to compose and to immerse herself in the musical life of the university and the community. She soon became famous on campus for her compositions about Vanderbilt. Dean Herbert Tolman said of her, "Of the women of our city, some have distinguished themselves in literature and some in art, but in the realm of musical composition, there is one name that stands pre-eminent. It is the name of Mrs. Emma L. Ashford."

Mrs. Ashford was a prolific composer, as well as a frequent conductor of her work. She composed over 600 pieces of music, including organ voluntaries, sacred cantatas, hymns, song cycles, anthems, and graded works for piano and organ instruction. She traveled throughout this country and abroad, performing or conducting her work. In addition to this recognition, she won numerous prizes in international song and anthem contests.

Among her works written for Vanderbilt, the most acclaimed was "Vanderbilt Ode", written in 1901 for Vanderbilt's 25th birthday celebration. A memorable performance of this work occurred in 1926 at the War Memorial Auditorium with the Nashville Symphony and a large chorus. The evening concluded with Chancellor Kirkland complimenting Mrs. Ashford publicly with the following remarks: "As long as men love the beautiful in music, so long will your name live and be cherished by Vanderbilt men and women."

Mrs. Ashford died September 22, 1930 at her home in Nashville.

Box Listing

Box 1

Series I Compositions by Emma L. Ashford

1. "Old Vandy"---Words by Saidee S. Luff---Music by Emma L. Ashford. Two printed copies.
2. "Vanderbilt Hymn"---Words by Dean Herbert Tolman---Music by Emma L. Ashford. Manuscript copy.
3. "Vanderbilt Hymn" ("Vanderbilt, Our Vanderbilt")---Words by Dean Herbert Tolman---Music by Emma L. Ashford. Manuscript copy; also notarized statement by Charles Washburn dated 8 Nov. 1946, affirming that the manuscript and signature are in Mrs. Ashford's own hand.
4. "O Alma Mater" (An Ode to Vanderbilt University Written for the 25th Anniversary in 1900)---Words by Olin D. Wannamaker---Music by Emma L. Ashford. Eleven printed copies plus a letter from Browne Martin which accompanied his gift of one copy to the library.
5. "Class Ode" (1905)---Words by Adelaide Lyon---Music by Emma L. Ashford. Manuscript copy, March 20, 1905.
6. "Ashford's Piano Voluntaries" (For Use in Church Services)---Arranged and Edited by E.L. Ashford. Published by Lorenz Publishing Company, 1916.
7. "The Shadow of the Star"---Words by Mary F. DeMotive---Harmonized by Emma L. Ashford. Addison Avenue Day Home, 1917.
8. "O Alma Mater"---Words by O.D. Wannamaker---Music by Emma L. Ashford.

Six copies, printed by Lorenz Publishing Company 1924. Octavo No. 4010 in Lorenz's series, "Quartets and Choruses for Mixed Voices".

9. "Tommy's Troubles"---Words by Helen Whitney---Music by Emma L. Ashford and "The Martyr"---Words by Charles Jones---Music by Emma L. Ashford. A manuscript copy of each song placed together in a folder with "Chas. C. Washburn, Scarritt College" written on the cover in pencil.

10. Program for Musicale and Reception in Honor of the 60th Birthday of Mrs. E.L. Ashford, March 28, 1910. Two copies.

Series II Compositions by Mabel Lee McFerrin

11. "Kappa Alpha Fraternity March"---Music by Mabel Lee McFerrin. Published by H.A. French, 1897.

12. Program featuring "Vanderbilt Waltz"---Music by Mabel Lee McFerrin, 1897. Xerox copy of program and photo of Ms. McFerrin.

Series III Compositions About Vanderbilt by Other Composers

13. "Vanderbilt University March" (For Mandolin Orchestra)---Music by J.A. Le Barge. Published by H.A. French, 1995. Three copies.

14. "Phi-Delta Theta Two Step"---Music by Odielein McCarthy. Published by H.A. French, 1896.

15. "Vanderbilt, All Hail!"---Music by Robert Vaughn and "O Vanderbilt! Dear Vanderbilt!"---Music by Wilbur Fisk Tillett. Pages from 1914-1915 Commencement Program.

16. "Vanderbilt Songs-Old and New"---June 11, 1928. Six copies.

17. "Vanderbilt Forever!"---Words by Grantland Rice---Music by Thornton W. Allen. Published by Thornton W. Allen Co., 1933.

18. "Echoes of Dudley Stadium"---The Commodore Band. 45 RPM phonograph record.

19. Article about gift of sheet music to the Vanderbilt Library in "Vanderbilt Alumnus", January-February 1952.

