Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse: The History And Organization Of The New England Youth Ensemble

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VIRGINIA-GENE RITTENHOUSE: THE HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE

A Dissertation
Presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In the Department of Music
The University of Mississippi

by

VALENCIA COLLINS THEVENIN

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and the history and organization of the New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE). Born in Lacombe, Canada in 1922, Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse was a violinist, pianist, composer, and notable music educator in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who established the New England Youth Ensemble in 1969.

The ensemble has toured internationally since the early 1970s and it is the resident orchestra at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland. The youth orchestra has played numerous times under the baton of John Rutter and has performed frequently in Carnegie Hall under the auspices of MidAmerica Productions.

The author conducted interviews, analyzed videos and administered questionnaires. In addition, the researcher examined concert programs, which provided important details about how Dr. Rittenhouse operated.

The researcher found that Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse used music as an agent of social change through her work with the NEYE. She mingled with the world and her flagship Adventist youth orchestra thrived as a result of her determination, drive, and the strategic manner in which she functioned.

This research can benefit both musicians and directors of youth music groups alike. Music educators who follow this model should 1) form meaningful relationships, 2) partner with businesses, organizations, and philanthropists to enhance and sustain their music groups, and 3) maintain a strong presence in their communities. The relationships that Dr. Rittenhouse formed
with people, organizations, and churches around the globe caused the ensemble to flourish, and many lives have been forever changed as a result.

Keywords: Seventh-day Adventist, New England Youth Ensemble
DEDICATION

When I was a teenager my mother purchased books she thought would interest and encourage each of her children in the pursuit of their dreams. I was given the book entitled *Encore!,* which was co-authored by Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, the subject of this study. Providentially, I had the opportunity to meet the person whom I read about as a teenager while I was a student at Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. This paper is dedicated to my mother, Marbeth Hicks Collins, who planted the seed of music that guided me in the direction I would pursue in life. I also dedicate this paper to the memory of my father, Derek James Collins, Jr.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>NEYE</td>
<td>New England Youth Ensemble</td>
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<td>NESE</td>
<td>New England Symphonic Ensemble</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventist</td>
<td>Official abbreviation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Chicago Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>Atlantic Union College</td>
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<td>Washington Adventist University</td>
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<td>NCU</td>
<td>Northern Caribbean University</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God who gives me wisdom and who is a very present help in time of need. I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Alan Spurgeon, for his guidance and advice throughout this process. This appreciation extends to the members of my committee, Dr. George Dor, Dr. Andy Paney, and Mr. John Leslie. I offer my gratitude to Dr. Preston Hawes for lending his assistance and providing significant information from archived material that was especially beneficial to this research.

A special thanks to my aunt, Vera Harris, for assisting me early in my writing process and giving words of encouragement. Last but not least, I greatly appreciate my husband, Eddynio Thevenin, for his tangible support and commitment towards my completing this project, and to my loving children, Samuel, Ella, and Theodore Timothy for their understanding and patience when I had to spend time writing.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse

Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse (1922–2011) was an eminent music educator in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who founded the New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE) in 1969 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse from http://neyesquarespace.com/history/

Rittenhouse, a violinist, pianist, and composer, founded the New England Youth Ensemble in the living room of her historic home, the Butterick Mansion, unaware of the rewards that forming this small group would produce in the years to follow (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988). According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1988), in 1969 the NEYE was established with five members and Rittenhouse had the idea to have the students perform at
a local event at the Kiwanis Club. She was thrilled when she saw how much the audience appreciated the children playing classical and sacred music.

In a 2002 interview with Lincoln Steed, Dr. Rittenhouse reminisced about the beginnings of the NEYE:

I was teaching at Atlantic Union College, and I had very young pupils, violinists. Just as an off-hand thought, I wondered if I had them play together, maybe they would get a bit more inspired to practice. So in my living room I gathered five of them. . . . Well, they started playing together, and in no time at all we put them in little outfits and they started playing concerts. I found that people were just charmed and that it was a real mission. Our first concert was at a luncheon for the Kiwanis Club at Christmas time . . . [and] suddenly I realized that there was real power in children and youth playing great music. That was the spark of my inspiration. Then we started playing in the churches everywhere. . . . The young people were just a sensation wherever we went. We played at many famous music centers, including ones in Poland and Russia. (Steed, 2002, para. 4)

The newly formed group had their first tour and performed at the World Youth Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1973. They had a major tour every year afterwards (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988). Steed (2002) asked Dr. Rittenhouse if there had been any breaks from touring and she confirmed that they have toured every year since 1969. The ensemble would not exist without the courage and faith of Rittenhouse and a group of committed supporters.

The NEYE has toured communist Russia, South Africa (during the years of the apartheid), Jamaica, Australia, Jordan, Israel, Canada, China, and the United States to name a few. According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1995), the ensemble has visited over forty five countries. Worthy of mention, the NEYE performed at a state dinner in Warsaw, Poland, which was hosted by President Ford for the president of Poland (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988).
Early Life

Virginia-Gene Shankel (later Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse) was born in Leduc, Alberta, Canada and she spent her childhood in South Africa where her father, George Shankel, served as the president of Helderberg College, a Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) college in Cape Town, South Africa (Schultz, 2013). Virginia-Gene’s mother, Win Shankel, was a talented musician and the most influential person in her life and she encouraged her daughter to pursue music (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998). See Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Virginia-Gene and Her Parents from archived materials at Washington Adventist University](image)

Rittenhouse played the piano and violin and made her debut as a teenager with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra on both instruments (see Figure 3).
She was ten years old when a performance of her compositions was broadcast on National Public Radio while on furlough in the United States. During her time in South Africa she fell in love with the country, people, and the native music. She also worked as a music educator for the Adventist church at Walla Walla College in the state of Washington and Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts (Schultz, 2013); Dr. Rittenhouse later joined the faculty at Columbia Union College (CUC) now named Washington Adventist University (WAU) located in Takoma Park, Maryland.

The following is Rittenhouse’s comments in a video-taped interview in 2003 with David Miller that was presented as a tribute to Virginia-Gene’s legacy. Rittenhouse recounts,

my life has covered the whole picture of music in its different phases and that’s been an amazingly rich experience. I commenced composing music—my mother told me—at the age of three. I made up my own poems and my own music with it, and she realized that music was going to be a very great part of my life. So she started teaching me piano. The moment we could own a piano—I remember trying to play as they were moving the piano in—I was so excited. At fourteen, I made my debut with the Cape Town Symphony as soloist for the Beethoven Piano Concerto and that ended up very shortly with a debut as a violinist also with the Cape Town Symphony. So I played very
frequently as a soloist in symphony concerts. I’ve had some wonderful experiences in witnessing through my music even at that very early age. . . . It was a wonderful statement they made when I played the violin debut. The orchestra said, ‘Only someone who loves God could play like that.’ (Emaus7, Dec. 10, 2011, “A Tribute to Dr. Rittenhouse”)

Rittenhouse earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Washington, studied at Juilliard, and she received a master’s degree from Boston University. Worthy of mention, she was the first person to receive a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Peabody Conservatory at John Hopkins University in 1964 (Byrd, 2011).

Virginia-Gene’s family was Adventist and she was also a member of the church. The NEYE is a Seventh-day Adventist youth orchestra, an organization that was founded in Sterling, Massachusetts in 1969 and was later housed at Atlantic Union College (an Adventist college in South Lancaster, Massachusetts). Rittenhouse’s lifelong friend, Dorothy Minchin-Comm (2012), recalled that Virginia-Gene had a gift for inspiring students to play great music and she pushed them beyond what they thought was even possible.

Rittenhouse has won several awards including the New York Madrigal Society Town Hall Award, the London Associated Board Overseas Scholarship, and the New York Concert Artists Guild Award (Schultz, 2013). She enjoyed a fruitful music career and relished every moment she was afforded to conduct the NEYE.

On October 22, 1950, Virginia-Gene married Harvey Rittenhouse of Massachusetts. Her compositions were performed with an accompanying full orchestra at their wedding ceremony (see Figure 4).
In the early 1950s they lived in Jamaica where her husband was a missionary doctor and Virginia-Gene taught violin at the local Adventist college. In addition, Rittenhouse published her compositions, namely the *Jamaican Suite for Orchestra* (performed in Carnegie’s recital hall) and her lifelong work, *The Vision of the Apocalypse* (Byrd, 2011). The latter work will be discussed in greater detail.

Rittenhouse formed a lifelong relationship with English composer and conductor John Rutter. Through their relationship the NEYE has performed at Carnegie Hall over sixty times. Since its founding over forty years ago, the ensemble has become a household name in Adventist churches and an acclaimed ensemble both in the United States and abroad (Schultz, 2013). The NEYE has traveled more widely than any other Adventist music group, taking countless tours in the United States and throughout the world. Under its professional name, the New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE) is the resident orchestra at Carnegie Hall, where it has performed more frequently than any other orchestra in the country (Schultz, 2013).
In Rutter’s forward to Minchin-Comm’s & Rittenhouse’s (1995) *Curtain Call: The Continuing Story of the New England Youth Ensemble* he affirms the youth ensemble, “My continuing relationship with this fine orchestra has been a source of joy and satisfaction to me over the past several years. I hold the Ensemble and its remarkable director, Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, in the utmost respect and esteem” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995, Forward).

Members of the NEYE perform at Carnegie Hall through the Carnegie Scholars Program. According to the current conductor, Preston Hawes, the program gives exceptional students from the orchestra the opportunity to perform in prominent concert venues in New York including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and Avery Fisher Hall five times a year. The students play alongside professional musicians who are able to guide them throughout the orchestral experience (Byrd, 2011).

The ensemble is currently housed at Washington Adventist University (formerly Columbia Union College) in Takoma Park, Maryland, and the members of the ensemble enjoyed many memorable performance opportunities under Rittenhouse’s direction (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995), who conducted the orchestra until her health declined. She announced, “Retirement doesn’t appeal to me. . . . I’d be lost.” She wanted the orchestra to carry on with the same goals, missions, and traditions after she retired (Miller, 2003).

**Background**

Little research exists on the history of youth orchestras affiliated with the church where sacred music is an important component of the performed repertoire. Because “music is involved in the basic human dilemma of conflict between good and evil” (Lehtinen, 1992), the youth orchestra that regularly performs sacred music is indispensable for the spiritual growth and maturity of young people.
This study traces the existence of the New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE) and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, founder of the orchestra. Since this is the first known research that has been done regarding a youth orchestra that is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist church, the author believes information from this study can benefit instrumental teachers, members, sponsors of youth orchestras, and prospective founders of youth orchestras in both private and public sectors.

**Purpose of the Study**

This paper traces the history of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse (whose career spanned over 60 years) and the organization of the New England Youth Ensemble. The author also explores the organization, repertoire, and performance practices of the members as well as the ensemble as a whole. The study focuses on the history of the NEYE through the lens of the relentless work of Dr. Rittenhouse, whose dedication, drive, and strategic planning caused the ensemble to prosper for over forty-five years.

**Definitions**

Various terms have been used to describe youth orchestras such as symphony youth orchestra, training orchestra, philharmonic orchestra, junior symphony, youth symphony orchestra, youth orchestra, and philharmonic youth orchestra (Schafer, 1982). The writer uses the term *youth orchestra* to refer to youth orchestra organizations; the author also applies the terms *ensemble* and *New England Youth Ensemble* (NEYE) interchangeably when referring to the NEYE.

The NEYE is professionally known as the New England Symphonic Ensemble, NESE (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, February, 27, 2017). However, the author will refer to the orchestra by its founding name, the New England Youth Ensemble. Moreover, the terms
Seventh-day Adventist and Adventist will be used interchangeably to refer to Rittenhouse’s affiliate denomination. Adventist is the official abbreviation of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination (The Seventh-day Adventist Church, n.d., Information: Identity, Logo Section).

**History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The Millerite Movement, which first began as a regional crusade, became a national movement where followers believed the teachings of William Miller, who shared publicly his belief that Jesus Christ would return around 1843 (Rodgers, 1991). See Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Camp Meeting during the Millerite Movement](http://www.adventist.org/en/information/history/)

The Great Disappointment took place on October 22, 1844 during the Millerite movement. Baptist pastor, William Miller, preached that Jesus would return between 1863 and 1864 based on his study of prophecy from the Biblical book of Daniel (Kroll, 2015). About 100,000 people waited for Jesus to return, and when this did not occur “bitter anguish set in at midnight when they realized that their hopes would not be fulfilled. Many wept bitterly until daybreak and according to McChesney (2014), it was a very important moment in the history of the earth and the three angels’ messages in the book of Revelation.

Several eccentric offshoots from the Millerite movement were established at that time; however, according to Elizabeth Lechleitner (2013), “as they moved toward church structure,
early Adventists didn’t lose their initial zeal, rather they were able to carve out a balance between the radicalism that pervaded much of the religious expression in the mid-1800s and the conservatism that would follow. It is an equilibrium the Adventist Church still maintains today” (para. 16).

Although many hopes were shattered because Jesus had not returned as they expected, this led a group of people to conduct further study of the Bible regarding the Second Coming. They found that the true Sabbath is on the seventh day of the week. The members of the church were from different places, however, they gathered to organize themselves on October 1, 1860; Therefore, the title “Seventh-day Adventist” was given to the newly established church. According to the General Conference website, the Bible is the supreme source for the beliefs, faith, and practice of the church (n.d., History, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church*).

The Adventist church has adopted twenty-eight fundamental beliefs from the Bible that are categorized as follows: the teachings of God, man, salvation, the church, the Christian life and last day events; the overarching theme of the church’s faith is to restore the relationship of humanity with God. However, certain beliefs are particular to the church: the seventh-day Sabbath, Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, scriptural dietary principles as relates to Christian behavior and the state of the dead (The Seventh-day Adventist Church, n.d., Beliefs Section).

The church is composed of different levels and the top level is the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; the General Conference headquarters are located in Silver Spring, Maryland. Next in rank after the general conference are the thirteen divisions around the world, which represents thirteen administrative regions internationally (see Figure 6).
Figure 6. Thirteen Divisions (and two attached fields) of the Adventist Church from https://www.adventist.org/en/world-church/

Under the divisions are the unions, followed by the state and regional conferences, and the local churches. In addition, missions, schools, and hospitals are supported around the world (World Church Section, n.d.).

Every five years the church at-large holds a meeting called the General Conference Session where the world church meets to elect officers and make changes to the church’s constitution; the last session occurred in July 2015 at the Alamodome and Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas (World Church Section n.d.).

As of 2014 there were 78,810 churches around the world and the membership was 18,479,257. Currently, about one-third of the church’s membership dwells in Africa and one third resides in Central and South America. According to the General Conference website, Brazil has a membership of 1.3 million and is the country with the most Adventists. The North
American Division (inclusive of, but not limited to, the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and Guam) has about 1.1 million members (World Church, n.d.).

Oral work and Adventist publications are produced in 947 languages. Languages used in publications are 366. The world church has 173 hospitals and sanitariums, 126 nursing homes and retirement centers, 294 clinics and dispensaries, and 34 orphanages and children’s homes. As of 2012 the worldwide Adventist education system had a total of 7,842 schools (including primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities), 93,674 teachers, and 1,814,810 students (Information: Statistics, n.d.). Adventist education began as early as the 1850s with homeschooling; however, organized schooling in the church began in the early 1870s. (History: Education, n.d.).

One of the beliefs of the Adventist church is the belief in the spirit of prophecy according to writings of the Bible. Ellen White, one of the founders of the church, gave prophetic advice to the church in several areas through numerous publications. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in 2014 the Smithsonian Magazine named Ellen White as one of the 100 Most Significant Americans of All Time (Who Are Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). Ellen White (1903) believed education should start in the home and the object of education is the work of redemption where love is the true basis. As shown in the law given by God, love should first be directed toward God and then unselfish love toward fellow man (ibid).

According to Gardner (2010), “The purpose of Adventist education is to prepare workers for the Church’s organization and service to the wider community by developing the physical, mental, social and spiritual powers in providing service to the society. In pursuit of the goal, Adventist education seeks to restore in the man the image of his Maker” (p. 198).
One of the present concerns in Adventist schools is maintaining “Adventist” ethos in the midst of the increased enrollment of non-Adventist students in the church’s colleges and universities in many parts of the world (Gardner, 2010; Furst, 2002; Grajales, et. al, 2010; Rasi, 1992). Another study (Mainda, 2002) revealed kindergarten through twelfth grade enrollment in the Adventist schools is steadily decreasing; however, Nwosu (2012) contends carefully selected activities will enhance the self-reliance of private Christian schools.

The Adventist church has the second largest integrated system of schools in the world, the largest worldwide Protestant integrated network of hospitals and clinics, and in 2011 was recognized by USA Today as the denomination with the fastest growth in North America. Notwithstanding, the church operates in 209 countries and territories around the world (Who are Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.).

“Many in the general public have noticed Adventists tend to be superstars of good health and longevity; research shows they tend to live 10 years longer than the average American. With strong track records for success in health and education, Adventists find they get a hearing among skeptics who share those priorities” (MacDonald, 2011).

**History of Music Education in the Adventist Church**

Dan Schultz (2008) is a prolific writer on the history of the Adventist Church, music and musicians. He states:

The close of the 20th Century marked the end of an era of unprecedented change. Life and the arts had been transformed by quantum leaps in knowledge and technology. American culture, in particular, had been infused with vitality and enriched by the influx of talent from abroad, a migration facilitated by two calamitous wars in Europe and the emergence of a more clearly defined national identity in both serious and popular music.

During that time music benefited significantly from initiatives in higher education. In that century the Eastman and Juilliard Schools of Music and New England, Peabody, Oberlin and other conservatories were founded. These schools, coupled with the
blossoming of comprehensive music programs at major universities, created opportunities for music study equal to the best in Europe.

This commitment to music in America became serious in the late twenties, flourished with increasing strength through the middle of this century and then began to fade in the late seventies. During that fifty-year period the arts were encouraged and funded in both public and private schools. (Schultz, 2004, para. 1–3)

According to Schultz (2004) the at the beginning of the 1970s there were more than seventy full time music positions in Adventist colleges in North and South America and most high schools had at least three persons working in the music department. During that time public and private schools were allocated funds to enhance their music programs—at least two Adventist colleges had twelve full-time faculty members for fifty students. However, after the funds decreased enrollment in music classes declined in both public and private colleges.

Schultz (2004) explained that many music educators’ programs had vision and were stable during the time. Before and after the middle of the century there were several newly constructed music buildings and conservatories in the Adventist church, including the Thayer Conservatory at Atlantic Union College in 1974 and the Peters Music Center in 2011 at Washington Adventist University, the current residence of the New England Youth Ensemble (Schultz, 2016).

Consistent with the scope of this study, the author highlights the history of music education at the two colleges associated with the New England Youth Ensemble, Atlantic Union College and Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University).

**Music at Atlantic Union College**

The music department at Atlantic Union College (AUC) was established in 1907. In 1937 the department approached music more seriously with the arrival of Bela Urbanowsky of Hungary, who was a student of Eugene Ysaye (Schultz, 2008). He taught at AUC for nine years
and his work with the orchestra made the school more prominent in the community. In the mid-1940’s music enrollment increased because of the return of veterans from World War II who received government funding to attend school.

“One youthful teacher, however, Virginia-Gene Shankel, a violinist and pianist who had come in 1946 . . . would continue into the early years of the next decade. She married Harvey Rittenhouse while there, and then returned two decades later to establish and lead The New England Youth Ensemble,” said Schultz (para. 13).

In 1954 AUC offered a degree in music education. Professors at the college who had attended prestigious schools wanted to raise the standards in the music program at AUC to the level of established conservatories. During this time students had the opportunity to study with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Schultz, 2008).

“Throughout the 1950s and most of the 1960s, the enrollment and number of faculty increased at the college. . . . Additionally, racial tensions in the school escalated, in part due to the civil rights movement that had blossomed in the 1960s,” explained Schultz (2008, para. 23).

Founded in 1882 Atlantic Union College (South Lancaster, Massachusetts) is the oldest Adventist college that is still located where it was first erected. The school was established to train the workers of the church and music was mainly seen as a means to spread the gospel (Schultz, 2008).

John Robertson, who completed his doctorate from the Juilliard School of Music, was the first African-American to chair the music department at AUC: “As a condition for his coming he requested and got the Thayer Mansion, a nearby larger and historically famous building owned by the college” (Schultz, 2008, para.26).

With that accomplished, he set about to establish a comprehensive conservatory-style music program that would, along with the college program, include an extensive
preparatory music program. He expanded the staff by hiring qualified musicians living in that culturally rich region. The refurbished mansion was renamed the Thayer Conservatory of Music.

Finally, in the fall of 1974, Robertson presented The Thayer Conservatory Orchestra to the public in an inaugural concert that stunned and excited the community and college. A large symphony orchestra, staffed with qualified students and musicians from the region, TCO under Robertson and his immediate successor, Mark Churchill, provided many memorable performances of major orchestral works in subsequent seasons. (Schultz, 2008, Music at Atlantic Union College: An Historical Overview, para. 27–28)

The music department in the Thayer Mansion (later renamed the Thayer Conservatory of Music), was the first residence of the New England Youth Ensemble. It was Robertson’s work that established the music department at The Thayer Conservatory, which brought prominence and growth to the program (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7. Thayer Conservatory at Atlantic Union College fromhttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Thayer_Estate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Thayer_Estate)

In 1991 the music department at AUC received accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) through the work of Margarita Merriman and James Bingham who were professors in the department (Schultz, 2008). During this time the NEYE, directed by Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, and James Bingham’s choir toured nationally and internationally in venues where no other Adventist colleges had performed.
Music at Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University)

According to Schultz (2010) Washington Adventist University was founded in 1904. It was initially called Washington Training College and in 1907 the name changed to Washington Foreign Missionary College. In 1961 the name was changed to Columbia Union College and in 2009 the school was renamed Washington Adventist University. In 1914 music was offered as an area of study. “The school’s location led to an enviable ongoing cultural advantage that has benefited the college’s music program for over a century,” said Schultz, (2010, A Cultural Advantage Section, p. 2).

During the 1970s and 1980s enrollment at the school decreased and there was “…an actual proposal to merge CUC (Columbia Union College) with Atlantic Union College and relocate to another area” (Schultz, para. 10). However, CUC had dedicated and loyal professors who sought to see the school reach greater heights, and in 2003 Columbia Union College celebrated their 100th anniversary. The opening ceremony of the two-year celebration was held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D. C. with Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, James Bingham, and famous choral conductor and composer, John Rutter, conducting the New England Youth Ensemble and CUC’s Collegiate Chorale (Schultz, Columbia Union College at the Kennedy Center, 2003). Schultz (2003) quoted Washington Post music critic Joseph McLellan’s comments about the NEYE and CUC’s choir:

Columbia Union College in Takoma Park is far from the largest or best-known college in the Washington area, but it has an excellent music program, and a chorus, under the direction of James Bingham, that is notable for its quality even in a metropolitan region overloaded with fine choruses. . . . [The] program was imaginative in its choice of repertoire and polished in its performance. (Schultz, 2003, “Columbia Union College at Kennedy Center, pg. 4)

Rittenhouse and James Bingham relocated from AUC to WAU in the mid-nineties and they worked together over twenty-five years at WAU and more than a decade at AUC (Schultz,
The music department has strong choral and instrumental traditions dating back to the early 1900s, with Dr. James Bingham and Dr. Rittenhouse having the longest tenure in serving the music department in choir and orchestra respectively (Schultz, 2010).

The music department at CUC is recognized for having a quality program (Schultz, 2003, Music at the Kennedy Center). The university offers musical experiences and opportunities for international travel that are not normally offered at other universities (Washington Adventist University, 2010, Music at WAU). Former CUC student Aaron Wilson recounted, “My experience at CUC [now WAU] has been phenomenal... [Since] I’ve been here I’ve toured countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Brazil, Argentina... [and] I haven’t even graduated from this institution yet. I cannot think of any other place that offers so many opportunities to a [sic] undergrad” (Washington Adventist University, 2010).

The music department at Washington Adventist University has many gifted professors and the NEYE (the resident orchestra at WAU) continues to thrive as a product of the former direction of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and the current vision of Preston Hawes.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature consists of four sections: 1) the role and qualifications of the conductor, 2) the youth orchestra as an instrument of social change and relevance 3) the effect of music upon youth, and 4) trends of the performance structure and organization in youth orchestras.

Youth orchestras have served the musical needs of many young people throughout the United States and abroad. The goal of a youth orchestra is to produce musicians who have the experience of playing great repertoire, train them in the musical skills needed to play professionally, and to embed music in their lives at a young age (Pickney, 2000). While enhancing the future of music education, the youth orchestra gives the talented young musician the opportunity to experience greater depths of music making than is often experienced in a school setting.

Youth orchestras are also important to children’s development in Western classical music traditions (Subotnik, 2001). Such groups for adolescents promote the development of musicianship; moreover, results from several studies reveal a positive correlation between participation in after-school activities and a variety of outcomes such as increased academic achievement (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009), improved self-esteem and self-awareness (House, 2000; Zhang, 2001), and an optimistic outlook toward school (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). Like Cooper, et. al (1999), Fitzpatrick’s
(2006) study suggested that music students have a superior academic performance to their counterparts. Results from this study revealed that instrumental students in the same socioeconomic status category scored higher on standardized tests than students who did not play instruments. Other studies on the same subject supported these findings (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009).

According to Pickney (2009) students enjoy being involved in youth orchestras because they have the opportunity to perform music appropriate to their skill level, participate in a group in addition to their school orchestra, and have performance experiences that are not available in their schools.

**Role and Qualifications of the Conductor**

Conductors are not only leaders of the orchestra, but they are visionaries and interpreters of the composers’ intent for the music. According to Leonard Bernstein (1959), great conductors are rare because it takes someone with skill and talent to be able to guide a group of trained musicians in their own right to perform as one instrument. The conductor’s job is multifaceted; and great conductors have superb musicianship, good communication, and artistic direction (ibid). Philip Hart (1979) indicates that conductors should have sustainability in order to lead the ensemble to the greatest levels of performance. Hart also noted that orchestras do not benefit from multiple conducting styles over a short period of time as opposed to the demands of a talented resident conductor.

Like Bernstein, Van Horn (1979) reported that good conductors have experience playing in orchestras and are able to understand from a member’s perspective, which allows them to create an atmosphere of respect and cohesive collaboration. An effective conductor should have artistic, organizational, and leadership skills. However, the craft is developed through the actual
experience of conducting, and good conductors have to learn the details of their profession by experience (Van Hoesen, 1939; Nussbaum, 2005).

Johnson (2010) defined music for youth orchestra as “music that has been composed specifically for performance by a youth orchestra, rather than music that is playable by a youth orchestra” (p.44). Contemporary compositions should be made accessible for the youth orchestra and “composers need not make compromises when composing for youth orchestra or to ‘write down’ to their technical level. Instead composers can create music that is technically and intellectually challenging and innovative, not only for themselves but also for young musicians” (p. 44).

Johnson (2010) listed the important composers of youth orchestra music: Aaron Copland, Grace Williams, Cedric Thorpe Davie, Nicholas Sackman, and Richard Meyer. He maintained that these composers wrote music while keeping the young musicians’ talent in mind without undermining their technical abilities.

Conductors from Nussbaum’s 2005 study revealed that conducting is innate and is usually something people gravitates towards as a result of their musical experience. Ewen (1943) expounded, “The qualities by which every great conductor must be identified are found in him to a remarkable degree: not only sound instinct, inborn musicianship, and instinctive feeling for the technique of the trade, but also temperament, and flair for the dramatic, and a consummate mastery over the orchestra, score, and audience. . . . He is, in short, a born conductor” (p. 60).

According to Hilary Apfelstadt (1998), the goal of successful conductors is to choose quality music, program creatively, build group morale and sense of self-worth, and choose pieces that have significant texts. Pickney (2000) conducted a study of the repertoire selection of youth
orchestras. She says the orchestra director must be competent in choosing the appropriate repertoire for young musicians. Moreover, Pickney maintained that good directors are aware of the knowledge needed to select appropriate repertoire, and they must understand the educational goals and methods of teaching each selected piece of music. According to Pickney, the most frequently programmed composers of the 74 youth orchestras in her study are Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and J.S. Bach; the most frequently performed arrangers were Isaac, Leidig, and Sandra Dackow, and the most frequently programmed arrangements were Rimsky-Korsakov’s *A Night on Bald Mountain*, Ravel’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and Isaac’s arrangements of “Russian Sailor’s Dance” from *The Red Poppy*.

Orchestra conductors are vital to the life and direction of an orchestra—especially a youth orchestra. Directors must have a particular skill set in order for the group to thrive and they must be able to lead the group with gusto and in the musical direction and vision of the organization. Handy (1995) quoted Charles Munch of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, ‘The orchestra is not a docile instrument. It is a social body, a collection of human beings. It has a psychology and reflexes. It can be guided but it must not be offended’ (p.10).

**Instruments of Social Change**

Since 2000, more research has been conducted on the subject of youth orchestras. Several studies have focused on youth orchestras that function as instruments of social change (McCashin, 2002; McCashin, 2005; Kartomi, 2007 and Thoen, 2009). In addition, Lam (2005), Albert (2006), Hollinger (2006), Thoen (2006), Fitzpatrick (2006), and Flenaugh (2012) addressed the social implications of participating in youth orchestras. Results from Albert’s (2006) study revealed that students’ attitude towards music is significantly related to their socio-economic status.
It has often been said that music enhances individuals’ and communities’ health and social life. Moreover, the youth orchestra serves as a social learning community for its participants (Moore, Burland, & Davidson, 2003). Guest and Schneider’s (2003) study revealed positive social outcomes that resulted from participating in similar activities. Another study suggested that improved social networks and social skills are a result of participating in organizations (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

Washington and Beecher’s (2010) study focused on the social power of music in various countries and communities in the Middle East, and if it were not for the connecting power of music the participants would not interact with one another under normal circumstances. The Divan Orchestra was created as a performance medium for youth from age ten to late twenties and the orchestra has become a platform for its participants to discuss social issues that would not be addressed otherwise. The authors explained how the orchestra represents unity and collaboration when they tour. One student member announced, ‘Wherever we go, we are ambassadors of hope and peace’ (131).

Cohen and Palisofsky (2013) recorded similar social implications in their study involving members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) consistently visiting and sharing music with incarcerated female youth. The young girls listened to music normally not in their sphere of influence and they participated by singing and acting. In addition, during their rehearsals for performances they would step outside their comfort zone and sing solos and duets and in small groups. According to the authors, these young ladies often traveled to listen to CSO open rehearsals conducted by Ricardo Muti. When they attended the rehearsals they were allowed to wear clothing that reflected societal normality. Results from this study show they experienced the camaraderie, self-esteem and self-worth of performing in a musical group.
Like Cohen and Palisofsky (2013), Ramnarine’s (2011) study investigated three orchestras in the United Kingdom who engaged in bringing their music to unfamiliar audiences by performing a variety of music and bringing music to children who were at or below the poverty line. She concluded that the function of the orchestra is moving from a self-contained nucleus to becoming aware of the society that surrounds them.

**The Effect of Music upon Youth**

Previous investigators have found positive effects of music education on students’ view toward school (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999 Southgate & Roscigno, 2009). Co-curricular activities involving music may positively affect student achievement and self-reliance in Adventist schools (Sandiford, 2012). Sandiford (2012) examined students in private Adventist schools who participated in co-curricular activities inclusive of music (band and choir) and sports. His research revealed that students who participated in music groups had higher average achievement scores than students who participated in sports. Moreover, Lehtinen’s (1992) study found that music can be used to mold students to grow spiritually.

Sandburg (1958) investigated instrumental music that could be played for religious services in Seventh-day Adventist schools. The author stated,

> the added outlet for musical expression in church benefits the student. There is opportunity for gaining experience in playing often before an audience. . . . When the student finds a demand for his particular talent which he has developed while in school, the chances are increased manifold so that he will continue his musical experiences after he has graduated from school. . . . The carry-over of his instrumental skill from school to church and community provides an excellent reason for continuing his playing in post-graduate years…The performing of religious instrumental music should keep the instrumentalist in close association with the things which are best suited to the development of a stable character, emotional stability, and a satisfying life. . . . The cause for good music can be closely allied to the religious instrumental program in a school or church. (p. 2–5)
From the body of aforementioned research, it is evident that youth benefit from performing sacred music that can allow them to mature spiritually. When young people experience various forms of music through participating in youth orchestra there are positive behavioral outcomes and performing sacred repertoire allows him or her to develop both skill and character.

**Performance Structure, Organization, and Administration in Youth Orchestras**

Until the last decade little research has been done on the subject of youth orchestras (Rabin, 1968; Schafer, 1982, Dowdy, 1995). Schafer (1982) researched the history, structure, and organization of youth orchestras in the state of Pennsylvania. Dowdy (1995) conducted an historical study focusing on the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio, Texas from 1977 to 1994. The subsequent study was conducted during the beginning of the youth orchestra movement in the United States and adds important research to the field.

Rabin (1968) conducted an historical study on the development and structure of the Greater Boston Youth Symphony orchestra during its initial six years. He analyzed the effect of student participation and identified types of structures of youth orchestras. Rabin categorized them as independently structured, public school sponsored, municipally sponsored, adult orchestra sponsored, privately sponsored, and higher education sponsored youth orchestras. In addition to investigating initial development and structure of the orchestra, the author researched the influence and effect that the orchestra had upon its youth, the home musical environment of its participants, and the effect that participation in the orchestra has upon the post high school behavior of its participants. He found that participation in youth orchestra had an overall positive effect on post-secondary school behavior and involvement in music.
In 1982, Schafer conducted a study on the structure of youth orchestras in Pennsylvania. In this study the author analyzed the administrative structure, performance policies and procedures of each youth orchestra in Pennsylvania, and he examined the opinions and attitudes of the members as well as school music educators regarding the school and youth orchestra relationships. Questionnaires were administered to sponsors of the youth orchestras, student members, and selected music educators. His study revealed that the thirteen youth orchestras have a philosophy, organized rehearsal and concert schedules, and standards for student membership. Overall, students see the value of participating in such a group because of improved musicianship, social interaction among peers with like interests, and the opportunity to perform quality literature. The study also showed that, in general, music educators support the youth orchestras; however, they are concerned with their students having negative feelings toward the school orchestra as a result of participating in an advanced ensemble. Schafer (1982) says music teachers would like to see more communication between youth orchestra conductors and school music educators and a change in the number of students who do not participate in the school orchestra while in the youth orchestra.

This review of literature highlights the important aspects of the youth orchestra. Having exceptional conductors who understand the components of a great orchestra (and youth orchestra) is an important dimension to the sustainability and success of the group. Moreover, developing a great conductor takes time and effort as well as the actual experience of conducting an ensemble. Conducting an orchestra involves knowledge of the scores, interpreting the intentions of the composer, and the ability to communicate effectively. Great conductors command the attention of the musicians and they are able to clearly outline a vision for the group. Moreover, being at the right place at the right time has revealed the talents of many
conductors who may have gone unnoticed otherwise (Sharp & Stierman, 2008). Orchestra directors must be able to choose appropriate repertoire for the group and seek opportunities for their orchestras to have a presence among unlikely participants in its community (Cohen & Palisofsky, 2013). This is the current trend in the United States with *El Sistema* (Hollinger, 2006; Flenaugh, 2012). “*El Sistema* is a tested model of how a music program can both create great musicians and dramatically change the life trajectory of hundreds of thousands of a nation's neediest kids. *El Sistema* Venezuela has nurtured international musicians such as Edicson Ruiz and Gustavo Dudamel and the world-renowned Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra” (El Sistema USA, n.d.).

Youth orchestras can serve as a platform for social change and allow students to become aware of their place and importance in the community by understanding the intrinsic nature of music and the significant value it adds to the human experience. Youth orchestras should connect with their community by identifying their audience, attracting their attention, and understanding their tastes (Harrison, 2009).

The youth orchestra positively effects behavior and musical involvement. Moreover, it can be used as a tool for spiritual development and have a lasting effect on participants and audiences. Notwithstanding, organization and structure are of great importance to the success and sustainability of the youth orchestra. The author found little research regarding youth orchestras who consistently perform sacred music in their repertoire. Because this study traces the history and development of the flagship youth orchestra of the Adventist church, information on the current educational trends and statistics of the denomination has been included.
Research Questions

This research is concerned with the influence of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse on the musical culture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in her work with the New England Youth Ensemble, a group for Adventist youth who perform sacred and classical music. In addition, the author explores the organization, structure, and performance practices of the members as well as the ensemble as a whole. The researcher examines the following questions:

1. How did Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse’s work with the New England Youth Ensemble affect the musical culture of the Seventh-day Adventist church and education system?
2. What type of structure, organization, administration, and performance practice characterize the NEYE?
3. What are the performance practices of the members NEYE and the ensemble as a whole?

Methodology

This paper is an historical study of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and her work with New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE); the writer conducted an exhaustive search of all aspects of the musical career of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and the NEYE. The author collected and analyzed information from books, journals, newspapers from the communities in which Rittenhouse taught, school newspapers, archived video interviews of Rittenhouse, interview transcripts, and her compositions. In addition, the author interviewed former members of the NEYE, subjects who worked closely with Rittenhouse, and utilized e-mail correspondence. The researcher also examined obituaries, concert programs (including program notes), websites, and tax documents.
CHAPTER III


Virginia-Gene Shancel was born in Lacombe, Canada at Canadian Union College, an Adventist institution of higher learning, on October 15, 1922, to George and Win Shancel (Byrd, 2011). Her mother, Win Shancel, taught music at Canadian Union College and her father taught history (V. Rittenhouse. Obituary, September 11, 2011). At three years of age she moved with her parents to South Africa where she received her formal training from British teachers and lived there until she was eighteen years of age (Miller, 2003).

She began formal training on the piano and violin at the age of six (Washington Adventist University, 2013), and at the age of thirteen she won a scholarship in piano, violin, and composition at the University of South Africa (Schultz, 2009). Rittenhouse also won a competition to play with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. According to Dr. Rittenhouse, she started composing at the age of three and later composed several fugues and songs about historical events because of her affinity towards the subject (Miller, 2003). At the age of ten she performed her own compositions on National Public Radio when she was on furlough in the United States and on South African Broadcasting Corporation Radio. According to Virginia-Gene, these were the earliest performances she could remember (Miller, 2003). She had the opportunity to study with Ivy Angove, concert violinist, at the Stellenbosch Conservatory in South Africa (V. Rittenhouse, Obituary, September 11, 2011).
Rittenhouse was the recipient of several awards. Alita Byrd (2011) interviewed Dr. Rittenhouse and she spoke about one such important honor:

She then won the prestigious London Associated Board Overseas Award, the top music award in the country [of South Africa]. She still tells the story with emotion in her voice, mainly because she feels her victory was such a witness. ‘I wouldn’t travel on Sabbath, so I had to take the old slow train to Pretoria on Saturday night, while the other contestants took the fast train to get there in enough time to rehearse. I didn’t get there until shortly before I had to go on stage and just had time to dash through my piece with the accompanist. My professors were very angry—they said I had a great chance of winning and was giving it all up for nothing. I left the moment I finished because I didn’t expect to win. I’d heard there was a brilliant pianist that morning and the judges had already made up their minds. Then I got word I had won. The head of the university came to me and apologized, telling me to keep my religion because it made me what I was.’ (Byrd, 2011, para. 48)

In 1954 Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse graduated from the University of Washington and began teaching at Walla Walla College (now University), an Adventist institution located in College Place, Washington. She taught at Atlantic Union College (AUC) from 1946 to 1954 before traveling to Jamaica with her husband, Harvey Rittenhouse, a surgeon who served as a missionary doctor at the Adventist hospital in the country (Washington Adventist University, 2013). During her time in Jamaica she taught violin and piano at Northern Caribbean University (The Landmark, 2012). “[They] often presented fund-raising concerts for the hospital and returned in 1969 for further concerts. She thinks that music and medicine are compatible, noting that her husband finds rehearsing ‘relaxing’” (Barrett, 1970, Part E).

Rittenhouse received her Master of Music degree from Boston University in 1954, and in 1963 she was the first person to receive the Doctor of Music Arts degree in piano performance from John Hopkins University’s Peabody Institute of Music (Washington Adventist University, 2013).
Dr. Rittenhouse performed her own *Jamaican Suite* for violin at Carnegie Hall in 2003 and the *Vision of the Apocalypse*, her lifelong work, was performed on Pearlman Stage in April 2004. Nadia Boulanger, Leon Fisher, and Louis Persinger are among her teachers and she has pursued additional studies at the Julliard School and *Ecole d’Arts Americaine* at Fontainebleau (Washington Adventist University, 2013).

**Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse’s Chapel Chamber Ensemble**

The researcher discovered an archived concert program entitled “The Third Annual Christmas Candlelight Concert” presented by the Friends of the Princeton Library and the Princeton Historical Society at the First Congregational Church in Princeton. The concert program described the early ensemble:

> The Chapel Chamber Ensemble was organized by its director Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse in 1965 as a group of musicians dedicated to the presentation of sacred music. Since that time the group has presented concerts of sacred classics in churches of all faiths throughout the East Coast including performances in New York, Washington, Boston, Worcester [Massachusetts], Albany, Portland and Hartford. . . . The present concert is the third performance by the Ensemble in the lovely old church in Princeton. (1969)

This group was formed a few years before the NEYE; they presented a Christmas concert in 1969 and possibly concertized during the same time the NEYE was established. The group also produced a recording (see *Figure 8*).
The New England Youth Ensemble

Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1988) stated, “The unique character of the New England Youth Ensemble first began to form some fifty years ago in the Shankels’ simple little home on the campus of Helderberg College in South Africa” (p. 31). Virginia-Gene spent her earlier years at Helderburg College, an Adventist institution in South Africa, where her father taught history and her mother had the gift of finding children’s hidden talents (Byrd, 2011). Their small home was always filled with students.

Virginia-Gene’s mother was a trained elocutionist and was the greatest influence in her life. Because Virginia-Gene had advanced well on both the piano and violin, her mother wanted to avoid any difficulties that would arise from playing with the less advanced students. She taught Virginia-Gene how to be comfortable on the stage; therefore, her job was to announce the students and the pieces they were going to play (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998). Dr. Rittenhouse believed that parents should not simply allow their children to choose their direction in life, but nudge them gently in the direction where there is talent (Miller, 2003). Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse (1998) expounded, “In this context it’s not surprising that Virginia developed an interest in the idea of promoting children and their talent” (p. 31).
According to Byrd (2011), ‘[Preston] Hawes, who served as concertmaster of the NEYE for many years . . . said that Rittenhouse called everyone in the orchestra her kids. Everything she did was out of love for us, love for the mission of the orchestra, [and] love for God ’ (para. 10). Dr. Rittenhouse had no children of her own; however, she has influenced and cared for many students during the time of her music ministry (Rittenhouse & Minchin-Comm, 1988). Her influence caused many of her students to change their plans of where to attend college and career paths (Byrd, 2011).

In an interview with David Miller (2003) on the campus of Washington Adventist University Virginia-Gene recalls,

the next stage was this unexpected formation of the New England Youth Ensemble—which started out with no intent at all of it ever becoming what it is now. I just got a few of my young people together (a little group in my living room) and said, ‘Let’s do some playing together.’ I thought it might give them a little bit of interest. It [was] just unbelievable how it moved and it grew and became the New England Youth Ensemble, to the extent that it has now toured the forty-four countries of the world in a mission to, as we say, ‘Share God’s love through great music’. . . . It’s been a very warm wonderful experience . . . . They tell me over and over, ‘You’ve transformed my life’ . . . . it’s not just the music, it’s the mission. And I tell myself this is the greatest purpose of this music. This mission of music is a powerful mission—absolutely—both within the group itself, and, in turn, a powerful mission to the world. So that’s what makes it worth all the effort and all the struggle, and all that we go through to do these tours. (Tribute to Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, December 10, 2011)

Although New England was always home for Virginia-Gene, in 1964 the family finally settled down and purchased their home, the historic Butterick mansion, in Sterling, Massachusetts. It was in this house that Virginia-Gene prepared her lectures when she worked for the University of Hartford in Connecticut, and where the New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE) was formed five years later in 1969 (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998). The small group of five children consisted of four violins and one cello (New England Youth Ensemble, n.d.). Among the original members are Marcia Kidder, Connie Rittenhouse, Jerry Rittenhouse, and Glee Charlestream (V. Rittenhouse. Obituary, September 11, 2011). The average age of
participants was fourteen years and most of the members were proficient on two instruments (ibid).

The NEYE soon outgrew the music room in the Butterick mansion and they held rehearsals in the basement of the Village Church of Seventh-day Adventists in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. The blossoming orchestra outgrew the basement and the rehearsals moved to the music building on the campus of Atlantic Union College (AUC), a Seventh-day Adventist institution, when Virginia-Gene rejoined the faculty. The family, including Virginia-Gene’s parents, had lived and worked at AUC eight years before (in 1956). According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1988), within the first six months of the NEYE’s existence their name “had been picked up at some small-church program—a label that would stick and become unchangeable” (p. 28-29). The ensemble played at Radio City Hall before their first international tour (Watkins, 2011). According to Watkins (2011), “During the summer of 1973 the Ensemble made a successful tour of Europe which included Iceland, the International [Adventist] Youth Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland, The New Gallery, London, and climaxed with a performance at the world-famous music center of Fontainebleau, France, by special invitation of Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger” (para. 2). She later wrote a letter of gratitude for the performance of the NEYE. See Figure 9.
The following is a description of the ensemble from the concert program for The New England Conference of Christian Women’s Clubs and Christian Business and Professional Women’s Councils:

The New England Youth Ensemble, organized four years ago by its director Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, is a group of highly talented and dedicated teenagers devoted to the cause of making and sharing sacred music. Their unique presentations have inspired audiences both young and old. They have appeared throughout the East Coast including Boston, Worcester, Hartford, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Among the group are six first prize winners in the Massachusetts Music Teachers Association’s Annual competition in Boston and also a number of young people are winners in the New England Piano Teachers Annual Scholarship Award. All members of the group are devoted young Christians and are dedicated to sharing their talents for the glory of God and the Christian witness. (1973)

When planning tours she met objections and was often advised not to proceed with her tour plans for the group. However, Virginia-Gene was a person who was full of integrity and she felt Spirit-led when she made decisions for the group. She did not heed the suggestions of the naysayers, yet she forged ahead girded with prayer and determination to accomplish the plans.
she set out to do. Surrounded by her mother and supportive colleagues she was fortified to accomplish her life’s work (Rittenhouse & Minchin-Comm, 1998). “With her indomitable spirit and energy she was able to find and use performing sites and situations our host governments never dreamed of. When local Communist officials tried to discourage these concerts, Virginia-Gene would merely smile and suggest how the concerts could materialize” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998, p. 9).

With her mission of evangelism and bringing people together through beautiful music, Virginia-Gene was a woman who accomplished so many feats and played in countries many thought impossible, because of her faith and indomitable spirit (Miller, 2008).

Famous choral conductor John Rutter also observed her persistence and perseverance when she invited him on one of their tours, recalling how he sent a detailed fax explaining why it would be difficult for him to go on the tour. However, when Dr. Rutter met with her the following week, Virginia-Gene told him that she knew he would join them, pretending to ignore all the negatives. He was convinced and joined the NEYE on tour that year (Byrd, 2004).

It was no simple feat when the orchestra toured Poland during the Communist period and crossed the border from Warsaw to Vienna. The authors recollect, “That border crossing was not, however, any inconvenience compared to the passage of Austria. The Iron Curtain was not just a figure of speech, they found. Barbed wire, iron spikes, electrically charged fences, towers, guards with guns. . . . Suddenly all the fun and laughter on the bus stopped. Everyone froze. It was like passing through the jaws of a great steel trap” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998, 62). After the thorough search of the instrument cases they were finally cleared by customs in time enough to play their concert in Stadt Halle in Vienna. The young ambassadors overcame
several obstacles; nevertheless, they had a successful tour and received an invitation to return to Poland in 1975 (ibid).

According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1998), one of the greatest events in the history of the youth ensemble occurred on their second visit to Poland in 1975. The NEYE had the opportunity to play for President and Mrs. Ford who were in Poland for a state visit, and he personally congratulated the group on their performance and expressed his gratitude because NEYE had represented the United States so well. President Ford stated, ‘You don’t know how proud I was. I looked at your wonderful young faces and heard the superb performance that you gave this evening. You are America’s youth and there are none finer. And I thank you very much’ (New England Youth Ensemble Program Notes, Veteran’s Memorial Stadium, Rhode Island, 1975, para. 5).

The NEYE was able to go on these tours through the help of the Friendship Ambassadors program. The ensemble was chosen above several prominent groups to represent the United States in a three-week tour of Poland “for the promotion of goodwill and understanding between the youth of America and the countries of Eastern Europe” (New England Youth Ensemble and Kingsway Symphonic Choir Tour Program, 1979).

According the Lancastrian, the school newspaper for Atlantic Union College, the article entitled “Youth Ensemble to Tour Russia” records:

Word had just been received that the New England Youth Ensemble, under the direction of Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, has been chosen over hundreds of applicants from all over the United States to be the first musical organization to make a concert tour of the Soviet Union during August, 1976. This invitation has been extended by officials in the Soviet Union to the Friendship Ambassador Organization in New York and constitutes, in the words of Friendship Ambassadors, ‘a major breakthrough.’

On April 8, Dr. Rittenhouse received word that the New England Youth Ensemble was one of the two organizations chosen, the other being the Hardin-Simmons University
Choir of Texas. The two organizations will travel together but will present separate concerts, though at times they will combine for certain occasion.

The Ensemble will leave August 11, spending eight days in concerts in Poland, and the remainder of the three weeks will be spent in Russia, including concerts in Moscow, Riga, and Leningrad, returning September 1. (April 22, 1976)

Virginia-Gene did not take these opportunities for granted. According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1998) the New England Youth Ensemble was the only traveling youth orchestra in the United States at the time.

She often gathered the ensemble for group prayers and called for special morning prayer before tours. When they arrived at various countries and they also met for sunset worship (to close the Sabbath hours on Saturday). “Everyone needs to have a ‘clean slate’ to begin the task. Let there be nothing hindering God’s working the miracles for which they were asking,” Dr. Rittenhouse advised (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988, p.71).

According Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse (1988), before going to the airport for their tour to Russia (by way of Poland) they were told that all the concerts had been canceled. Virginia-Gene and her husband, Dr. Harvey, spent the next two hours in prayer for God to work a miracle. A few hours later they received news that the tour could go on.

In August, 1976, the Ensemble was invited by Sputnik International to be the first musical organization to enter the Soviet Union under the auspices of Friendship Ambassadors. The acclaim accorded their concerts by the young audiences in Moscow, Riga, and Leningrad was extraordinary. The concert at the Palace of Culture in Moscow was taped and rebroadcast throughout the Soviet Union by Radio Moscow while the Associated Press carried the story of their success in the leading newspapers of the United States. Russian officials called the tour a ‘triumph’ and the performance and deportment of these young American musicians an unexpected ‘challenge’ to the youth of the Soviet Union. Once again the medium of music, the friendship and good will was fostered between the youth of the two great countries and the members of the Ensemble proved themselves Ambassadors in the finest sense. (New England Youth Ensemble Concert Program, Veteran’s Memorial Stadium, Rhode Island, 1975, para. 5)
In 1977 the NEYE toured North America, including the West Coast, Texas, Michigan and Canada. They performed on Channel 5 TV, Boston, on the “Good Day Show.” In 1978 “[h]ighlights were a T.V. presentation from Memphis, Tennessee and an Easter performance at the Washington National Cathedral” (New England Youth Ensemble and Kingsway Symphonic Choir Tour Program, 1979).

In 1981 the orchestra toured Israel after the bombing of Beirut and they met opposition when trying to make the decision to go. They were offered luxurious accommodations in Greece but many of the orchestra members declined to go unless they were going to Israel. Several parents were concerned, but the trip went on as scheduled and the NEYE enjoyed successful performances in Israel. They felt protected because “the morning they left a bus was bombed in Jerusalem near their hotel. There had been risk, but the blessing outweighed everything else” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988, p. 99). Virginia-Gene did not spend money on expensive hotels; however, the orchestra would often stay in hostels and sleep in church fellowship halls and pews when on tour (Byrd, 2004). They believed that going to share their music in the war-torn country was part of the mission and purpose of the group.

Because Virginia-Gene wanted to share her concerts with more people than just aristocrats she requested to have concerts in churches (while touring Communist countries) and in the parks so the passersby could hear their beautiful music. Sometimes church members waited for hours. Then, at great personal sacrifice, the congregation would serve them a meal (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988).

Hallmarks of the NEYE include sleeping on the bus, enjoying one another’s company, eating cold lunches, camaraderie among the players, and spending time in prayer and worship. Other trademarks entailed singing hymns, Bible discussions, playing concerts with the smaller
ensembles when instruments have been left behind or delayed in traffic, and malfunctioning buses. These trips were accompanied by the mishaps expected of teenagers: lost airline tickets, misplaced passports, lost luggage, missing instruments and the like. One veteran member said that after performing with NEYE life only goes downhill (Byrd, 2004).

The ensemble has performed for all classes of people, they knew how to survive with minimal necessities, and the group often had fun together. Moreover, “A succession of young people [had] . . . been trained to humility and service rather than personal gain and stardom” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1998, p.137).

Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1998) revealed that the NEYE has played at many of the famous cathedrals including the Notre Dame Cathedral, Dom in Salzburg, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, San Marco in Venice, St. Bartholomew’s Church in New York City, Vilanow Palace in Warsaw, the Crystal Cathedral in southern California, St. John’s Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane, Australia and the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1995), preparations had begun for a return trip to Poland; however, in 1985 a plane had been bombed on the way to Europe and due to the political and terrorist upheavals the United States State Department placed a ban on travel to Europe during that summer. The NEYE made plans to travel to the world church session (the Adventist world church meeting) in New Orleans and had proceeded to make plans to cancel their planned trip to Poland. However, during the General Conference Session (of Seventh-day Adventists) Virginia-Gene learned that Poland lifted the ban on religious books and a supporter gave her the largest donation that the orchestra had received (at one time) to go on the Poland tour. Later she decided that the trip must go on as planned. The trip to Poland was a success and before they left the country “the people of Nova Holta [Poland], living so long under a cloud,
could hardly believe that these young Americans had made all that effort and faced the risk of defying the ban to bring them music” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988, p.134).

In 1988, the ensemble was preparing to play at Carnegie Hall for the first time, along with the Chamber Singers of AUC. There they had the first of many rehearsals with renowned conductor and composer John Rutter. Although skeptical at first he was very pleased with their sound.

Virginia-Gene worked closely with James Bingham, the choirmaster at AUC; the choir would often tour with the orchestra and they accompanied the NEYE on their tour to Bingham’s native land of Australia (Rittenhouse & Minchin-Comm, 1995).

The following year Virginia-Gene had the idea to travel to her homeland of South Africa; although she was born in Alberta, Canada, her early years were spent in South Africa. Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1995) indicated that the invention of the fax machine was the reason they were able to plan their trip so speedily. They toured all the major cities and institutions. During this time South Africa was still under apartheid; several people were against the ensemble going there because it would look like they were in support of the apartheid government. Virginia-Gene believed felt that “South African politics constituted some of the most significant issues of our time. There the young musicians could view history in the making as the inevitable changes had begun to evolve” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995, p. 40).

The tour to South Africa proved to be a test for the Ensemble that caused division among many involved in the orchestra as well as supporters. Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1995) recall:

Suddenly the Ensemble became the center of a huge turbulence. Many took sides in the conflict, and the opposition called forum meetings which turned into heated discussions of the issue. Others set up seminars in human relations and racial issues. Cartoons decrying the proposed tour appeared and were widely distributed
on campus. When the conflict had reached incendiary proportions a meeting was called for a fair and open hearing on the matter. Those wishing to attend, however, were prevented by picket lines. Mysterious figures appeared from distant places and seemed to be masterminding the whole disturbance. Even when church leaders called for reconciliation and rationality, a small minority still refused to cooperate. Never in her life had Virginia-Gene been in the center of such intense turmoil.

Serious threats of reprisals came daily. There were rumors of planned protest riots at the airport, and some even feared acts of sabotage on the plane. As a result of the uproar, only two black members of the group were courageous enough to face the storm and go to South Africa.

Night after night during this frightening time, Virginia-Gene paced her kitchen floor wrestling with the decision only she could make, Like Nehemiah building the wall of Jerusalem she wanted to reject the ‘company of Sanballet’ out of hand. At the same time, if these risks were real how could she in good conscience expose the kids to what might be serious danger? The voices which had protested the Russian tours were as but a murmur compared to this howl of anger. . . . the travel agent had received so many threats that she had hired detectives to see that no foul play occurred at departure time. (p. 41)

According to Rittenhouse and Minchin-Comm (1995), Virginia-Gene received a call from one of her students early in the morning while pacing the floor; he felt deeply convicted that she should carry on with the plans for the group to go on the tour to South Africa. In May and June of 1989 the tour went on as scheduled but it would have long-term repercussions. She was advised that there would be low attendance at the concerts in the poorer townships, but Virginia-Gene was determined to bring their music to every cross-section of the country.

They also visited the independent country of Lesotho during their journey. In many of the concerts the orchestra and choir would have exchanges of their music and native African music. Dr. Rittenhouse was thanked for her courage to come to South Africa in the face of political turmoil and racial divide. Upon return from South Africa she received letters of commendation from the Adventist church saying that relations have greatly improved with South Africa and North America divisions (entities of organization within the Adventist church) because of the mission of the NEYE (Rittenhouse & Minchin-Comm, 1995).
The researcher interviewed former NEYE member Jason Uyeyama, a member of the LA Philharmonic and Professor of Violin at La Sierra University, an Adventist institution in Riverside, California (see Appendix A). Uyeyama, who mostly toured with the group in the late eighties and early nineties, first met Dr. Rittenhouse when they were on tour in California and she invited him to play Bach’s *Double Violin Concerto* with the orchestra on an upcoming tour. Jason said the following about the work of Dr. Rittenhouse: “Being a performer and a musician is about giving; I think she [Dr. Rittenhouse] did a lot of giving to the audience . . . and not necessarily an audience who paid $150 to hear you. It was more about giving to the people who were not necessarily able to hear nice concerts. She brought music and spirituality to people who may not have had the opportunity otherwise” (Personal Communication, January 26, 2017).

Rittenhouse and Minchin-Comm (1995) stated that the NEYE had a tour to the Middle East planned in 1991 but the Gulf War caused them to cancel their plans. In lieu of traveling to the Middle East Rittenhouse arranged to have the NEYE tour Europe once more. Members sometimes had to improvise with solos and duets when music was lost; this was the case on this particular tour when music and stands were left on the bus that was parked in an undisclosed location a mile away from Saint-Martin-in-the Fields.

Similar to the opposition they met in their prior tours, there were many hurdles Virginia-Gene had to cross while preparing the NEYE’s tour to the Middle East. The authors recounted, “if Virginia-Gene had taken notice of all the opposition over the past twenty years, the Ensemble would barely have dared to cross the state line” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995, p. 92). However, she was advised to move forward in confidence as she had done in the past. They arrived safely and played for the dignitaries of Egypt. During their performance in Jordan they
played for the Queen. They were told that the group could be captured by Saddam Hussein at any moment (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995).

Former member, Naomi Burns Delafield, spoke about her most memorable performance as concertmaster of the NEYE in a personal conversation with the author:

One of the performances that I’ve often thought about was when a small group of us traveled with [Rittenhouse] in Amman, Jordan. It was a very big concert outside at night. There were riots out in the street; people were throwing rocks and some of them actually landed near the orchestra. Nothing was going to stop Beethoven’s Symphony that night! The theme of the orchestra was that ‘the music must go on’. . . . We would still play if some instruments were left behind, music arrived late, wet, lost, or blown into the bushes.—the music went on! (February 13, 2017)

During Virginia-Gene’s tour to Jordan she composed an arrangement of the Jordanian national anthem; it was recorded with an audience of several dignitaries and became the ‘official version’ of the country’s national anthem. When the NEYE traveled to Israel, one of their concerts was at the home of the U.S. ambassador, and the head of Israeli National Television attended their final concert to see if the reviews of the performance from the Cairo Opera House were exaggerated. He later invited them to return to perform a concert that would be televised (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995).

Soon after fundraising began for a tour to the Far East and on May 19, 1992 they headed off to China where they performed at the Shanghai Conservatory. “The Ensemble, as it was later discovered, was only the second music group from the West to come to China since the country had begun to open up” (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995, p.70). No sacred music was permitted so the choir changed the lyrics to a sacred anthem they performed. Because many Christians in attendance were brought to tears, the tour was in jeopardy of continuing. For the following five days no concerts were permitted and prayers ensued. They were finally allowed
to play after a statesman recognized Virginia-Gene at one of their concerts that was later broadcast on the national news (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995).

However, changes were in the making for the NEYE and they would soon find their new home. Rittenhouse and Minchin-Comm (1995) recount:

Now the summer of 1993, the Choir and Ensemble finally had to come to grips with a problem which had been brewing for two years. Although the opposition had largely gone underground after the first South Africa tour, the adverse reaction toward the success of other tours and Carnegie concerts had continued to escalate. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and James Bingham had been so fulfilled that they didn’t realize the seriousness, [or] even the nature, of some of the issues. Now the forces bent on destroying the work of the past ten years had to be faced squarely. . . . The record seemed clear enough, annual tours to the Western United States consistently had built up financial and moral support. . . . Highly successful Carnegie Hall engagements had increased in number each season. . . . The National Association of Schools of Music evaluated the music department of Atlantic Union College in more glowing terms. . . . The level of solo performance, they reported, ‘may be compared most favorably with such world-famous conservatories as the Juilliard School of Music.’ The enrollment of students from the United States and abroad was as high as it has ever been. (p. 114)

It was decided that the program could not continue at AUC and in the summer of 1993 Virginia and her husband would travel once per week to Takoma Park, Maryland where the orchestra relocated and held weekly practices in the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church. She admits that it felt as though she was starting from scratch. In April 1994, James Bingham who worked closely with the Ensemble and often took his choir on some of the tours, also relocated to Colombia Union College (CUC), now Washington Adventist University (WAU), located in the suburbs of Washington, DC. He brought 140 of his choir students with him (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995).

Twenty-five years in New England had deepened roots, and the decision could not be an easy one. Still the support and encouragement of the people in Washington indicated that people down there had caught the vision of NEYE goals and an awareness of what the music groups could do for their campus. Therefore, it was agreed to make the Ensemble and Choir part of Columbia Union College, beginning the 1994–1995 school year. (Rittenhouse & Minchin-Comm, 1995, p. 116)
In 1994 the NEYE relocated to Columbia Union College. The summer of 1994 Virginia-Gene planned a short tour to Canada because of the younger students who had joined the group; the trip began in Carnegie Hall. Hence, the choir and the NEYE joined once again the 1994–95 school year and they performed under the baton of John Rutter that same year. They were also planning to perform at the General Conference session in Amsterdam.

In 1995 they toured Europe, Israel, and Jordan. In a personal conversation with Preston Hawes, current director of the NEYE, the researcher discovered that the NEYE and the Columbia Collegiate Chorale were selected to represent the United States at the 1995 Jerash International Festival under the sponsorship of the Queen Noor of Jordan (February 27, 2017).

Hitherto, the group had suffered break-up and reorganization. However, during the 1994-1995 season the NEYE was able to forge ahead and with purpose and mission; it was also during this trying, yet triumphant, time that they celebrated twenty-five years of existence (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995, p.127-128).
CHAPTER IV
THE NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE TODAY

Current Director

David Miller, broadcast coordinator and Assistant Professor of History at Columbia Union College (CUC), now Washington Adventist University (WAU), conducted an extensive interview with Dr. Rittenhouse on April 4, 2003, just prior to the start of the two-year long centennial celebration’s opening concert at the Kennedy Center (Miller, D., 2003, Part 1 of 8). In the interview with Miller (2003) Virginia-Gene spoke about future successors of the NEYE. “That, of course, calls for the finding of a person that is going to have the talent, the time, the dedication, the spiritual vision. . . . It’s quite a tall order. . . . I certainly want it to go on with the same tradition, the same values, the same mission” (Miller, 2003, In Conversation with Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, Part 8 of 8).

Originally from Canada, the person who filled the “tall order” was Preston Hawes (Byrd, 2012). According to Barzio (2011), Virginia-Gene asked the talented violinist to travel as a soloist on their tour to Russia. Hawes (2011) recollects, “My first contact began with an unexpected phone call, when I was 15 and living on a farm in Saskatchewan, Canada. ‘Hello? Is this Preston? How would you like to travel to Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia? You’ll be playing the Mendelssohn violin concerto, of course!’” (para. 2).

I went on the trip and was instantly entranced by Rittenhouse’s magnetic personality and musical talent. She was 59 years older than I was, and seemed ancient—but only in body. That was the beginning of a number of trips that I took with the New England Youth Ensemble (NEYE). When it was time for me to start college, Rittenhouse promised me a full scholarship to study with her at a small, little-known school outside of
Washington, D.C. . . . I resisted, intent upon my life goal of studying with a famous violin teacher in New York. Like a fool, I brushed off her offer. (Hawes, 2011, para. 3)

Nevertheless, Hawes was uneasy about his decision to attend Mannes College of Music. He had lived two blocks from the World Trade Center, and on September 10, 2001 he prayed for God to show him the course he should take. After the events of September 11, 2001 he returned home to Canada and came to study at WAU the following year (Hawes, 2011).

In 2011 he became the full-time director of the NEYE and the artistic director of the New England Symphonic Ensemble (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, February 27, 2017). According to the website, New England Youth Ensemble, “This change has brought youthful vigor to the orchestra and it continues to pursue the vision of its founder” (n.d., Our History Section). Dr. Hawes is the Assistant Professor of Music and serves as the Head of Strings and the Director of Orchestral Studies at WAU (ibid). He received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Violin Performance from the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, Maryland) in 2016 (Crews & Bigler, 2016, para 1).

According to Crews and Bigler (2016) Hawes has received several music awards and has played under the baton of prominent conductors such as Marin Alsop, John Rutter, and Sir Neville Marriner. At the age of sixteen he became an Associate Performer of the Royal Conservatory of Music in 1997 after joining the NEYE on a tour of Europe. He received his undergraduate degree from Columbia Union College (now WAU) and a Master of Music degree from Yale University. He also studied at Mannes College of Music.

Dr. Hawes stated that “his number one focus is . . . seeking out new young talents and building up the New England Youth Ensemble” (Crews & Bigler, para. 3). According to Steed (2003), Dr. Rittenhouse reported that Hawes had the opportunity to attend The Julliard School in New York City, but he chose instead to come to WAU. In the interview with Lincoln Steed
(2003), Dr. Rittenhouse recounts her efforts to recruit Hawes to attend Columbia Union College (now WAU):

I recruit ensemble members from all over the country. I think of a brilliant young violinist who is coming to join us at Columbia Union College. He is choosing us above Julliard, the prestigious School of Music. . . . I said to him, ‘Preston, let me tell you something, I know we are not Julliard. We are trying to raise money for a new music building. I want you to understand that it is inadequate, but it is not a building that you are coming to.’ I told Preston that we are small, and we don’t have the facilities, and so on. ‘But, Preston, I can promise you that no place else can offer you what we can. We offer a Christian atmosphere.’ I talk to the players in New York, and I know what they think. The spiritual dimension is not there. Many of them would love to join our group. They beg to go on the tours. If I opened up the program, I would have all non-Adventists on the tours. They love the idea of the mission and the tour and all. So I said to Preston, ‘You’ll have the tours. We go throughout the world. You’ll play in Carnegie Hall and you’ll have—the most important of all—a Christian atmosphere.’ Well, I have convinced him. (para. 9)

Born on a college campus herself, Virginia-Gene was dedicated to Christian education and more importantly, she was dedicated to Christian education in the Adventist Church (Byrd, 2011). Moreover, she was determined to find a director who held the same beliefs, motivation, and drive, to fill her shoes (Miller, 2003). Preston Hawes has successfully picked up the mantle of her leadership in his own regard.

**The Drs. Harvey and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse Memorial Scholarship Fund**

According to Washington Adventist University’s (2015) promotional video for the Rittenhouse Scholarship Fund, the Drs. Harvey and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse Memorial Orchestral Scholarship is a scholarship for promising and talented music students to study music at WAU. One scholarship recipient, Vanessa Bionic, says, “Without the scholarship, I wouldn’t have been able to be a part of this ensemble, and being a part of this ensemble means a lot to me…because everybody…is like a family. I’ve learned so many lessons that impact other areas in my life as well, not just music” (Washington Adventist University, April 30, 2015). Many young musicians at WAU have cited at least five countries they have visited that year through
their participation in the unique music program, and they are certain they could not have gained such an experience at any other university (Washington Adventist University, Music at WAU, 2015).

Hawes revealed that the majority of his string students receive the Drs. Harvey and Virginia-Gene Memorial Orchestral Scholarship. He comments, “WAU… offers the highest scholarships I can think of and supporting that outreach to students is one of the most important things that a supporter can do. Typically music students are coming from situations where they’ve already spent… money on instruments [and]… lessons, and in order for them to come here they need that support” (Washington Adventist University, 2015). Hawes expounds: “To see the ability that having a scholarship has to free a student to actually focus on their studies… that’s really the ultimate gift a potential donor can give a student is the freedom to really flourish. The Drs. Harvey and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse Orchestral Scholarship is one that will make a huge difference to any student who’s lucky enough to be a recipient.” (ibid).

He goes on to say,

it’s also our goal to be an agent of positive change to anyone who hears us and anyone who come through our ranks. It’s my goal to instill in every ensemble member the knowledge that music is, least of all, entertainment and really is something that can change people for the better. (Washington Adventist University, 2015)

**Kennedy Center Performances**

In 2003 CUC (now WAU) celebrated its 100th anniversary with a performance at the Kennedy Center. “It was the opening event for what will be a two-year celebration” (Schultz, 2009, p.3). The NEYE and CUC’s Collegiate Chorale was conducted by John Rutter, who led the two music groups in three of his compositions: *Gloria, Requiem, and Feel the Spirit*, and there were many memorable moments in the momentous performance. Schultz (2009) recorded that Virginia-Gene opened the first half of the concert conducting Mozart’s *Die Zauberflote*
Overture and the audience applauded for three minutes. The NEYE had performed previously at the Kennedy Center in the mid-1970s when they accompanied the Adventist Chorale Society in a presentation of Advent hymns (Rittenhouse, 1974).

**Jamaica Connections**

During Virginia- Gene’s concertizing in her later years she maintained her strong ties with the Jamaican Adventist and classical music communities. According to Kimberly Whyte (2008), in 2008 the NEYE performed at the annual Feast of Lights held in Jamaica. This annual event is sponsored by Columbia Union College CUC (now WAU) and Northern Caribbean University (NCU), an Adventist institution of higher learning in northern Jamaica. Virginia-Gene formerly taught at NCU from 1950–1953. The presidents of both colleges were in attendance at NCU’s annual Feast of Lights concert, which was performed outside of Jamaica for the first time in thirty-six years (Whyte, 2008). The NCU Concert Choir, NCU Steel Orchestra, and the NEYE were among the featured performers for the weekend event. Both the NCU Concert Choir and the NEYE performed the national anthems for their respective countries. The New England Youth Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, presented Pastoral Symphony from the Christmas Oratorio by J.S. Bach as its inaugural performance of the weekend. Dr Weymouth Spence, president of Columbia Union College and alumnus of NCU, was the keynote speaker for the evening,” said Whyte (2008). Two years prior, the 45-piece NEYE visited Jamaica to perform in the same celebratory Christmas program (*The Jamaican Union, 2006*).

According to Michael Reckord (2013) Hawes performed Rittenhouse’s *Jamaican Suite* for Violin and Piano during the second annual Orrett Rhoden International Music Festival with Preston Hawes on the violin and Orrett Rhoden was the accompanying pianist. The event took
place at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Kingston, Jamaica (McCallister, September
24, 2013). Rittenhouse started composing this piece in 1955 while living and teaching in
Jamaica. “One could almost see the donkeys and market women suggested by the evocative
work,” Reckord mused (2013, para. 15). The festival was scheduled to be performed in Carnegie
Hall in 2014 and is “billed as the only classical music festival in the English-speaking
Caribbean,” reported MacCallister (2015, para. 1). Notwithstanding, the festival is named after
concert pianist Orrett Rhoden, a former student of Dr. Rittenhouse (Music & Vision Homepage,
n.d.).

Indeed, Rittenhouse’s influence has reached Jamaica as well as the United States and
Preston Hawes maintains musical relationships built through Dr. Rittenhouse’s work in Jamaica,
North America, and overseas.

Other Performances

The NEYE performed in Mexico at the Museo Nacional de Historia (National Museum
of History) in Chapultepec Park in 2003. The ensemble performed a gala concert in the Alcazar
Castle of Chapultepec (Mediatrelaity, 2003). Rachel Berthelson Davis, the assistant director of
NEYE at the time of this concert intimated, “Dr. Rittenhouse had an amazing amount of
initiative. . . . She had the tenacity of a bulldog and she will keep asking and questioning until
she knows she hits a brick wall; and then she’ll find a way around that brick wall”
(Mediatedreality, 2003).

Javier Montesuma, the director of Migration and Religious Affairs in Mexico, said, “it
was a wonderful experience for everybody. They did a terrific job—very professional; and also,
they did their best for this cause of peace and helping the children . . ., so we are very moved.
There are a lot of children without homes, without hope and with this they bring a light of hope,
and this is the best gift that they can give to the children in Mexico” (Mediatereality, 2003). The proceeds from the concert went directly to support homeless children in the streets of Mexico City (ibid). This type of concertizing helped promote the mission of the ensemble.

The orchestra has played at the Salzburg International Festival at least two times. In 2008 the orchestra played during opening night (Hynum, Part 7, January 17, 2010). Rittenhouse led the ensemble in a rousing performance of Vivaldi’s *Concerto in B for Strings*, RV 580, I. Allegro, where a soloist as young as thirteen years old also performed the third movement of the Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto (Strider, 2010). Even in her old age she conducted with energy Smetana’s “Dance of the Comedians” (Dance No. 3) from *The Bartered Bride*, Beethoven’s *Egmont Overture* and the *Overture to Bach’s Suite No. 3*. In the recorded video of the performance at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Virginia-Gene expounds,

thank you, indeed, for being a wonderful audience. It’s always an inspiration to us to have this kind of audience, and . . . as an encore I’d like to do something special. We are playing the Overture to the Bach Suite No. 3. The reason I say it is special is because I would like to play this in honor of Mr. John Rutter. We have the greatest privilege, for we are playing in Carnegie Hall concerts—we’ve just finished a concert in Carnegie Hall under Dr. Rutter’s conducting; it’s a privilege I cannot explain how wonderful [it is] to play his music—it was so inspiring. I think it is wonderful how our ties in England have become. (Hynum, January 18, 2010, part 10)

According to Jaclyn Day (2009) in the Columbia Union *Visitor*, Preston Hawes (current NEYE director) had an epiphany at the 2008 Salzburg Music Festival:

Hawes reports that his most memorable concert was with the NEYE at the 2008 Salzburg Festival in Austria. ‘To conduct works by Mozart in the Salzburg Dom, and to share conducting with Kapellmeister Czifra—the man who holds Mozart’s old job—was simply amazing,’ he recalls.

Deeply spiritual about the role of music in his life, Hawes says that he considers his greatest personal musical accomplishment to be the moment he realized that ‘music can, and does, effectively and sincerely bring people to Christ, and can be used as a tool of the gospel despite language barriers.’ (pg. 13)
Dr. Rittenhouse would often invite students whom she heard perform for the first time on tour in the United States to participate on international tours; in the 2010 tour she had a member from Mexico and California who she recruited to join the group on tour where they performed at the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral (Hynum, January 15, 2010).

The NEYE concertized to raise funds for orphans with AIDS in Zimbabwe and South Africa at the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral and Windsor Castle and throughout the rest of their tour. Rittenhouse announced, “The mission of this orchestra . . . is to take music to all people of all races and cultures and share music and bring people together through great music. The other mission, at present, is that we are . . . working towards raising funds as a project that our orchestra will not only share great music but will try to . . . meet the great need of suffering children,” Rittenhouse announced (Strider, 2010).

In 2007 the NEYE participated in the Rock Creek Festival where John Rutter conducted his Mass of the Children, and the NESE (New England Symphonic Ensemble), the professional branch of the NEYE was led by Virginia-Gene and CUC’s Columbia Collegiate Chorale was conducted by James Bingham. “Rittenhouse and her ensemble displayed boundless energy in upbeat music by Mozart, Vivaldi, Telemann, Haydn and Smetana” (Reich, 2007, Rock Creek Festival Concert, para. 2).

In Dr. Rittenhouse’s final years she shared the conducting podium with Preston Hawes, then the associate conductor; when Hawes conducted she also played as concertmaster (Strider, January 15, 2010, part 11). Her husband, Dr. Harvey Rittenhouse, accompanied her on her last tour with the group to Europe (Strider, January 17, 2010). Trenise Gully revealed that Dr. Harvey Rittenhouse attended tours and rehearsals and was always at Virginia-Gene’s right hand.
Gully commented, “They had a true love affair” (Personal Conversation, February 9, 2017). The support of Virginia-Gene’s spouse was an integral component of her success.

Dr. Rittenhouse performed at the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral with ease and finesse, yet with frailty. Former members of the orchestra said that Dr. Rittenhouse would take naps during cadenzas or long rests; however, she would wake-up in time to bring the orchestra in. According Naomi Delafield, she had the responsibility of bringing the orchestra in on time after those long rests (Personal Communication, February 13, 2017).

In the same performance in Ely Cathedral Dr. Rittenhouse mentioned why the venue was important to the NEYE.

Beyond the beauty of this chapel there is another reason why Ely is such a special place and that is that Mr. John Rutter—I just cannot pay sufficient tribute to what he has meant to the orchestra, and I understand his wife is here today and I think this is wonderful. The last performance at Ely was recorded [with the NEYE]. . . . I can only say [we] just recently celebrated the 100th performance in Carnegie Hall under the baton on John Rutter and through MidAmerica Productions. (Strider, January 17, 2017)

During a recent tour to Europe the NEYE missed a scheduled performance; however, they made the best of the situation and some members played at least a thirty minute street performance in front of enthused passersby who seemed to be quite appreciative of the impromptu entertainment. The selections included classical instrumental and vocal solos, duets, and other popular group performances (Hynum, Part 2, January 7, 2010).

Two events worthy of mention occurred soon after the turn of the century in the early 2000’s. In March 2001 students from all over the United States and abroad came for a NEYE alumni reunion. Virginia-Gene exclaimed, “It was absolutely wonderful!” (Steed, 2002).

According to Alita Byrd (2011), Dr. Rittenhouse performed her very own *Jamaican Suite* for violin in October 2003 in Carnegie’s Recital Hall.
Before she completed writing her oratorio in 2003 Virginia-Gene was in conversation with David Miller, Professor of Journalism at WAU. Rittenhouse states,

I suppose you have to sacrifice, you know, it’s not a nine to five job, it’s twenty-four hours a day. . . . They have to know that it means so much to you and they are important to you . . . and its mission and all . . . that you just expect their loyalty and they give it. . . . I appeal to them anything that is worthwhile is worth sacrifice. . . . I think that any leader has to lead in a sense of giving of himself and sacrificing, otherwise you are not going to inspire loyalty in others if you don’t feel intensely loyal to what you feel is the mission. (Miller, 2003, Part 7 of 8)

Virginia-Gene recalls that her most memorable performance occurred in Russia in 1997 in “SKK” [Saint Petersburg Sports and Concert Complex] Arena, the largest roofed sports stadium in Europe (Barzio, J. M., 2011). The NEYE played for a large crowd in St. Petersburg and Rittenhouse exclaimed that hundreds of people congratulated them afterwards and lined the stage with flowers. She was filled with joy over the thousands of people who were baptized that day, and the orchestra was blessed to witness the occasion (Steed, 2002).

According to Byrd (2011), the orchestra had planned a tour to Europe in the summer of 2004 which included a visit to a summer string school in Austria and her oratorio was scheduled to be performed in South Africa the following year. Around 2004 she had also agreed to assist and revive the orchestra at Atlantic Union College (AUC). Both AUC and Columbia Union College (CUC), now WAU, consented to the arrangement for her to spend one week at AUC and one week at CUC (WAU). Though she taught at WAU, she and her husband still lived in Sterling, MA near AUC (Byrd, 2011).

Rittenhouse spoke about how she knew that she would be a musician. She said, “I had opportunities in other fields. . . . I loved history, but at the same time, nothing even ever came near my view of myself music was my life. I couldn’t think anything else. I would have never thought anything else” (Miller, 2003, part 7 of 8).
Since the NEYE relocated to Washington Adventist University (WAU) they have toured South Africa five times since 1998; two of the tours were with Dr. John Rutter. Their most recent trip occurred on May 28–June 16, 2012 with Preston Hawes leading the tour. This was the first major international tour since the passing of Dr. Rittenhouse. The members of the ensemble reported that they had great audiences and enjoyed interacting with the people and touring the city of Cape Town. The orchestra performed for dignitaries and they played a concert at St. Georges’ Cathedral, which was “a major center of resistance to Apartheid under the leadership of the Archbishop and now Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu” (Washington Adventist University, para. 3, September 13, 2012).

According to Washington Adventist University, “Besides the major concerts, the groups participated in worship services in several churches and schools and interacted with a wide cross section of South African society. For example, concerts were given at the all black Good Hope Seventh-day Adventist School, Cape Town, attended by children from kindergarten to high school” (September 13, 2012, para. 5). One of the principals from the schools they visited showed her deep satisfaction and appreciation towards the ensemble and expressed how the students rarely experience such performances. Barzio (2011) says “She could read a crowd and instinctively feel out what program would make the most indelible impression, what music would move them” (A Musical Experience Section, para. 3).

One of Virginia-Gene’s favorite places to perform was at the Muluti Adventist Hospital in Lesotho where they had a tradition of giving to the children who were hospitalized there. “Continuing a tradition of giving to the children started by Rittenhouse, flutist Juliana Baioni, presented blankets to the hospital crocheted by members of the Spencerville Seventh-day
Virginia-Gene’s Lifelong Accomplishment

Virginia-Gene spent about forty years working on her most important composition, *The Vision of the Apocalypse*, an oratorio written for choir and orchestra. On March 2, 2004 her lifelong work was premiered in Carnegie Hall.

In 1987 John Rutter gave Dr. Rittenhouse feedback on the oratorio when she met him for the first time (Byrd, 2011). Years earlier she met with world renowned musician Nadia Boulanger, who told her that her work must be performed:

The audition over, the pianist senses her effort has failed to impress Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger. The revered composition teacher—who for decades presided over a select roster of students in her Fontainebleau studio outside Paris—could intimidate even the most accomplished musician. (Watkins, 2009, pg. 18)

The elderly woman sits in silence, eyes closed and head bowed. A stately clock counts time and the pianist, terrified, prepares herself for rejection. Slowly, Boulanger raises her head, focusing her intense gaze on the younger woman. ‘I do not know how I can teach you,’ she begins quietly, in accented English. This music has been heard, not manufactured. It is like Schubert’s music; it is music that has come to you from . . . ‘ She pauses, waving an elegant hand heavenward. And then, looking directly at the pianist, she proclaims: ‘This music must be heard.’ (Watkins, 2009, pg.18)

Dressed for the occasion, Virginia-Gene narrated the premier of the performance of the oratorio reading from the book of Revelation (in the Bible) flanked by the NEYE and two choirs. Several of her former students attended and participated in the program. According to Byrd (2011),

among the audience that night at Carnegie Hall were numbers of long-time New England Youth Ensemble players and their families who flew in just for the performance—several flying from the West Coast for the day and back for work the next morning. Many others were able to get enough time off work to rehearse and play in the Oratorio. It was a reunion of hundreds of people who had worked with Rittenhouse over the years and whose lives had been touched by her dynamic personality and sense of mission. (para. 8)
Each of the three angels’ messages is set to music in different movements and the opening chorus is a setting of Psalm 90. (Byrd, 2011, para. 9)

The two choirs were the CUC Columbia Collegiate Chorale, conducted by James Bingham, and the AUC Pro Arts International Choir, conducted by Francisco Araujo. The enthusiastic audience was at capacity and there was a prolonged standing ovation at the end of the concert. This particular concert was the seventeenth concert the NEYE gave at Carnegie Hall and the event was sponsored by MidAmerica Productions (Schultz, 2009).

Kara Watkins (2009), quotes Dr. Rittenhouse reflecting on how her life ‘has been a series of miracles. The most satisfying of these, certainly, are the doors that have opened for the ensemble to share God’s love through music, to lift the audience’s eyes and ears heavenward, and to give hope to all who listen’ (p.18). Rittenhouse believed that music served a noble purpose and was not just meant for entertainment. In the article “The Role of Rhythm in Church Music” Rittenhouse (1974) stated, “Great music is capable of both creating and expressing our deepest emotions thus becoming the highest medium of spiritual communion. . . . This music becomes not merely a succession of pleasing sound patterns but indeed the voice of the human soul” (Part 1, para. 2).

In the same article she articulates:

Through the ages man has found his highest expression of worship through music. Worship and music were blended in magnificence at the dedication of Solomon's temple as 120 priests with trumpets were joined by the Levitical singers who, to the accompaniment of trumpets, cymbals, harps and lyres, raised such a triumphant sound of praise. . . . Here indeed was sacred music in its highest fulfillment bringing all into the very presence of God. (1974, Part 1, para. 3)

**Influence of Leadership on Members**

According to Robert Rittenhouse (n.d.), The Rittenhouse School of Music was established to carry on the legacy of Virginia-Gene and her love for music. The music school is located in Sterling, MA, in the Butterick Mansion, the original home the Rittenhouse family
purchased when they settled in Massachusetts when they moved from South Africa (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988). Some of her students still teach in her home (Rittenhouse, R., n.d.).

Participation in the New England Youth Ensemble positively affected the lives of several of its current and former members, many of whom are professional musicians that have started music groups and schools of their own. Connie Drexler Rittenhouse, niece of Dr. Rittenhouse, was a charter member of the NEYE who played the violin, viola, and was a solo pianist with the group. She studied piano with Virginia-Gene in Thayer Conservatory at Atlantic Union College (AUC), the original residence of the NEYE.

According to Rangeley Friend of the Arts,

when a number of former members of the Youth Ensemble had children, they asked Dr. Rittenhouse to start another group for these young people. She [Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse] started the Chamber Ensemble in 1999. Her niece, Dr. Connie Rittenhouse Drexler assisted her with the orchestra, and in 2004 Dr. Rittenhouse asked her to take over the directorship of the Chamber Orchestra. The chamber orchestra still has a number of members that are the children of the original Youth Ensemble members (n.d., History, para. 1).

Barzio, 2011, stated:

Rachelle Berthelsen Davis, who was involved with NEYE for more than a decade as a concertmaster and teacher, noted that four of the nine major North American Division Adventist college orchestras are directed by musicians who played in Rittenhouse’s ensemble: Naomi Burns Delafield at Canadian University College, Hawes at WAU, Lori Redmer Minner at Southern Adventist University, and Davis, who is the Music Department chair at Pacific Union College. She has certainly kept the voice of classical music strong and alive and inspired two generations of musicians to give back something of what she gave them, whether it was to their own children, or through their support and/or leadership of youth ensembles in their community. (para. 7)

According to the Advocate Staff of the Red Deer Advocate, Virginia-Gene had not returned to her birthplace of Lacombe, Canada to share the music of the NEYE. However, Preston Hawes, also a native of Lacombe, endeavored to bring the music of his mentor and
teacher back to their native Canada. Hawes organized a concert in tribute to Dr. Rittenhouse at the Canadian University College in the administrative building’s auditorium. He played pieces composed by Dr. Rittenhouse for the event (May 8, 2012).

“A memorial service for Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse was held . . . [at] Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church on Saturday, October 22, 2011. The service seemed a fitting tribute to someone who has dedicated her life to music as the musicians presented a program of classical works as well as hymns—each selection chosen specifically for its relation to Dr. Rittenhouse” (Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Memorial Service for Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, n.d., para.1).

Delafield, former concertmistress of the NEYE, spoke about writing an updated book with the help of fellow NEYE members, “It’s time for a new chapter” (Personal Communication, February, 13, 2017). The last book written about the ensemble was published in 1995, over twenty years ago. And who, other than the fellow members of the NEYE, could tell the stories of the orchestra the best? Dr. Rittenhouse influenced the lives of her students and people that she interacted with. In a personal communication with the author Delafield revealed, “what she did for me personally is not only give me the love of music and excitement about playing, but she put an excitement in me to do what she did” (ibid).

Rittenhouse’s oratorio, The Vision of the Apocalypse, is a musical rendition of the three angels’ messages in the book of Revelation from the Bible. After the third angel’s message John the revelator says, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, ‘Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:’ ‘Yea’, saith the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them’” (Revelation 14:13, King James Version). Indeed,
Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse planted the seed of music in the hearts of her students and they were taught to not only have zeal for the music, but to replicate the mission of the music.
CHAPTER V
ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE

Mission and Vision

Established in 1969 by Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, the NEYE is the resident orchestra at Washington Adventist University (WAU) since 1994. In August of 2011 Preston Hawes assumed the directorship of the NEYE.

The following is New England Youth Ensemble’s mission statement: “A Christian non-profit performing organization, the New England Youth Ensemble endeavors to instill in young musicians the mission of service through music that brings joy, solace, and adventure to all who hear, and in the words of J.S. Bach to perform with the overall aim of bringing ‘Glory to God and Refreshment of Spirit’” (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017).

Dr. Hawes’ goals for the orchestra are to “grow the numbers of core members, involve alumni to a greater degree, solidify the Carnegie Scholars Program in the educational experience of the NEYE and WAU students, and expand the performing repertoire” (ibid).

Non-Profit Organization

The NEYE is a private not-for-profit entity that exists to enhance the music education of its youth. The following statement is from a concert program from 1974:

The New England Youth Ensemble is an entirely self-supporting organization dependent upon the generosity of friends and music lovers for its support. If you would like to make a contribution—large or small—to help promote the witness of this group through music kindly fill out the form below and hand it to the Director (NEYE Concert Program, Boston Temple of Seventh-day Adventists, December, 1974).
The ensemble has a governing board of directors and there is a written guide for operations; other jobs include a librarian and assistant to the director (ibid). See Appendix B. The NEYE’s annual budget varies depending on the touring schedule.

From 1994-2004 there were ten board members (Internal Revenue Service, 1994-2004). In the 1985–86 concert season the business manager was George Choban and the tour director was Ariel Schmidt (New England Youth Ensemble, Tour Itinerary, 1985-86). Dr. Rittenhouse and her husband, Harvey Rittenhouse, were listed as directors and both positions were paid. In 1998 there were nine board members in addition to Drs. Harvey and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse and they also had one accountant. Currently, there are five persons on the board of directors (Internal Revenue Service, 2015).

**New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE)**

According to Preston Hawes, “The New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE) is the umbrella organization under which the NEYE falls. The two groups often blend but . . . within the [Adventist] church the organization is known as the NEYE, but functions professionally as [the] NESE” (Personal communication, March 13, 2017). The NEYE does business as the New England Symphonic Ensemble and is listed as a non-profit organization (ibid).

Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse’s obituary stated the following about the New England Symphonic Ensemble:

This group [the NESE] consisted of her students and a supplement of local musicians that was designed to accompany various choral groups as well as to play as an orchestra for performances at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. They appear on stage over a dozen times a year often working closely with the renowned composer and conductor, John Rutter, who formed a special bond with Virginia and the Ensemble over the years since 1988. (September 11, 2011)

Several alumni members have played in the Carnegie Hall Concerts and the orchestra is supplemented by professional musicians who are hired to play with the ensemble.
Guidelines

The researcher came across a set of rules for the ensemble as early as the 1970’s in Rittenhouse's archived documents entitled “Guidelines for the New England Youth Ensemble” (n.d.) The guiding principles consider the purpose, deportment, concert deportment, rehearsals, and code of social conduct. The purpose is outlined as follows:

The New England Youth Ensemble is devoted to the cause of great music, especially great sacred music. Its aim is to combine a high level of musical attainment with a dedicated Christian commitment. This serves to create a unique organization where character is on an equal basis with talent. Because of the extensive tours, both in this country and abroad, the Ensemble offers a unique opportunity to represent not only the highest ideals of our country, but also a challenge to our Christian faith and witness. (pg. 1)

Members of the ensemble were expected to heed the rules; because they toured often, students were required to exhibit appropriate deportment on and off the stage and were expected to possess the highest standards of Christian behavior. In addition, it was essential for members to be devoted to the ensemble and appreciate the privilege of participating in a touring orchestra (Guidelines for the New England Youth Ensemble, n. d.).

Students were expected to attend worship services and take a proactive approach to helping out with duties when traveling, such as setting up and breaking down the stage before and after concerts. Students were obliged to adhere to the dress code when they were not concertizing and during leisure time. They were encouraged to have a “cheerful” attitude when assuming the aforementioned responsibilities (ibid). Notwithstanding, Dr. Rittenhouse said that her main rule was that no one should complain (Miller, 2003).

Members were to refrain from the use of tobacco, indecent language, alcoholic beverages, drugs, or reading or distributing “pernicious literature”. Any student who would
engage in such conduct would not be permitted to remain in the ensemble (Guidelines for the New England Youth Ensemble, n. d.).

Appropriate for school-age youth, the students had certain expectations for social conduct:

A high standard of proper behavior between boys and girls is expected of each member at all times. Girls and boys of the Ensemble must be known as ladies and gentlemen. They are allowed the privilege of eating and riding together as long as their conduct is in accordance with the highest Christian standards. . . . Those of grade school and academy [high school] age are encouraged to keep their friendships of a general nature. Warm friendship and fellowship are highly encouraged. While on tour, no member or members must leave the group without permission. Conduct of members when outside the Ensemble is expected to be in accordance with church standards.

It is the hope and prayer of the Director and the Board of the Ensemble that each member will feel a deep personal responsibility to uphold the high standards of the group in order that our witness may be of the highest order. (Guidelines for the New England Youth Ensemble, n. d., p. 2)

The researcher discovered that there were guideline reforms for the ensemble in 1984. The document entitled “New England Youth Ensemble Guidelines-Reforms for 1984” included modifications and reinforcement in the following categories: musical standards, Sabbath observance, conduct, social conduct, rehearsals, and tour assignments.

Pop music of any kind was to be avoided at all times and all members were expected to respect the observance of Sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday and participate in worship services and discussion groups. More specific guidance was outlined for concert deportment, behavior when they lodged in the homes of church members during tours, and conduct on the bus during the tours.

Currently, students follow guidelines as relates to attendance, concert dress, and conduct during rehearsals. In addition, the current director expects for all students to have practiced the repertoire and be prepared for rehearsals (New England Youth Ensemble Contract, 2015–2016).
Facilities

Construction of the new music building at Washington Adventist University (WAU) started in April 9, 2010 following a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the old building during the school’s annual alumni weekend (see Figure 10).

“As the first new building in thirty years . . . the music project is creating excitement at the university about the future” (Schultz, 2010, para. 10).

With its grand opening in 2012, the new Leroy and Lois Peters Music Building includes small practice rooms varying in size, percussion studio rooms, a music library, three ensemble libraries, administrative offices, a robing room, instrumental storage rooms, and a [rehearsal] hall. The building also has smart classrooms, teaching studios, and “is expected to add enormously to the timbre of University life in general and to the richness of its fine arts programs” (Washington Adventist University, 2011, “WAU Completes Music Building”, para. 2). See Figure 11.
The researcher visited the Peters Music Building at WAU and observed the beautifully lit memorial on the second floor dedicated to Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse for the work that she accomplished with the New England Youth Ensemble and the music department at Washington Adventist University (formerly Columbia Union College). See Figure 12.

**Participation in the NEYE**

Auditions are held for membership for participation in the ensemble; students play required selections and sight-reading is compulsory. Participants are given a contract at the
beginning of each season and a list of rehearsal and concert obligations. Members are required to display a growing proficiency on his or her instrument and be actively engaged in lessons. They are expected to play in tune, have the ability to sight-read, exhibit good dynamics, and tone control. Auditions are also held for seating as well as soloists to perform with the ensemble. Soloists are not required to be a member of the orchestra (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017).

The age of members is generally in the high school to college age range. In addition, Dr. Hawes recruits students from tours, festivals that he adjudicates, and from the community; some students are also recruited from master classes. The ensemble is also open to members of the community. Most members are required to study with private teachers. Students do not pay a membership fee as the organization is non-profit (New England Youth Ensemble Syllabus, 2015-2016).

**Rehearsals and Concerts**

Rehearsals are held in the James T. Bingham Rehearsal Hall in the Peters music building at WAU. The ensemble rehearses twice per week and the time accommodates the schedule of community members. Sectionals are also held when necessary.

There are rules of engagement during rehearsals and attendance guidelines that are specific to scholarship holders. Students who hold higher scholarship amounts are required to study privately with an instructor approved by the school (ibid).

Under the direction of Dr. Rittenhouse, the orchestra rehearsed before their international tours. Rehearsals were held in the Recital Hall in the former music building at Columbia Union College (now WAU). According to the ensemble’s concert tour itinerary, the orchestra would
rehearse twice per day for several hours before traveling overseas; rehearsals were also scheduled during tours (New England Youth Ensemble Summer Tour Itinerary, 2002).

The researcher attended a rehearsal on March 23, 2017 in the James T. Bingham Rehearsal Hall at WAU. The ensemble practiced Prokofiev’s “Cinderella’s Waltz” from Cinderella Suite No. 1 for Orchestra, Op. 107 and Vaughn-Williams’ Te Deum in G. The quality of the sound of the ensemble was impressive.

Younger student members from the community attended the rehearsal. At various times the conductor, Dr. Hawes, demonstrated the sound and nuance he wanted to achieve in both the strings and winds on the violin. He advised the string players on appropriate positions to use for challenging passages in "Cinderella's Waltz" and demonstrated rhythms from Vaughn-Williams Te Deum in G on the smart board. In addition, Dr. Hawes used an electronic version of the score for the Vaughn-Williams selection. Afterwards, the conductor announced the upcoming rigorous concert schedule for the month.

According to Hawes, the rehearsal season generally runs from September through December for the fall and the spring and summer sessions are from January through May and June through August respectively (Personal Communication, March 13, 2017). The NEYE has 40 or more rehearsals per year and 15 or more concerts per year (New England Youth Ensemble Rehearsal, March 23, 2017). The concerts are held at various churches and venues. Admission fees are usually not charged unless the orchestra is fundraising (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017). In addition, the ensemble performs pops concerts as they have done in the previous years (see Figure 13).
Figure 13. Promotion of a NEYE Pops Concert Performed on April 7, 2016 from www.facebook.com/

Typical NEYE repertoire includes Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, Beethoven’s “Hallelujah” from *Mount of Olives* and Bach’s “Little Fugue”. According to Hawes, three of New England Youth Ensemble’s favorite pieces are Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue*, Smetana’s Dance No. 3 from *The Bartered Bride* and “Romance” from Wieniawski’s *Violin Concerto No. 2* (ibid).

The Carnegie Scholars Program

Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse started the Carnegie Scholars Program through her association with John Rutter and MidAmerica Productions (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1995). Students who participate in the Carnegie Scholars Program should have exceptional sight reading skills, quick study skills, and the ability to play perfectly in tune, blend well, and have solid rhythm (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017).

MidAmerica Productions has operated for thirty-four years since January 7, 1984 (MidAmerica Productions, 2017). Established by Peter Tiborius, MidAmerica Productions endeavors to bring talent to Carnegie Hall.

MidAmerica Productions’ concerts has brought together conductors, soloists, and choral and instrumental ensembles from the U.S. and abroad to appear at New York’s top venues, including Stern Auditorium, Weill Recital Hall, and Zankel Hall at Carnegie
Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. Additionally, MidAmerica Productions has presented concerts in numerous U.S. cities and in countries throughout the world, including Greece, England, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, and Russia. (2017, About, MidAmerica Productions at 34, para. 2)

MidAmerica’s concert series in Carnegie Hall commenced February 18, 2017. The New England Symphonic Ensemble opened the concert series and they will perform at least ten times at Carnegie during the 2017 concert season. See Figure 14.

Figure 14. NEYE Member Backstage at Carnegie Hall
from https://www.facebook.com/437180969674055/photos/pcb.1038476036211209/1038475122877967/?type=3&theater

Barzio (2011) stated:

For the past 10 years I assisted her [Dr. Rittenhouse] in managing the Carnegie concerts and saw her frequently in Manhattan, not to mention the many phone sessions we shared often in the wee hours of the night. The NEYE has performed hundreds of times at Carnegie, more often than any other orchestra in the world. (A Musical Experience Section, para.6)

According to Dan Schultz (2009), the New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE) is the official orchestra-in-residence at Carnegie Hall for MidAmerica Productions. In 2009,
Preston Hawes was the associate conductor and concertmaster of the NESE and assisted Dr. Rittenhouse with various tasks with the orchestra at the time of Schultz’s (2009) article.

Former concertmistress, Naomi Burns Delafield, also assisted with organizing concerts at Carnegie Hall through MidAmerica Productions. One of Delafield’s responsibilities entailed hiring professional players; she revealed that MidAmerica Productions informed the ensemble of the number of players required for each section and Delafield had to submit a list of the exact number of players three weeks before the concert date (Personal Communication, February 13, 2017).

According to Washington Adventist University (2015), Preston Hawes asserts, students are invited into the program and seated beside a professionals in the New England Youth England Symphonic Ensemble. We’ve had this in place since 1994 here at Washington Adventist University. And it’s just getting stronger.

In an interview with Lincoln Steed (2003), Virginia-Gene confirmed that the NEYE would perform 15 concerts at Carnegie Hall that season. “We have performed more at Carnegie Hall than any other orchestra in the country, I guess. Each season we tour all over the United States and other countries” (para. 11).

Barzio (2011) interviewed Wolfram Koessel, cellist of the American String Quartet, and he acknowledged, ‘The most beautiful thing about Dr. Rittenhouse was that she believed that the ability to perform such music itself was a gift from God. She prayed before every Carnegie concert. Even for the New York musicians who did not believe in God, it was moving to see.’ (Irrepressible Section, para. 2).

**Promotion and Fundraising**

Alita Byrd (2012) interviewed Preston Hawes regarding the 2012 South Africa tour. According to Hawes, Dr. Rittenhouse made the initial contact to partner with ADRA (Adventist
Development and Relief Agency) and the ensemble traveled under its auspices to South Africa. The 2012 South Africa tour was in memory of Virginia-Gene.

Dr. Hawes responded to a query regarding the budget of the tour:

The fundraising budget was set for $125,000 with an additional $25,000 from the coffers of the NEYE. So the entire budget was around $150,000. It was only after the prompting of several alumni that I decided to take a cue from Dr. Rittenhouse and step out in faith and make the decision to go on tour. Within a month, we had only $20,000 left to raise to meet our minimum goal’ (Byrd, 2012, para. 33).

Hawes named the following major donors:

- ADRA (Adventist Developments and Relief Agency) International
- Washington Adventist University
- The Rittenhouse Family Trust
- MidAmerica Productions
- Columbia Union Conference (of Seventh-day Adventists)
- Nirmala and Vimala Abraham
- Hanson Place Adventist Church in Brooklyn, NY
- Triadelphia Adventist Church in Maryland
- Ephesus Adventist Church in New York City
- Ohio Union (of Seventh-day Adventists)

Hawes revealed that the majority of the funds for their most recent tour to South Africa were raised by the ensemble participants in the amount of $70,000. Each person had to raise $1,650 to on their own for the tour (Byrd, 2012).

In 2015 the ensemble had a successful fundraising campaign for their tour to Australia and Texas. Hawes estimates the alumni base in North America is between 600-800 former members of the NEYE (Personal Communication, March 13, 2017). He asserts,
supporters from our alumni and friends are key. Developing a sense of ownership in support of this group from those who have enjoyed the music or experienced tours as members is now our most valuable resource. Maintaining close ties and developing renewed ties to those who find our mission important and valuable remains one of the most important tasks the Director has. (Inspire- NEYE, 2015, Risks and Challenges, para. 2)

At least 68 supporters pledged $10,450 to assist the orchestra for the Australia tour. The seven levels of pledges included the following:

- NEYE Friend Circle-$25 or more
- NEYE Supporter Circle-$50 or more
- NEYE Concertmaster Circle-$75 or more
- NEYE Soloist Circle-$100 or more
- NEYE Podium Circle-$200 or more
- NEYE Bach Circle-$500 or more
- NEYE Rittenhouse Circle-$1000 or more

Donors’ names would appear on each printed Australia Tour program under the corresponding level of their donation. Other incentives included a mailed copy of the tour program, an audio download link to *The Vision of the Apocalypse*, the DVD version of the aforementioned oratorio, a copy of Minchin-Comm’s and Rittenhouse’s books *Encore! & Curtain Call*, which are historical recollections of the NEYE. Other incentives included receiving all of the recordings by the ensemble, Preston Hawes’ CD, *Prayer*, a personalized bound reproduction of Rittenhouse’s original score of the *Jamaican Suite*, and an historical recording of Virginia-Gene performing the suite on the violin (Kickstarter, 2015, Inspire-NEYE).

The ensemble is publicized through fundraising efforts and distributions of their recordings (ibid). They are also promoted through bulletins, brochures, websites, posters, and videos (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, February 27, 2017.)
“The biggest obstacle is always fundraising and organizing people from many different areas,” says Hawes (Personal Communication, March 13, 2017). According to Hawes, patrons donate faithfully each year and the ensemble’s fundraising is project-driven. When planning a tour their fundraising efforts are geared towards people who are interested in the particular countries where the ensemble intends to travel. In addition, each member has a fundraising goal.

According to the Kickstarter website, “Running over budget is always a concern. However, with careful planning the tours upon which the NEYE has embarked with Preston Hawes as director have NOT run over budget and have always been fully funded before departure” (Kickstarter, Inspire–NEYE, Risks and Challenges, para. 1).

**Contributed Services**

The orchestra often performs for anniversary programs and assists various organizations and churches in their fundraising efforts. For instance, around the 1980s the NEYE performed a concert entitled “Applewild Pops Concert”; this performance benefited the Montachusett Community Concert Association (An Applewild Pops Concert, The New England Youth Ensemble, n.d.).

The ensemble helped raise funds to build an orphanage in Harare, Zimbabwe on that same tour in 2000 (ibid). One of the highlights of the 2000 Zimbabwe and South Africa tour was the orchestra’s gift to the Maluti Hospital in Lesotho. The following is an account of the events:

Above and beyond all the acclaim and musical triumph was the spiritual aspect of the tour. Never has the mission of the NEYE been more clearly defined and put across. One such outstanding event happened at Maluti Mission Hospital in [Lesotho] where we especially went on a side trip to spend the Sabbath at a real live mission hospital. There we visited the children’s ward to give them small gifts. On the tour through the hospital we were all very touched by the tremendous needs of these people. At its close [it was] suggested that every one of us make a sacrificial donation to the needs as we saw them. . . . When totaled, the orchestra gave nearly $1400. This was a very special occasion and we all felt blessed (Account of South Africa and Zimbabwe, NEYE Summer Tour, 2000).
Preston Hawes recalls that his most memorable events were the concerts they played at the academies (Adventist high schools) in South Africa. They visited a number of schools where young people were interested in music—several were Adventist and some were not. In addition, the ensemble helped raise funds for Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of St. Georges Cathedral in Capetown, to help pay for a new roof during one of their tours to South Africa. Hawes enjoys when the NEYE is “engaging with the communities on tour whether it’s playing at orphanages, hospitals or schools with something they are trying to accomplish or helping students gain more exposure to music or [playing for] people who are struggling with their health” (Personal Communication, March 13, 2017).

**Sponsors and Donations**

The NEYE has a variety of sponsors and they rely on the generous support of alumni and patrons who frequent their concerts. Several businesses, philanthropists, and patrons are among the donors.

On July 6, 1975, the NEYE had a concert entitled “Music for a Summer Evening,” which took place on the lawn of Thayer Conservatory at Atlantic Union College. The following sponsors for on the 1975 Pops Concert Program were

- T.F. Burke Company
- Worcester County National Bank
- Colonial Press
- Fairlawn Nursing Home
- Benoit Real Estate
- Siver Insurance and Real Estate Agency
- Christoph Realty
• Golden Oak Foods
• Atlantic Union College Dairy

The following were listed as donors:
• Facreau Construction and Realty
• Brookfield Machine Inc.
• Clinton Polish American Veteran Club
• First Bristol County National Bank
• Ladd’s Music Center
• First Bristol County National Bank

Worthington Foods and Dakota Bake-N-Serv were also included among patrons (New England Youth Ensemble Pops Concert, 1975). Moreover, the NEYE performed a concert for Mr. Sumner Gerard, the U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, at the Hilton Hotel in Jamaica on March 15, 1976, and sponsors listed on the concert program included,

• The Kiwanis Club of Ocho Rios
• Mr. Jag Mehta and the Jamaican Hilton Hotel
• Sir Harold & Lady Mitchell
• The Rotary Club of St. Ann

The ensemble concertized to promote and raise money for their tour to Israel in 1981. The concert was entitled around the “Around the World in Eighty Minutes” and was presented at the Field House at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts. The program stated, “All proceeds in benefit of the Scholarship Fund for the Europe–Israel 1981 Tour” (NEYE Concert, Program, “Around the World in Eighty Minutes, n.d.). Selections on the program
included Copeland’s “Hoe-Down” from *Rodeo* and Smetana’s “Dance of the Comedians” from *The Bartered Bride*. Some sponsors that were listed on the 1981 concert program were:

- Southwest Realty
- Discount House of Wallpaper
- Attorney Richard Clark
- Woodruff Plaza Laundromat
- Gould Title Co.
- Colins Barber Shop
- Knight Fuel Company
- Greg Mitrakas Realtors

The NEYE has been sponsored by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) (Byrd, 2012). According to concert program notes on November 11, 1984, the ensemble was also affiliated with Shoreline Alliance for the Arts in Guilford, Connecticut. In 1983, Private Edge sponsored their concert on November 29th that was held in Weston Auditorium.

**Performance Practices**

In the early years of the ensemble many of the soloists were winners of state and national competitions. “The Ensemble is comprised of versatile young performers, a number of whom are first-prize winners in various competitions. As a result, a considerable number of the group serves as soloists as well as Ensemble members thus adding interest and variety to the programs (NEYE Tour Program, 1973).

The following was a stated in the program notes when the NEYE was five years old:

Highlights [of the 1974 Poland trip] were the performance before 4,000 people at the Oliva Cathedral, third largest in Europe and the concert before a capacity audience at the
Paderewski Memorial Auditorium in Bydgoszcz, which was taped for broadcast by Polish National Radio. Warm tributes were paid by musicians and critics and by the Minister of Religion for the government of Poland who stated that the Ensemble had the greatest impact on the people of Poland. (NEYE Concert Program, Boston Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1974)

Throughout the history of the NEYE they have performed with numerous choirs such as the St. Bartholomew’s Choir, the University of Pennsylvania Mens Chorus, the Resident Choir of the American Boychoir School, and the American Festival Chorus (Great Music at St. Bartholomew’s Concert Schedule, 1985-86; St. Patrick’s Cathedral Concert Program, 1982).

Concert programs stated that in 1983 and 1984 the NEYE performed under the auspices of the Community Concert Division of Columbia Artists of New York. In addition, they also performed several pops concerts in the 1980s in Massachusetts and Maryland such as “An Applewild Pops Concert,” “Almost Boston Pops Festival,” and “Fall Pops Festival.”

According to the New England Youth Ensemble Press Release,

the Ensemble has also had the opportunity to play in Jordan. In July of 1995 the Ensemble received an invitation by Queen Noor of Jordan as the only American orchestra to participate in the Jerash International Festival. As a result they were invited to return the following season to perform the first performance of Beethoven’s 9th symphony before royalty at the Roman Amphitheater in Amman [Jordan]. (May, 2004)

Other performance venues included Radio City Hall, the Musical Society of Philadelphia, and the International Youth Music Festival of Vienna. They have appeared on Channel 5-TV, Boston, as well as on the Classical Radio Station of Philadelphia, and on nationwide TV during their performance at the Crystal Cathedral in Los Angeles (New England Youth Ensemble Concert Program, n.d.)

As mentioned previously, in August 2000 the Ensemble embarked on a month long return engagement tour to Zimbabwe and South Africa. Featured on this tour was guest conductor, Dr. John Rutter. “This tour proved to be a triumph. Everywhere they were greeted with sold-out houses and standing ovations and were urged to return for another tour” (New England Youth
Ensemble Press Release, 2004). The 2002 NEYE summer tour itinerary revealed that the orchestra returned to Africa and played a benefit concert for an orphanage at the Music Conservatory in Zimbabwe. Other countries visited during that summer were England, Scotland, and South Africa.

“Highlights of the 2003 season were a highly successful two week tour to Mexico in January and a performance before a distinguished audience at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. on April 6. The Ensemble was joined by the Columbia Collegiate Chorale with Dr. John Rutter as guest conductor in his Washington, D.C. debut” (ibid).

On May 25, 2015 the New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE) played for the premier performance of Rutter’s newest work, Canticles of Creation in Carnegie Hall. In the summer of 2015 the group toured Australia and Texas from June 15 to July 7. “Young musicians joined seasoned professionals to perform over a dozen concerts in prestigious venues.” Some of the places they performed included Edinburg College, Avondale College, Sydney, New South Wales, Port Macquarie, and Brisbane. One of the students reported that performing at “St. John’s Cathedral in Australia [was a] beautiful close to an eventful, incredible tour” (New England Youth Ensemble Member, Personal Communication, March 23, 2017). The tour culminated in the United States with a performance in San Antonio, Texas for a convention gathering of over 80,000 audience members, broadcast to over 5,000,000 viewers (Internal Revenue Service, 2015).

The orchestra participates in festivals such as international string workshops, Salzburg Choral Festival, and InterHarmony® International Festival.
Instrumentation

The researcher administered a questionnaire to the current conductor of the orchestra.

The number of players for each instrument is as follows:

- 1st Violin-5
- 2nd Violin-6
- Viola-3
- Cello-5
- Bass-1
- Flute-2
- Oboe-1
- Clarinet-3
- Bassoon-1
- Horn-2
- Trumpet-2
- Trombone-1
- Tuba-1
- Percussion-1
- Harp-1
- Piano-1

Procedure

The researcher administered questionnaires to the conductor and the members of the NEYE. The questionnaires included a letter of introduction about the research project (see Appendix C). The members completed the questionnaires and they were returned to the
researcher. The questionnaires included basic demographic information and were related to the performance practices of the NEYE, in general, and the individual members of the ensemble (see Appendix D).

**Responses**

The New England Youth Ensemble has 25 members. Responses were received from 21 students. Of the 21 members who answered the survey, six were male and fifteen were female. The mean age among the participants was 18.86 years; the oldest member was 24 years of age and the youngest was 15. The majority of the participants attended college. Among the students, there were nine freshman, four sophomores, two juniors, two seniors, and four high school students.

Of the NEYE students who participated in the survey, 100% are members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Most of the students are from the United States; there are also participants from Russia and the Caribbean islands of Barbados and Bermuda. The majority of the NEYE members attend Washington Adventist University (WAU), 16 students (76%), and 24% of the members attend public high schools, colleges, or private Adventist academies. Most of the ensemble members do not live on campus, however, the majority of the students do not travel more than 10 miles to rehearsals.

Students reported that they first learned about the New England Youth Ensemble as follows: attending WAU, attending a NEYE performance, a school music teacher, reading a book by Dr. Rittenhouse, having a family member who was a former NEYE member, news media advertisement, and by word-of-mouth.
The instruments represented in the NEYE included eight violins, three violas, three cellos, one tuba, one trumpet, two flutes, one harp and three clarinets. One student plays both the harp and flute.

Thirty-three percent of the members indicated participation in the ensemble for one year. Thirty-eight percent of the members were active in the group for two years, 19% of the students had been in the group for three to four years, and 1% of the students reported participation in the group for five or more years; the longest duration of participation among the members who took the questionnaire was six years.

Each member responded to a question regarding their activity in other music groups at the school he or she attends. Of the students who attend WAU seven students participate in the NEYE exclusively. Nine students participate in other performance groups offered at WAU, including chamber music (one), band (seven), and choir (one); two students who are in both high school and a public college did not participate in any additional performance groups, and two high school students also participate in their school’s orchestra.

Because of NEYE’s extensive touring schedule, most of the students do not participate in summer music camps; however, four students had participated in a summer music program. One student who reported activity in a summer music camp did not specify the program.

The summer music programs that NEYE members have been involved in are: Bravo! Music Camp (The University of Minnesota), InterHarmony® International Music Festival (Italy), and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Summer Programs.

Most of the students do not participate in community music groups. However, individual students reported involvement in the following community music groups: Kettering Praise Orchestra, Dayton Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and Washington Concert Winds.
Eighty-six percent of the students are enrolled in private lessons and 14% are not studying with a teacher; however, one hundred percent of the students who attend WAU study with a private teacher. Forty percent of the members who do not attend WAU are enrolled in lessons and 60% are not enrolled in private study.

Students were asked their reasons for becoming a member of the ensemble and they responded: forming friendships, touring, the love of music, the camaraderie of being a part of the orchestra, learning repertoire, the rigorous concert schedule, the overall experience, and the quality of the music program. Other responses for becoming an NEYE member included the ability to practice orchestral repertoire, edification, enrichment, and fulfillment. Students also joined the ensemble to further their instrumental skills, earn scholarships, and to further their music education. Moreover, members indicated that they participate in the NEYE for the following reasons: 1) the joy it brings, 2) it is a requirement for their major/degree program, and 3) to gain experience in an orchestra that originated in the Adventist faith.

The students responses to their favorite classical pieces are as follows (each piece received two votes): Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No.3*, “Cinderella’s Waltz” from Prokofiev’s *Cinderella Suite*, Mendelssohn’s *Hebrides Ouverture*, Grieg’s *Holberg Suite*, Mozart’s *Church Sonata No. 12*, and Bach’s *Little Fugue in G minor*. Their favorite sacred songs are “How Great Thou Art,” followed by “Amazing Grace,” “Brother James’s Air,” and Haydn’s “The Heavens Are Telling.”

The ensemble’s most memorable performances were playing in Australia at St. John’s Cathedral, performing in Ohio and New York, and playing at a small church in Johannesburg, South Africa. One student revealed, “we played and the church members shared choral pieces
with us too” (New England Youth Ensemble Member, Personal Communication, March 23, 2017).

The members responded to how participating in the NEYE has affected their overall musical experience as follows:

- enjoy classical music more than before
- improve sight reading skills
- ability to follow the conductor and blend
- expanded overall musical knowledge and exposure
- improved performance skills
- great orchestral experience
- ability to work as a team
- time Consuming, yet wonderful musical experience
- share beautiful music through that talent that God has given us

Overall, the students had a positive attitude toward the ensemble and expressed that participating in the NEYE has improved their musicianship.

Much work is involved in the planning of concerts, tours, and preparing students to perform in Carnegie Hall. More importantly, students are trained to use their music for the edification of others and their lives are enriched as a result.
CHAPTER VI

NEYE REPERTOIRE AND VIRGINIA-GENE RITTENHOUSE’S COMPOSITIONS

The Repertoire of the NEYE

In this chapter the author provides a representative list of the repertoire performed by the New England Youth Ensemble and a list of the known compositions of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse. In a personal communication with Naomi Burns Delafield, the researcher learned that the orchestra had a set of repertoire they were required to learn. The repertoire consisted of at least one hundred pieces and during performances Dr. Rittenhouse would often announce a song without telling the orchestra beforehand, and they were expected to know it. “She also called for soloists to play on the spot without notice,” says Delafield (February 13, 2017).

The author has provided the reader a sample of the works performed by the NEYE. The repertoire listed is not exhaustive; however, it provides an illustration of the pieces the group has performed over the years. The author has compiled the pieces from concert programs, books co-authored by Rittenhouse and Minchin-Comm (1988; 1995), videos, and recordings. The following list of repertoire can be useful to music educators and directors of orchestras of youth:

- Frescobaldi’s Toccata
- Purcell’s “Trumpet Tune and Air”
- Handel’s “Finale” from Water Music
- Handel’s Concerto Grosso No. 6
- Felix Mendelssohn’s Sinfonia
• Felix Mendelssohn’s *Verleih uns Frieden*
• Gordon Jacob’s *Overture to Suite. No. 3*
• Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings*
• Bach’s Overture from *Orchestral Suite* No. 3 in D Major
• Corelli’s *Concerto Grosso for Strings*
• Handel’s *Royal Fireworks*
• Haydn’s *Creation*
• Handel’s anthem, *Zadok the Priest*
• Vivaldi’s *Concerto for Four Violins*
• Earnest Bloch’s *Concerto* for strings and piano
• Weber’s *Concerte for Clarinet and Orchestra*
• John Rutter’s *Suite Antique for Flute, Harpsichord, and Strings*
• Smetana’s *Dance of the Comedians* No. 3
• Rimsky Korsakov’s *The Procession of the Nobles*
• Haydn’s *Trumpet Concerto*
• Mozart’s *Church Sonata No. 14 for Orchestra* in C Major, K 278
• “Concertino”, Op. 26 for clarinet & orchestra, Carl Maria von Weber
• Bach’s *Suite in B minor* for flute & strings
• *Voluntary No.1* for two trumpets, William Boyce
• Pastoral Symphony from Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*
• “Rejoice Greatly,” Aria No. 18 form G.F. Handel’s *Messiah*
• Bach’s *Double Violin Concerto*
• Frescobaldi’s *Toccata*
• *Farandole* by Bizet

• Lalo’s *Symphonie Espagnole*, 1st movement

• “Joy to the World”, John Rutter

• “Tuneful Oboe” by Connie Rittenhouse Drexler

• Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*, Mvt. 3

• Wienawski’s *Violin Concerto*

• Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40 in G minor*, 1st movement

The ensemble concertizes often in churches and they perform a large amount of sacred music as well as secular works that are appropriate for church gatherings. Because the group concertizes often in churches, the NEYE does not play entire symphonies due to time constraints (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, February 27, 2017) “Now there is an educational aspect of it,” asserts Dr. Hawes. “We try to keep the tradition with the repertoire but I also want to make sure that students have a more varied and well-rounded repertoire.” Hawes stated that since the orchestra has residence in a university setting, learning important symphonic repertoire is a part of his overall goals for the ensemble (Personal communication, February, 27, 2017).

During Rittenhouse’s sustained tenure as the director of the NEYE she enjoyed featuring talented soloists in the orchestra. According to members of the orchestra the researcher has interviewed, she was a relentless conductor, especially during her earlier years with the ensemble. Delafield recalls practicing one phrase over and over until the sound Rittenhouse was looking for was achieved. She says Rittenhouse overlooked issues regarding artistry in the ensemble during her later years that she would not have allowed before. “Dr. Rittenhouse was very particular about phrasing and that is what made the orchestra stand out,” said Delafield (Personal Communication, February 13, 2017).
Lib Andrews (1974) commented after one of the ensemble’s performances:

Anytime you have an opportunity to behold and hear such a group of talented teenage musicians sharing their enjoyment of great music, take it. The soloists, too, performed with grace and ability of well-seasoned professionals. And, what fun to observe the director’s bow change from playing to batonning, after she has shared some appropriate tidbits about the forthcoming selection. (“Cooking with Lib,” February 7, 1984, para. 2)

**Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse’s Compositions**

Rittenhouse composed music for many different performance mediums. She has written two oratorios, pieces for orchestra, piano, voice, and string quartet to name a few. According to the Advocate Staff in the *Red Deer Advocate*, she also had a ‘musical sense of humor,’ explains Preston Hawes. Many who knew her said she had a remarkable personality and ‘she would entertain [her friends and students] by creating impromptu variations on ditties, such as the Happy Birthday theme to make it sound like Brahms or Mozart’ (Advocate Staff, 2012, para. 10).

According to the *Hartford Courant*,

she [was] the concertmistress of the Worcester Symphony, where she once startled audiences with an appearance as both piano and violin soloist at a single concert. . . . Plans to attend music school in London were thwarted by World War II, but she was allowed to use a British scholarship for study at Julliard School of Music in New York. . . . After her stay at Juilliard Virginia did get to London, where she earned a Performers Diploma from the Royal Academy of Music and became a fellow in composition at Trinity College, London. She studied for a time with the late Harold Bauer at Hart College. (Barrett, B., 1970, Part E)

The author has compiled the works of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse with the assistance of the current director of the NEYE. Her music, compositions, and recordings are housed in the music department at Washington Adventist University. According to Hawes, many of her compositions were orchestrated by Bob Wilson (Personal Communication, February 27, 2017).

Most of the pieces do not have a date. Listed below are the known compositions of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse:

• *Song of the Redeemed*, oratorio (premiered at Walla Walla College in 1945 and in 1966 premiered in Tokyo’s Festival Hall)

• “Hear My Prayer Oh Lord”

• “For the Lamb Shall Lead” for contralto solo and quartet

• “African Drought” for voice, text by Francis Carey Slater—(unfinished, there are similarities in the music score of the *African Suite*)

• “Fairest Lord Jesus” for full orchestra

• *African Suite* for two pianos

• *Jamaican Suite* for violin and piano (1955)

• “Frolic” for voice and piano, text by George Russell

• “Music, When Soft Voices Die” for flute, voice, violin, cello, and piano (text by Percy B. Shelly)

• “African Fantasy” (later called “Tropical Dawn” in *Jamaican Suite*)

• “Festive Dance” (originally for violin)

• “African Dance” (unfinished)

• “Cherry Blossom”

• “The Twenty-third Psalm” for flute, harp, voices and string quartet

• “Setting of the Ninetieth Psalm”

• “Fishing Boat” (a movement later included in the *African Suite*)

• “Wind in the Pines” (unfinished)

• “Hear My Prayer Oh Lord” for tenor or soprano

• “Roll Jordan Roll”
• “A Wedding Prayer” for three female voices or solo and organ accompaniment, text by Amy B. Sherrard
• “Blessed are They” for solo baritone or mezzo soprano and piano
• “Lament” (added in as one of the movements of the African suite)
• “Mistress Mine” for voice and piano, text by William Shakespeare
• “Orpheus” for voice and piano, text by William Shakespeare
• “The Musicians” text by Walter De la Mere
• “Cherry Tree” for voice and piano
• “Christ our Hope” Hymn setting
• “The Lord is My Shepherd” aria for tenor (parts available for flute, harp and string quartet)
• “Ye Watchers” for vocal quartet and piano
• “Wedding Processional” (1982)
• “A Wedding Psalm” (1982), based on the text from Psalm 36: 7,8
• “I Only Plead: A Wedding Recessional” (1982)
• The Vision of the Apocalypse (2004)

According to the Hartford Courant, “[Rittenhouse] toured Europe in 1958 as violin soloist with the All-America Chorus, was violinist with the New York Madrigal Society, toured the West coast, and in 1966 appeared in Tokyo where her oratorio, Song of the Redeemed, was premiered at Festive Hall” (Barrett, B., 1970, Part E). The aforementioned oratorio was also presented at the Glendale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition, Rittenhouse’s “Twenty-Third Psalm” was performed in Usher Hall in Edinburgh, Scotland when the NEYE presented an afternoon concert during the Adventist World Youth Congress in 1973.
African Influences

The Rittenhouses and Shankels (Virginia-Gene’s parents) often performed African music for audiences, educating them on the language and style of music. “Whenever possible she set native [African] music down in manuscript form, and since then the Shankels have often performed as a family group, describing and presenting African music” (Barrett, B., 1970, Part E, para. 4).

Virginia-Gene was very interested in African music and wrote her master’s thesis at Boston University on the subject. Rittenhouse (1954) writes,

> a simple African village crowd can at a moment’s notice without rehearsal, produce something which as an art form expressing live creative genius would be hard to surpass. The writer has experienced the thrill of hearing a group of Africans, who when a tone was sounded, spontaneously took to their part in a remarkable demonstration of extemporaneous harmonization which endowed their music with a richness and warmth of tone unexcelled. (p. 22)

In 2012 Preston Hawes performed Dr. Rittenhouse’s pieces with African influences including the Jamaican Suite, African Suite and Cherry Tree Vignette. He performed on Dr. Rittenhouse’s 1840s violin made by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume in a tribute concert in Dr. Rittenhouse’s hometown of Lacombe, Canada (Advocate Staff, 2012).

The Jamaican Suite

Hawes provided the notes from his 2008 interview with Dr. Rittenhouse regarding her inspiration for composing the Jamaican Suite (1955). Rittenhouse was impressed with the country life in Jamaica where she lived in a village in the Red Hills overlooking Kingston. She wrote the piece while she taught composition and performance at West Indies College, now Northern Caribbean University (Personal Communication, February 27, 2017).
According to Hawes, Rittenhouse explains that the first movement was evoked by the freshness and rejuvenation of the dawn. The tangible experiences of life in the Caribbean evoked the mood of the music in the opening movement.

The second movement is very colorful and portrays women coming down the hill with the donkeys and baskets of fruit on their heads; the donkeys would start fast then slow down and trot off. The third movement is a lament in the Dorian mode and it depicts one coming home late in the night. The folk song, “Linstead Market,” is referenced and the music shifts to a sunny, yet melancholy, E major and then returns to the Dorian mode with the lament of love. Finally, the fourth movement describes young people returning to the village to dance. The rumba rhythms shift the mood, and the piece ends in a “flurry of colour and excitement” (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, February 27, 2017).

**New England Youth Ensemble Recordings**

Rittenhouse has two vinyl recordings of African hymns released by Cathedral Records in her early years. They have not been recently heard because they require professional restoration (ibid).

In 1974 the New England Youth Ensemble recorded an album entitled *Our Heritage of Sacred Music* produced by Bridge Records in Mountain View, CA (New England Youth Ensemble Discography, n.d.). In 1978 the NEYE and the Kingsway Symphonic Choir recorded *Praise be to Thee* produced by AFKA Records (n.d.).

The NEYE recorded in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral in England on September 2, 1998. The album was recorded live by John Rutter (Rittenhouse, 2000, New England Youth Ensemble). Pieces on the recording included Handel’s “Overture to the Royal Fireworks,” Barber’s *Adagio for Strings*, and Bedrich Smetana’s “Dance No. 3” from the *Bartered Bride*. 

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On January 8, 2001, the NEYE recorded live at the Calimesa Seventh-day Adventist Church in Calimesa, California, a recording entitled *New England Youth Ensemble in Live Concert: Featuring Young Artists of Tomorrow*. The recording featured concertmistress Naomi Burns Delafield’s rendition of “Winter” from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, and the “Jamaican Rumba,” a folksong that featured five year-old solo pianist, Noah Cabey; the song was orchestrated by Shawn Cabey, former member of the NEYE. The recording ended with Saint-Saëns’ rousing *Organ Symphony No. 3*. (Rittenhouse, 2001, CD liner notes).

A second recording in England occurred in 2001. Directed by Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, the NEYE recorded *Live from Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral* in Cambridge, England. “This concert was introduced and recorded live by Mr. John Rutter” (Rittenhouse, 2001, CD liner notes). The orchestra was accompanied by the Columbia Collegiate Choir, directed by James Bingham. They recorded Bach’s “Overture” from *Orchestral Suite No. 3* and the third movement of Bach’s *Concerto for Oboe, Violin, and Orchestra in C Minor, BWV 1060*. Francesco Durante’s *Magnificat* was also performed by the choir and orchestra. In addition, the NEYE performed *Suite Antique* for flute, harpsichord, and strings by John Rutter. Other works on the recording included pieces by Haydn and Mendelssohn.

**Rittenhouse’s Lifelong Composition**

*The Vision of the Apocalypse*, an oratorio composed by Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, is based on Scriptural passages that reveal end-time events; Rittenhouse began composing this piece as a child (Miller, 2003). The message of the oratorio is powerfully depicted through the music and the spoken word.

The first recording occurred on Friday, July 8, 2005 at Christ Church Cathedral in Saint Louis, Missouri.
The Vision of the Apocalypse has been in the mind of its composer, Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, for a number of years. But though she has repeatedly received the endorsement and encouragement from such well-known composers as Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger (with whom she studied and more recently from Maestro John Rutter of Cambridge), she has hesitated to pursue the work in the face of the powerful challenge this text demands and a sense that general audiences might be disinterested to consider such a text seriously. The tragic events of [September, 1, 2001,] however, spurred a new and deepening interest in end-time events, and she finally made the decision to complete the work. After MidAmerica Productions reviewed the score, they graciously offered to present its premiere performance at Carnegie Hall (Rittenhouse & Stepniak, 2005, Notes on the Program Section, Para. 1).

On 2004 the premiere was performed in Carnegie Hall featuring the NEYE, the Columbia Collegiate Chorale, and Pro Arts International Choir. Dr. Rittenhouse, director of the NEYE, and James Bingham, director of the Columbia Collegiate Chorale of Columbia Union College, were the executive producers of the 2007 recording. The soloists were Karla Rivera, soprano, Javier Gonzalez, tenor, Vincent Stringer, bass, and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, narrator. (Rittenhouse, V.G., 2007, CD liner notes).

The oratorio has thirteen movements:

I. Introit
II. Psalm 90
III. The Day of the Lord
IV. The First Angel
V. Chorale
VI. Babylon is Fallen
VII. The Third Angel
VIII. Here is the Patience
IX. No More Sorrow
X. The Resurrection
XI. No Night There

XII. Gloria & Sanctus

XIII. Salvation, Glory and Honor

The second recording of The Vision of the Apocalypse was made at the University Church (at La Sierra University) in Loma Linda, California, on January 6, 2007 (Rittenhouse, 2007, CD liner notes).

“The first movement opens with unsettling dissonance and a gradual crescendo” (Rittenhouse, 2005, CD liner notes). Rittenhouse asserts, “In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.” The choir echoes these words in song before singing Psalm 90 in the second movement with soprano soloist, Karla Rivera. This movement reminds listeners that their days on the earth are short and their life is like a passing breath (Rittenhouse, 2005).

The third movement opens with the baritone soloist, Ethan Herschenfeld, singing, “The day of the Lord is at hand,” followed quickly by the fourth movement with the tenor soloist, Javier Gonzalez, singing the first angel’s message, “Fear God and give glory to Him” (Revelation 13:7, New International Version). This movement is a call for humanity to worship God who made the “heavens, the sea, and the springs of water” (ibid).

Rittenhouse opens the fifth movement with the second angel’s message of Revelation 13:8, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (New International Version). The choir and orchestra echo the text in song and musical accompaniment.

“Babylon in scripture has always been associated with evil in all its forms: pride, greed, corruption, materialism, violence, racial discriminations, genocide, famine, war, disease, and
now terrorism—all present in our society today” (V. Rittenhouse, 2004, The Vision of the Apocalypse, CD Liner Notes, para. 3). The third angel’s message is proclaimed in the seventh movement with an animated accompaniment in the brass and woodwinds, followed by the tenor solo. The choir sings parts from the Biblical scripture of the third angel’s message:

If any man worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:9-11, New International Version)

The eighth movement, “Here is the Patience,” commences calmly with the harp, strings, and woodwinds and strains of the Biblical proclamation, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). The ninth movement, “No More Sorrow,” opens with the soprano soloist; In the tenth movement, ‘No Night There,’ “[there is] final victory over death and the grave . . . and promise of eternal life” (V. Rittenhouse, 2004 Liner Notes, Notes on the Program Section, (para. 5). The last two movements start with the snare drum and brass fanfare; the choir sings refrains from Revelation 19:1, “After this, I heard a great multitude in heaven shouting: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God” (New International Version).

In addition to The Vision of the Apocalypse, the orchestra also recorded Rutter’s arrangement of Deep River and selections by Haydn, Vivaldi, Saint-Saëns, and Fauré in the second recording in 2007 (Rittenhouse, V.G., 2007, CD Liner notes).

During the 2005 South African tour the choir performed the Vision of the Apocalypse in Pretoria, Johannesburg in Pietermaritzburg City Hall, Durban City Hall, Port Elizabeth (in the Eastern Cape), Helderburg College (an Adventist college in South Africa) and Cape Town City
Hall. Guest musicians included the Durbin Symphonic Choir, Symphony Choir of Johannesburg, and the Choir of Vocal Art-Tshwane (South African Tour Program Itinerary, 2005). The oratorio was also performed in the United States, Canada, and Iceland during Rittenhouse’s last tour with the ensemble (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017).
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSIONS

This study identifies the type of structure, organization, and performance practices that characterize the NEYE. In addition, this research gives the reader the background of the history of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse’s work with the New England Youth Ensemble and adds to the existing body of information about the youth ensemble.

The researcher focused on aspects that have not been thoroughly discussed in books and articles such as the repertoire, performance practices (outside of touring), funding, and sponsors. A list of Rittenhouse’s compositions has been compiled for the reader. Moreover, the researcher has provided the reader with a list of representative repertoire the orchestra has performed throughout the years; the author has also developed a timeline of the travels of the NEYE since its inception and a list of recordings of the orchestra (see Appendix E).

Virginia-Gene was a great conductor in that she provided artistic direction for the NEYE, she was a skilled and talented musician, and she had sustained leadership that produced hundreds of musicians (Hart, 1979; Bernstein, 1959). She played in orchestras from a young age and soloed with professional orchestras on both piano and violin before she was 18 years of age (Miller, 2003). She was a child musical prodigy whose compositions were broadcast in the United States and South Africa (ibid).

The information from the books (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988; 1995) and concert programs was essential for this research so that the reader could understand the background and culture of the group. The concert programs gave the author greater insight about
how Dr. Rittenhouse operated. In addition, previous articles, obituaries, videos and recordings allowed the researcher to provide a clear method to understand the ensemble being discussed in this paper.

Dr. Rittenhouse and the NEYE often concertized in affluent churches in New York, Boston, and California. She established important connections with the musicians and leaders of large churches. The NEYE performed on several occasions at the Crystal Cathedral in the 1980s and they also performed at churches and prominent cathedrals in New York City and Boston, while overseas performance venues include Saint-Martin-in-the-Fields and Sydney Opera House among many others.

Since the inception of the orchestra 1969, Rittenhouse raised money during concerts for the ensemble and she maintained their busy international touring schedule. In addition, she did not hesitate to make personal sacrifices in order for the tours to materialize (Kickstarter, March 10–April 10, 2015).

In the 1980s the NEYE performed several pops concerts to support their tours; they also assisted organizations such as the Applewild Concert Association and the Parents Association of Takoma Academy in fundraising.

Dr. Rittenhouse was influential and she formed relationships in Washington, D.C. long before the ensemble relocated to Washington Adventist University in the mid-nineties. Before establishing the NEYE she concertized with the Chapel Chamber Ensemble in Washington, D.C. and the Cathedral Strings in Boston, and recorded albums with both groups. Moreover, the ensemble recorded an album with John Rutter and Rittenhouse’s oratorio, The Vision of the Apocalypse, was performed internationally.
Dr. Rittenhouse’s talents as a musician and business-woman allowed her to accomplish a great deal with the NEYE. She mingled in circles inside and outside the Adventist church and she was successful because of the relationships she formed with various churches, organizations, and business people.

The NEYE has existed for forty-eight years and the ensemble will celebrate its 50th year in 2019. The last NEYE anniversary concert held was its 30th anniversary in 1999 (P. Hawes, Personal Communication, March 13, 2017). The ensemble relies on faithful sponsors and supporters for their various tours, concerts, and operation of the organization. The researcher was able to gather information about sponsors during the earlier years of the ensemble. Several businesses, business owners, and philanthropists from Lancaster, MA and surrounding communities supported the orchestra. Moreover, Adventist churches in New York and Ohio are also among the many supporters.

A portion of this study concerns the performance practice and repertoire preferences of the students of the ensemble. Members participate in community music groups and music groups offered at WAU. Notwithstanding, the students cited several memorable performances which included St. John's Cathedral in Australia and playing in area churches. Several members indicated that performing in the NEYE has increased their orchestral skills and musical development and they reported gaining friendships and camaraderie.

The students cited their favorite classical and sacred pieces. Secular and sacred repertoire are important components of music education and is beneficial to students (Sandburg, 1958). It is important for educators and persons in the field of music to understand the intrinsic value and positive effects of sacred music upon youth, and performing sacred repertoire is an essential component of music education.
As youth are coming into adulthood it is important for them to have a positive outlet that will encourage their talent and help them to grow spiritually as well. Steven Bird’s (2016) study revealed that students at Christian colleges reported that they are not at a place where they feel lost but they are at a time of “exploration and opportunity” (p.293). The NEYE provides the opportunity for students to gain exposure to other cultures and music across the world and grow spiritually. The ensemble, in addition, provides performance opportunities for Adventist youth who may not be able to participate in other youth orchestras and summer programs because of Sabbath observance.

Although they often participate in music festivals, the core of what the ensemble does is concertize and tour. As the resident orchestra of WAU, the ensemble provides music for the service of the campus and the church. The NEYE is dedicated to the mission of bringing great music to the world and using their music to cross barriers.

More importantly, the NEYE has touched the lives of the members and those who worked alongside the group:

The final day of the tour was very special. It was the Sabbath, and for three hours various members of the ensemble came up to the [microphone] on the bus to share their feelings about the tour. Some [non-Adventists members] said this was their first contact with religion and they spoke so movingly about how they had found real Christianity in this tour and that it had been a life-changing experience for them. (Account of South Africa and Zimbabwe, 2000, Spiritual Impact, para. 5)

‘Our bus driver even commented at the end of the tour how he was hoping to find a way out of such a tiring tour with so many young ‘kids,’ but then after the first couple days realized how much fun he was having. He indicated he'd not been to church for many years, but that after hearing all the laughter, singing, prayers, and worship thoughts on the bus rides he would come listen to us in church. He actually became one of our most faithful audience members—often racing back from parking the bus blocks away just so he wouldn't miss too much,’ said Hawes. (Byrd, 2012, para. 8)

One member of the ensemble responded that he first learned about the ensemble by reading *Encore!* (Minchin-Comm & Rittenhouse, 1988). Dr. Rittenhouse contributed great
wealth through her music compositions, books, the youth ensemble, and to her students personally. Even John Rutter, the decorated English choral composer, was impressed by Rittenhouse’s indomitable spirit: ‘She had tireless energy. And dedication to music, to her students, and to her faith, which shone like a light.’ (Barzio, 2011, A Musical Experience Section, para, 6).

Rittenhouse was also dedicated to keeping her own performance skills polished in her late eighties:

In her eighty-ninth year she was still practicing piano [90 minutes] daily and violin [90 minutes] daily. She was optimistically looking forward to writing her third book, recording some of her compositions, and taking another concert tour to South Africa. . . . [Virginia-Gene] was awarded Professor and finally Professor Emeritus for brilliant work on the campus [of WAU]. (V. Rittenhouse, Obituary, September 11, 2011)

According to Lincoln Steed, “Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse has indelibly stamped Adventist culture with her vision of musical activism,” he states in one of his interview questions with Rittenhouse. “It seems that you have used the ensemble to project the value of Adventist education” (2002, p. 21).

Donald King, the president of the Atlantic Union Conference says the following:

[Dr. Rittenhouse] was a significant part of our community for many years, contributing both personally and musically to AUC, the Church, and the wider community. Her high standards for sacred music had a profound and far-reaching influence on Seventh-day Adventists everywhere, and the Church is better because of it. (Kellner, 2011, para. 4)

Others have said that Rittenhouse was a ‘musical innovator and pioneer of Seventh-day Adventist education’ (Advocate Staff, 2012, para. 15).

The researcher believes that Dr. Rittenhouse’s work with the New England Youth Ensemble affected the musical culture of the Adventist Church a great deal. Rittenhouse was an example of someone who operated beyond the walls of her church. She mingled beyond the
circles of Adventism (the Seventh-day Adventist Church), her influence was spread around the globe, and the ensemble prospered as a result.

Although students have the opportunity to play in Carnegie Hall, they reported that their most memorable and profound performances were enjoyed in churches where the ensemble plays the majority of their concerts. The piece that was mentioned the most in either the classical or sacred category was “How Great thou Art.” The students described the piece as an emotional and powerful hymn that affects the entire ensemble.

A current NEYE student remarked that her most memorable orchestral experience was playing for a benefit concert for someone who had recently lost their son; this type of service—using the gift of music to comfort others—profoundly touches the hearts of the students and is what the NEYE stands for at its core.

The mission of the New England Youth Ensemble is to “bring people together through music” (Miller, 2003). Dr. Rittenhouse endeavored to share music with every class of people in every culture and walk of life. She was committed to the ensemble’s mission and she succeeded in sharing the orchestra’s music with the world (Miller, 2003). Although few will duplicate the work and spirit of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, both novice and seasoned directors of youth music groups can learn important lessons from her work with the NEYE.

This research can benefit both musicians and directors of youth music groups. Music educators who follow this model should 1) form meaningful relationships, 2) partner with businesses, organizations, and philanthropists, to enhance and sustain their group, and 3) maintain a strong presence in the community (Cohen & Palisofsky, 2013).

Another application of this research can encourage music directors to form alliances with other churches. Although Rittenhouse was committed to educating youth in the Adventist
church she formed relationships and alliances with non-Adventist churches and groups that allowed her to concertize around the world, and she planned far in advance for what she intended to accomplish (Byrd, 2011). She owned her nonprofit business, which allowed her to operate independently, yet maintain a meaningful connection to the church that she was dedicated to.

In many ways Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse was an instrument of social change through her work with the New England Ensemble. She crossed barriers that many thought were impossible and she exposed her students to great music in prominent venues; her efforts and relentless work ethic with the ensemble produced generations of musicians who were instilled to use music to edify and uplift humanity.

Further study could research the titles of the compositions Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse composed and performed on National Public Radio (NPR) and South African Broadcasting Corporation. According to Minchin-Comm and Rittenhouse (1988), at some point in its history the NEYE was the most widely touring youth orchestra in the United States, so future studies can investigate touring youth orchestras in the United States and North America. Finally, further research can examine the effects of sacred music on the lives of the youth in public and private secondary and tertiary schools.
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APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

FORMER MEMBER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your experience with the New England Youth Ensemble.

2. When did you participate in the group?

3. How many tours outside the United States did you participate? In which countries?

4. Was there any significant performance, event, or moment that occurred during the tours?

5. What were the rehearsals like?

6. Did your participation on any of the tours broaden your perspective of how music can bring people together?

7. What instrument did you play in the orchestra? Is this your primary instrument? Do you play other instruments?

8. Is your profession in the field of music?

9. Do you participate in any musical groups?

10. Are you involved with other musical entities?

11. How did your participation in the New England Youth Ensemble affect your life?

12. Describe the most memorable performances you’ve had with the NEYE.

13. What would you say to someone who may be interested in joining the group?
APPENDIX B

NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE CONDUCTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Orchestra Title:

Person Answering Questionnaire:

Title:

Please list the number of players in each category for this current season.

1\textsuperscript{st} violin ______ 2nd violin ______ viola _____ cello _____ bass _____ flute _____
oboe _____ clarinet _____ bassoon _____ horn _____ trumpet _____ trombone _____
tuba _____ percussion _____ harp _____ piano _____ other _____

Please check (√) the appropriate answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do students pay a membership fee?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Does the ensemble have a written guide for operations?</td>
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<td>3. Does the ensemble have an established yearly budget?</td>
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<td>If yes, what is the estimated yearly budget?</td>
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<td>4. Are there any stated requirements for the conductor position?</td>
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<td>5. Is the conductor salaried?</td>
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<td>6. Are there additional personnel? Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Conductor</td>
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<td>Manager</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>7. Which of these are salaried? Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Conductor</td>
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<td>Manager</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are funds budgeted to rent or purchase music?</td>
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</table>
9. Is admission charged for NEYE concerts?

10. Do local churches or organizations assist in promoting the ensemble?
   If yes, in what capacity?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

11. Does the youth orchestra have a summer program?

12. If yes, what is the nature of the activities?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

13. Name of Conductor ________________________________________

   Other professional employment
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

14. Name any Adventist churches, conferences, unions, community organizations, or liaisons that support NEYE.
   __________________________________________________________

15. What procedures are used to recruit students for the youth ensemble?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

16. Are there any international students in the orchestra? (Circle one) Yes or No

17. Please include any additional information that you feel may be of value to this study of the New England Youth Ensemble.
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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**Performance Practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are auditions held for membership?</td>
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<td>2. Are there required selections?</td>
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<td>3. Is sight reading a part of the audition?</td>
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<td>4. Are auditions held for seating?</td>
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<td>5. Are auditions held for soloists to perform with the ensemble?</td>
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<td>6. Must soloists be a member of the orchestra?</td>
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<td>7. Are paid professionals engaged for performance with the youth ensemble?</td>
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<td>8. Are students required to study with a private teacher for membership with the ensemble?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Is a list of rehearsal and concert obligations published for each season?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Are students required to be a member of their school band or orchestra to be eligible for membership?</td>
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<td>11. Does the ensemble participate in festivals?</td>
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<td>If yes, write the name and location of the festivals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Does the ensemble select student officers?</td>
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<td>13. Are there rehearsals with only college students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Do typical rehearsals include students from the community?</td>
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<td>15. Are there any major tours being planned in the near future?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. How many countries (to date) have the NEYE performed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. What is the length of the youth orchestra season?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
18. How many rehearsals and concerts are included in each youth orchestra season? (Write the number) Rehearsals ____ Concerts ____

19. What day(s) are rehearsals held? ________________________________

20. Where are the rehearsals and concerts held?

_____________________________________________________________________

21. Name three representative works that the NEYE is performing (or has performed) this season.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

22. Name three “favorites” from NEYE’s repertoire.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Dear New England Ensemble Member,

This survey is part of a research paper on the history, structure, and organization of the New England Youth Ensemble. A portion of this study is concerned with performance practices of the ensemble members. Your participation will provide important information for this project. Please answer each question to the best of your ability and return it to your conductor or organization representative. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Valencia C. Thevenin
APPENDIX D

NEYE MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender: (Circle one) Male or Female

2. Age:

3. Are you a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church? (Circle one) Yes or No
   If not, what is your denomination? ________________________________

4. Hometown: (City, State) or (City, Country) __________________________

5. Do you currently attend school? Yes or No
   If yes, what school do you attend? ___________________________________

6. Do you live on campus? (circle one) Yes or No

Please place a check mark (✓) next to the appropriate answer for questions 7, 8, 11, and 14.

7. Grade/Education Level:
   _____ Elementary (What is your grade level? _____ )
   _____ Secondary (What is your grade level? _____ )
   _____ Freshman
   _____ Sophomore
   _____ Junior
   _____ Senior

8. Are you a college graduate? (Circle one) Yes or no
   If yes, what college did you attend? ________________________________

9. How did you find out about the youth orchestra?
   __ current (or past) conductor
   __ school music teacher
   __ news media/advertisement
   __ attended a NEYE performance
   __ student member of the youth ensemble
   __ other _____________________________________________________

10. What instrument do you play in the youth ensemble? __________________

11. How many years have you been a member of the ensemble? ______________

12. In what music organization do you perform at your school?
    __ orchestra
    __ band

125
___ chorus  
___ stage band  
___ other ________________  
___ none

13. Do you play in a community orchestra or musical group? (Circle one) Yes or No  
If yes, what is the name of the group? ___________________________

14. Do you study with a private teacher? (Circle one) Yes or No

15. What is the distance you travel to NEYE rehearsals?  
   _______ 0-10 miles  
   _______ 11-20 miles  
   _______ 21 miles or more

16. Do you attend summer music camps? (Circle one) Yes or No  
If yes, what is the name and location of the camp?

17. What were your reasons for becoming a member of New England Youth Ensemble?

18. What is your favorite classical piece you have performed with the NEYE?  
   Why is it your favorite? __________________________________________

19. What is your favorite sacred piece you have performed with the NEYE?  
   Why is it your favorite? __________________________________________

20. Briefly describe your most memorable performance experience with the NEYE.  
   (Include location, church or performance venue, and any relevant details.)
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________

21. Explain how performing in this ensemble has affected your overall musical experience.
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________  
   ___________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E

NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE TIMELINE, 1969-2016

1969-sunset vespers at Village Church in Lancaster, Massachusetts; first public secular concert at the Worcester Kiwanis Club luncheon; performed at the General Conference Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey before 20,000 people; performed every Christmas and Memorial Day from 1969 to 1988 at the First Church Unitarian in Northboro, Massachusetts

1970-concert at the Hudson Public Library in Hudson, Massachusetts

1971-local Tours

1972-Christmas Festival-Boston Seventh-day Adventist Temple

1973-Iceland Tour; performed at the World Youth Congress on July 28 in Edinburg, Scotland, and Fontainebleau, France by special invitation from Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger

1974-Poland Tour

1975-Poland Tour, Vienna tour; played for President Ford at a State dinner with the Takoma Academy Chorale

1976-tour to Jamaica and Canada; played a concert for Maine’s Educational Television Station; tour to communist Russia

1977-toured the North American West Coast as well as Michigan, Canada and Dallas; Dr. Rittenhouse traveled to Fontainebleau to study composition with Nadia Boulanger.

1978-Canada, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, St. Croix and California tours; televised presentation from Memphis, Tennessee, Toronto, Boston (appeared on Good Morning Show); performed at Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

1979-Bermuda, Los Angeles, CA, West Coast Tour

1980-return to Puerto Rico and St. Croix, Dallas, Texas General Conference; performed at Sterling, Massachusetts’ 200th year anniversary (town where the NEYE was first established)

1981-tour to Israel and Romania November 1, 1981; performed at the Cathedral-Basilica of Saint Peters in downtown Philadelphia; concert was rebroadcast on Philadelphia National Radio on; performed in Strand Theatre in Baltimore, MD

1982-France, London, and Austria tour

1983-toured under the auspices of the Community Concert Association (a division of Columbia Artists Management, Inc.)

1984-toured Europe (Germany, Vienna, Paris, France); played in St. Mark’s cathedral in Venice, Eisenstadt, Austria, Budapest, London, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and St. Bartholomew’s in New York City
1985—Poland tour canceled due to State Department ban/played at General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists in New Orleans; performed at the Crystal Cathedral; played for the Governor of Kansas at Freedom Fountain Valley in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

1986—toured Jamaica and California (including third return to the Crystal Cathedral in a nationally televised performance); performed at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City and Madison Square Gardens; tour to England, Scotland and France

1987—toured locally; First Unitarian Church, Northboro, Massachusetts

1988—West Coast Tour (annual tour); Carnegie Hall (first performances at Carnegie Hall, May 28, 1988 and November 27, 1988); Australia Tour

1989—toured locally

1990—toured locally

1991—tour to Europe

1992—toured locally

1993—toured locally

1994—toured locally

1995—toured Amsterdam, England, Israel, and Jordan (received invitation from Queen Noor of Jordan to attend Jerash International Festival)

1996—toured Jamaica, Florida, Jordan, and Israel (played Israeli Prime Minister’s wife, Leah Rabin)

1997—tour to Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Scandinavia, St. Petersburg, Russia

1998—South Africa tour

1999—tour to the United Kingdom; Moscow tour; performed in Red Square Irkutsk, Siberia; Scotland tour; performed at St. Martin-in-the-Fields

2000—South Africa and Zimbabwe tour with Dr. John Rutter

2001—New Zealand and Australia (performed at the Sydney Opera House)

2002—European Tour (Austria and Italy Germany Switzerland, France, London); Dr. John Rutter traveled with the ensemble to England, Scotland, Zimbabwe

2003—West Coast Tour Jan. 1–6; Vancouver, Canada; Kennedy Center (April 6, 2003); Mexico tour

2004—West Coast Tour, Vancouver, Canada, premier of The Vision of the Apocalypse in Carnegie Hall, tour of Europe (visited a summer school in Austria); toured Munich, Germany, Salzburg International String Festival in Graz, Austria, Bogenhoffen Adventist Seminary in Germany,
Vienna, Venice, Florence, Italy, Avignon France, Switzerland, performed at Waldensian Temple, Jamaica

2004—The Vision of the Apocalypse presented in Carnegie Hall; performed at the International String Festival in Graz, Austria; toured Nuremburg, Salzburg, Vienna, Venice, Florence, Avignon, Geneva, and Shamonian Monk Blanc in Switzerland and Iceland

2005—London Windsor Salisbury Cathedral Ely Cathedral, South African, Apocalypse performed in South Africa; oratorio performed at the General Conference Session (of Seventh-day Adventists)

2006—local tours

2007—Thailand Christmas tour (led by Preston Hawes, current NEYE director); tour to California and Jamaica

2008—local tours

2009—Salzburg Music Festival

2010—South Africa tour

2011—Dr. Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse Memorial Tour (in the Northeast United States); memorial concert, October 15, 2011, at Brunswick Seventh-day Adventist Church Brunswick, Maine

2012—South Africa Memorial tour

2013—Puerto Rico tour

2014—local performances

2015—Australia tour

2016—Italy tour (members of the Carnegie Scholars Program participated in InterHarmony® International Festival)
VITA

Valencia Collins Thevenin is a native of Jackson, Mississippi. She graduated from Clinton High School (Clinton, MS) in 1998. Between 1998 and 2001 Valencia attended The University of Southern Mississippi where she was a violinist in the USM Symphony Orchestra. In 2003 she graduated from Atlantic Union College with a B.A. in Liberal Studies. She was the assistant conductor of the Mississippi Youth Symphony Orchestra from 2003–2004. In 2004 she received a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education and Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Atlantic Union College. In 2012 she received a Master of Music degree in Music Education from The University of Mississippi where she also served as the concertmaster and assistant conductor of the Lafayette-Oxford-University Symphony. Valencia is a string specialist whose research interests include the organization of youth orchestras in the United States and the Caribbean. She is currently a music instructor for the Potomac Conference Corporation.