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## Burnet Corwin Tuthill: The Unique Life of an Educator

Item Type	Other
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Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
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Download date	2026-06-16 06:14:13
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10267/2417">http://hdl.handle.net/10267/2417</a>

## **Burnet Corwin Tuthill: The Unique Life of an Educator**

**Sarah Eldridge**

Burnet Corwin Tuthill, known to many as, “Papa Tut,” was a man of many musical talents. He was a clarinetist, prolific composer, and conductor, as well as a long-time educator. Tuthill was exceptionally important to the development of the music department of Southwestern that would eventually become the music department of today at Rhodes College. He was also deeply involved in the revival of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and the rebirth of classical music in Memphis. The prosperity of the music department at Rhodes is greatly due to the tradition and example that Burnet Tuthill set. Despite his involvement with Southwester, Tuthill also made great contributions to the National Association of Schools of Music and the Society for the Publication of American Music which both emphasized the importance of supporting music and musicians in America. Both of these associations arose from problems that Tuthill faced in the field of music. Also, Tuthill was very concerned with expanding the repertoires of instruments that were usually overlooked. His contributions to music education are vast, providing generations with the repertoire to learn.

Burnet Corwin Tuthill was born in New York City on November 16, 1888. He was the only child of William Burnet and Henrietta Corwin Tuthill. His parents greatly influenced and encouraged his interest in music. His mother was a pianist and organist. When she was seventeen she was the organist for the First Presbyterian Church in her hometown Newburgh, New York.<sup>1</sup> She became organist at Calvary Baptist Church when

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<sup>1</sup> J.L. Raines, “Burnet C. Tuthill: His Life and Music,” (PhD, diss., Michigan State University, 1979).

she moved to New York City and also directed Sorosis, a women's Carol Club.<sup>2</sup> At this church she met and married one of the choir members, William Burnet Tuthill.

William Burnet Tuthill was an architect, but he was also an avid music lover and amateur cellist. He combined these two loves eventually when designing his masterpiece, Carnegie Hall. The hall has been declared a National Monument and is widely known for its beautiful design and stunning acoustics.<sup>3</sup> William Burnet Tuthill was a member of the Wiederholen Quartet, a small group of musicians who gathered frequently for informal concerts at home. Though these concerts were informal, great effort was put into them by those who participated. William Burnet Tuthill used another aspect of his artistry to hand-paint the concert programs, often with small watercolors on them.<sup>4</sup> William Burnet Tuthill's interest in all aspects of creativity exposed young Tuthill to numerous performances by "amateur" and professional musicians.<sup>5</sup>

Burnet Corwin Tuthill's first instrument was not the clarinet. He originally played the piano but decided to stop once he reached high school in order to focus more on academics.<sup>6</sup> After two years without learning a musical instrument, Tuthill visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit on musical instruments. There he saw a fascinating instrument, but it was not the clarinet, it was an oboe.<sup>7</sup> Tuthill immediately fell in love with the oboe and asked his father to purchase one for him. However, his father did not share the same fascination with the oboe and remarked, "Who wants one of those squeaky things around the house?"<sup>8</sup> In turn, Burnet's father suggested the clarinet

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Mary George Beggs, "Concert to Crown Tuthill's Career," *The Commercial Appeal*, January 31, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson, Personal Interview, July 16, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, Personal Interview. March 14, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> J.L. Raines

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

instead of the oboe. Burnet accepted the offer and his father bought a second-hand clarinet for fifteen dollars.<sup>9</sup> One problem ensued from this purchase however. Most solos for clarinet in A were very challenging for a beginner. Tuthill quickly learned the transposition from B-flat to A, expanding his repertoire.<sup>10</sup> This is not an easy task and normally takes musicians years to truly master.

The education behind our prolific composer is a somewhat unusual one. Tuthill received a master's degree from Columbia University in chemistry. He then immediately entered the work force because the financial hardships of a musician rarely cease. He worked many years in different jobs to make ends meet, for the salary of a musician was simply not enough to live on at the time. After Tuthill married Helen Hersey though, her involvement in music as a professional singer allowed him to pursue his own musical interests.<sup>11</sup> During their marriage he became more and more involved in musical endeavors on the side until he became the general manager of the Cincinnati College of Music. Tuthill described his responsibilities as, "to do whatever seemed necessary."<sup>12</sup> It allowed him to pursue his interests in music as well as his work in the business world. Tuthill's wife, Helen Hersey Tuthill died of a stroke in April of 1929 leaving Tuthill to care for his daughter Anne. After a few years, Tuthill decided to pursue a career in music and joined the master's program of the Cincinnati College of Music.<sup>13</sup> Tuthill enjoyed this job, but realized he wanted music to be a bigger part of his life and decided to work toward a degree in music with a focus in composition. Instead of applying to enter the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, Personal Interview.

<sup>11</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson.

<sup>12</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, *Recollections on a Musical Life: 1888-1973*, Unpublished memoirs, Knoxville, TN 2007.

<sup>13</sup> J. L. Raines.

bachelor's program, he applied to enter the master's program and lacked only eight points out of the ninety required. He completed the necessary coursework and entered the master's program.

Many opportunities came from Tuthill's connections with the Wiederholen Quartet. He was able to take part in many things because of this performance group. One member of the Wiederholen Quartet was a violinist named Edouard Dethier. A good friend of Dethier was Daniel Gregory Mason, who in 1912 was working on a pastorelle for clarinet, violin, and piano. Dethier was asked to find a clarinetist for the first reading of the work and immediately thought of Tuthill. In his memoirs, Mason says that the session went so well that he planned to write a sonata for Tuthill.<sup>14</sup> The sonata was finished August 19, 1912; and Tuthill went to Pittsfield, Massachusetts for the first reading. Tuthill loved the sonata and soon claimed the sonata as "his," meaning the one written for him, and wanted to have it published. He tried to get a company to publish the piece but the costs and the time delay involved in having it published frustrated Tuthill. Because of the difficulties brought by attempting to publish Mason's sonata for clarinet, he began work on a group to help promote the publication of American music.<sup>15</sup>

The Society for the Publication of American Music was founded in 1919 with the help of Tuthill's father and several other friends. The goal of the society was to acquire five hundred members who would like to promote the publication of music by living American composers and to have them each pay five dollars per year. This would raise enough money to engrave and print two works a year. Instead of the pieces going on the

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<sup>14</sup> J. L. Raines.

<sup>15</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, Personal Interview

shelves in music stores, the pieces would be distributed to the members of the Society.<sup>16</sup> Advocates of the society included the editor of the Musical Quarterly and later vice-president of G. Schirmer, Incorporated and A. Walter Kramer, the editor of Musical America. To begin the endeavor, lifetime memberships were granted for one hundred dollars.<sup>17</sup> Nine lifetime memberships were given including one for Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Edward J. de Coppet, and Serge Rachmaninoff. Tuthill served as the treasurer of the Society for thirty years.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to his contribution in founding the Society for the Publication of American Music, Tuthill also co-founded the National Association of Schools of Music. Tuthill worked to found this association during his years at the Cincinnati College of Music from 1922-1930.<sup>19</sup> For many years, a degree in music varied from institution to institution. The first institution to grant a degree of Bachelor of Music was Oxford University in England in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Degrees were not important to the musician until the twentieth century when universities began to hire full-time professors to teach music and then create music degree programs. In order for faculty members to show their credentials, it was necessary for them to obtain degrees. However, many different universities and conservatories had varying definitions of the required courses for a degree in music. This created problems when evaluating transcripts from other institutions. It became necessary that each conservatory and university have certain

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<sup>16</sup> J.L Raines

<sup>17</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, Personal Interview

<sup>18</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "NASM- The First Forty Years: A Personal History of the National Association of Schools of Music," (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Schools of Music, 1973), 1.

<sup>19</sup> David Stanley Smith, "Music Was His Hobby, Then His Life." *Musical Quarterly*, (1942): 63-77.

<sup>20</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "NASM- The First Forty Years: A Personal History of the National Association of Schools of Music."

common requirements that all music degree candidates must complete.<sup>21</sup> But in order for all of these decisions to be made, a council of some sort had to be formed and from this eventually came the National Association of Schools of Music. Burnet Tuthill was very involved in this process and continued to be involved as the Treasurer and Secretary of the Association for many years.

Tuthill's association with this organization was very important to his development into a longtime educator and administrator. At the first meeting on June 10, 1924, representatives of many conservatories were present discuss the standards for a Bachelor of Music degree. Those at the meeting included Kenneth Bradley, director of the Bush Conservatory of Chicago, John J. Hattstaedt, director of the American Conservatory of Chicago, Arthur Mason of the Louisville Conservatory, Edwin J. Stringham, director of the Walcott Conservatory of Denver, Charles N. Boyd, director of the Pittsburgh Musical Institute, Bertha Baur, director, and Burnet C. Tuthill, general manager of the Cincinnati Conservatory.<sup>22</sup> Each of the members present desired the ability to, "provide better musical education under more agreeable conditions."<sup>23</sup> Most schools had very few, if any, requirements for admission to the institution and very wide and varying requirements for graduation. This was a major problem when those present were attempting to define standards for a music degree. At this realization, it was determined by all those present that an organization must be formed to solve the problems discussed at the meeting. The first meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music occurred in Pittsburgh in 1924. The six school representatives made several decisions on

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "NASM- The First Forty Years: A Personal History of the National Association of Schools of Music."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

the agenda for the first meeting to be held later that same year. The group, “made a list of schools to be invited to send representatives; authorized Mr. (Kenneth) Bradley to draft a Constitution and set of By-Laws to be submitted to the coming meeting; chose Mr. (Charles) Boyd as the temporary Chairman and Mr. (Burnet) Tuthill as temporary Secretary.”<sup>24</sup>

It took many years to develop the requirements for the degree of music but this was the first task of the Association. It was decided that each student must earn a minimum of eighteen hours and that no more than thirty hours of academic subjects should be required in the curriculum.<sup>25</sup> Small conservatories objected to this due to the fact that many did not have the faculty available to provide instruction in areas other than music. However, each heated discussion was resolved with a unanimous vote. Ultimately, only two schools were set on excluding academic subjects from the curriculum of the music degree: Oberlin Conservatory and Yale University. But, these were eventually resolved.<sup>26</sup> The curriculum of the degree of Bachelor of Music remained the same for years, varying only in recent decades. Each student was at that time required to have only eighteen hours of academic study. They were required to have forty-eight hours of music theory, composition and history and no more than forty-eight hours of applied music. Any other remaining hours could be filled with electives.<sup>27</sup> Tuthill used the guidelines of the National Association of Schools of Music to build a curriculum for the music department of Southwestern.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Burnet Tuthill is responsible for creating what would become the music department of Rhodes College. In 1934, President Diehl was looking for a musician to form a marching band at Southwestern to perform at the football games. Tuthill heard of the opportunity and immediately sent his resume along with a letter explaining his qualifications and desire to work at the College.<sup>28</sup> At this time, Tuthill was working at the Cincinnati College of Music and had been performing and acting as a guest conductor around the country. By this time, he had begun composing a few pieces here and there making the start of what would become a prolific library of pieces. Tuthill was qualified and was soon asked to join the staff of Southwestern to form the first Southwestern marching band as well as a choir and an orchestra.

Along with the new positions of band and choir director, Tuthill acquired another position as the first director of music at Southwestern. At this point, there was little to the music department. It consisted of the newly formed band and choir and a, “three hour course in the history of music, or appreciation of music, or some such subject.”<sup>29</sup> President Diehl recognized that he did not know a great deal about forming a music department and put Tuthill in charge of that endeavor. Tuthill’s continuing involvement in the National Association of Schools of Music kept him well-informed on the issues that were pressing music departments all over the country. Tuthill worked with Robert Strickler of the Interlochen National Music Camp to develop a curriculum for a bachelor’s degree with a major in music.

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<sup>28</sup> Mary George Beggs, “Concert to Crown Tuthill’s Career.”

<sup>29</sup> Charles Diehl, Letter to Burnet Tuthill.

The first proposed courses were “The Language of Music” and “Literature of Music.”<sup>30</sup> Southwestern was having a bit of trouble trying to secure the funds in order to buy instruments to support a full band as well as to supply a library of music large enough to teach a course in the subject. In order to make the department successful, the second course “Literature of Music” was scheduled to be taught the second semester giving the College extra time to secure the money to purchase all of the necessary materials for the class.

Working to build a band was the first duty that Tuthill was given at Southwestern. When he began work on the band, he found that few were interested in the idea of a marching band and even fewer signed up for the opportunity. This was not helped by the fact that band practice was held in the fourth floor tower room in Palmer Hall, right above what was then the campus library in the third floor attic room.<sup>31</sup> Tuthill worked hard to ensure that the debut of the band was successful and because of this, the debut did not occur until the middle of the football season in 1935. It was difficult to build a band that sounded worth of the football field with only fair instruments and members that had little training. For the long-awaited debut, the band marched from the corner of Palmer Hall to Fargason Field where the student body joined in to sing the Alma Mater.<sup>32</sup>

After a season of playing in the tower room of Palmer, President Diehl was forced to move the band to a different location due to the number of complaints received. Tuthill and the newly formed Southwestern Band moved to a building fittingly named the “band house.” The building contained a rehearsal hall, an office, and a storeroom for instruments. Many years later, improvements were made upon the band house to hold

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> J.L. Raines

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

rehearsals for the Southwestern Singers as well as the band.<sup>33</sup> After the renovation was completed, the building was renamed “Tuthill Hall” but was quickly shortened to “Tut Hall.”

Tuthill once told a story to a newspaper journalist about his early days trying to start a music program with a shortage on money. President Diehl asked Tuthill for a list of all of the materials that he would require to be successful with the new department. Tuthill thought of it as a wish list and wrote down everything that he wished to have expecting to get only what the College had allotted for at the time. After receiving the list Diehl asked if Tuthill needed everything on the list. Tuthill responded that he had put everything in order of its importance and to simply draw a line to where he would provide. Diehl asked once again if everything was necessary and Tuthill told him yes. President Diehl drew a line at the bottom of the list.<sup>34</sup>

President Diehl also hired Tuthill with the hope that he could form a chorus. Before Tuthill’s arrival in Memphis, there were students who were involved with some student-led choirs on campus, but there was not an organized program. Tuthill gathered twenty interested singers and began by giving them breathing and diction lessons. His plan was to make the small group of singers sound so wonderful, that others would want to join the chorus. This was very successful and by the third year of the Southwestern Singers, being accepted was an honor. After the establishment of the Singers as a well-respected chorus, Tuthill began the tradition of taking the Southwestern Singers to civic clubs, school assemblies, and churches to perform. The chorus performed all different styles of music, exposing the audience as well as the performers to several varieties of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Mary George Beggs, “Concert to Crown Tuthill’s Career.”

music. Tuthill taught the chorus each year about the importance of high performance standards and the appreciation of music.<sup>35</sup>

Southwestern Singers played a tremendous role in making the department of music so successful. The Singers were all female and traveled around the South raising the profile of this small College. The Singers often traveled with few or no other chaperones other than Tuthill himself. However, Tuthill traveled with the Singers all around the South without a single incident. Because the Singers were so well behaved they became well-respected throughout the South and especially among the professors of the College. The faculty was fond of a reputation of good behavior traveling throughout the region bringing that reputation right back to campus.<sup>36</sup> Upon Tuthill's retirement from Southwestern in 1959, the Southwestern Singers performed his favorite work, Bach's *B Minor Mass*. The Southwestern Singers had performed it a decade earlier, but Tuthill chose to perform it again to, "mark the close of my career with the students who so loyally and lovingly made all my work with them so completely satisfying."<sup>37</sup>

Forming an orchestra at Southwestern was just as difficult as forming the band and the Southwestern Singers. Previously, a group had tried to form an orchestra combining faculty and students together; however there were not enough resources to do so. In 1938, Tuthill asked any member of the Memphis community who played an orchestral instrument to join them in rehearsing once a week. There was a wonderful response of 75 people who showed up for the first rehearsal including students, amateurs, and professionals. This school orchestra soon grew to become the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Tuthill was the conductor of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra which played

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<sup>35</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson, Personal Interview

<sup>36</sup> Charles Diehl, Letter to Burnet Tuthill.

<sup>37</sup> J.L. Raines.

his own compositions on several occasions. Jean DeFrank, wife of Vincent DeFrank, who conducted the Memphis Symphony Orchestra for a few seasons and played the French horn under Tuthill, remembers playing Tuthill's compositions. Ms. DeFrank characterized it as modern, but not avant-garde as are many other famed modernists.<sup>38</sup>

Soon after Tuthill moved with his family to Memphis, he received an offer to become head of the Memphis College of Music. President Diehl gave Tuthill his permission to take the position at the Memphis College of Music and to remain head of the department of music at Southwestern.<sup>39</sup> During his work at the two institutions simultaneously, Tuthill realized that both of them needed what the other had. Southwestern was in need of the instructors that the College of Music had, but the College of Music needed the financial support that Southwestern had. Tuthill hoped to merge the two institutions in a period of ten to twelve years.

Tuthill's first step was to find a new home for the College of Music. The current location was three miles from Southwestern which was too far for students to walk between. Tuthill searched for a house located near Southwestern to move the College of Music. However, the College of Music was limited by its financial means and nothing was found to be an improvement over the current location. But in 1943, the College of Music was forced to move after the landlord decided that property would be more profitable if the building was turned into apartments.<sup>40</sup> The College of Music was forced to move quickly, however the only house available was the large "Galloway Mansion" being sold as part of an estate.<sup>41</sup> The house was within a mile of the Southwestern

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<sup>38</sup> Jean DeFrank. Personal Interview, July 11, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> J. L. Raines.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> "Galloway Mansion to Be Music Center." *The Commercial Appeal*, July 30, 1943.

campus and was ideal for the College of Music because of its spaciousness, but there was a problem. The College of Music was short on time, and money was not available to make such a purchase. Tuthill asked President Diehl to help and explained his plan for eventually merging the two colleges.

Diehl began negotiations and on July 27, 1943 signed a contract for rental of the mansion by the Memphis College of Music with the terms of \$150 per month rent with an option to buy for \$35,000.<sup>42</sup> President Diehl provided funds from Southwestern's budget to negotiate the contract knowing that the trustees would not allow money for property that was not owned by Southwestern. Tuthill fixed this problem before the trustees could say no by giving a deed of gift to President Diehl for the College of Music awarding its name and assets to Southwestern.<sup>43</sup> Tuthill had successfully merged the two colleges and the Memphis College of Music now had under its name the subtitle, Music Department of Southwestern at Memphis.<sup>44</sup>

In order to have the mansion operate fully as a school, funding was needed to make repairs and upgrades. First, Tuthill called for \$5,000 to be raised by the President of the College of Music, Dr. Morton Finch.<sup>45</sup> The board of directors raised almost the full amount and repairs were made for the grand opening of the Memphis College of Music, Music Department of Southwestern at Memphis for the 1943-44 school year. Later that year, President Diehl went to New York to petition the General Education Board for money to support the new music department. The Board awarded a grant of \$25,000 to be paid in annual installments, provided Southwestern matched the amount from its own

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<sup>42</sup> J. L. Raines.

<sup>43</sup> "Galloway Mansion to be Music Center."

<sup>44</sup> J. L. Raines

<sup>45</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, Personal Interview.

budget. The grant provided much needed financial support for the new music department. The department was able to rebuild pianos, purchase instrumental equipment, and increase the holdings of the music library. Part of the money was used to transform the third floor ballroom of the mansion into three classrooms to hold lecture classes.<sup>46</sup> The music department was not moved from the “Galloway Mansion” to the Southwestern Campus until 1971.

Two years after Tuthill established the newly combined Memphis College of Music and the Music Department of Southwestern, he began a new administrative project. He accepted a position with the Army which involved organizing music departments for two American Army universities in England and France.<sup>47</sup> He received the call in the spring of 1945 and was given little time to make personal arrangements. Tuthill quickly took leave of Southwestern, the Memphis Symphony, which he was conducting at the time, and the National Association of Schools of Music. Within forty-eight hours Tuthill was being briefed in Washington, D.C.<sup>48</sup>

Tuthill worked in a two-room suite in the Pentagon which quickly became known as the, “Bureau of Confusion,” holding Tuthill, nineteen aides, and ten telephones.<sup>49</sup> In ten days, Tuthill along with his aides enlisted the basic personnel necessary for both schools. The university in Shrivenham, England was headed by Tuthill himself and Edwin J. Stringham who was the chairman of the music department at Queens College in Flushing, New York was named the head of the group that went to Biarritz, France.

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<sup>46</sup> “Galloway Mansion to be Music Center.”

<sup>47</sup> J. L. Raines

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Tuthill faced many problems in trying to obtain instruments and other supplies such as books and music from the Army to start a music department. Tuthill was promoted from “Branch Head” to “Chief of the Fine Arts Section” which helped him in acquiring the necessary supplies.<sup>50</sup> English musicians and educators were very interested in the work of their American counterparts. They invited Tuthill and others from the university to attend meetings of educational associations and were occasionally asked to speak to the English audiences about the trends of American music and music education. Tuthill also visited Oxford and London due to their close proximity to his location in Shrivenham. He attended lectures, concerts, and teas given at the colleges. During Tuthill’s time in Shrivenham, he met many English performers and composers including Ralph Vaughn-Williams, Arnold Bax, and Benjamin Britten.

These interactions of the English and American musicians brought about concerts and joint performances. The Shrivenham orchestra was large enough to tour to nearby towns and gave two concerts in London. The first concert in London featured a composition by Tuthill named, “Song of the White Horse Vale.” Tuthill eventually tailored this song to become the *alma mater* of the university in Shrivenham. After serving five months abroad, Tuthill’s duties were completed and he returned to Memphis and Southwestern.<sup>51</sup>

Despite Tuthill’s involvement in the education of students for a large part of his life, he also passed on his love for music to his family. Burnet continued the enrichment and encouragement through music that his parents provided for him. Burnet Tuthill’s second wife, Ruth Wood Tuthill, was a violinist. Tuthill’s daughter, Anne Tuthill

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Reynolds chose the flute and married a clarinetist, like her father. Each of these family members participated in the *Memphis Sinfonietta* in some capacity as amateurs, volunteers, or guest performers. The *Memphis Sinfonietta* was the fifth establishment of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Vincent DeFrank. Tuthill played the second clarinet while his son-in-law played first clarinet. Anne Reynolds played second chair flute. Due to their involvement in the orchestra, the family was surrounded with musicians from all over the world, creating an atmosphere of creativity that the entire family has enjoyed in some capacity. Tuthill's granddaughter, Helen Reynolds Patterson, recalls the nights when the symphony played. Though music was not a career for her father or her mother, each of them played with great seriousness and with great respect for Burnet Tuthill.<sup>52</sup> The goal of the Memphis Sinfonietta was to provide the citizens of Memphis with the greatest experience of music, and each of the Tuthills honored the tradition that Burnet Tuthill started.

Another large part of Tuthill's life was spent composing. He began writing music at the age of nine, long before he studied composition. In 1898 he composed twenty-five short melodies in octaves to use as technical exercises. A feature of these melodies is irregular rhythms, a common trait in many of his compositions. Tuthill's granddaughter, Helen Reynolds Patterson, recalls learning these short melodies when she played the piano as a small child. She remembers that they were written in strange keys and always with difficult rhythms.<sup>53</sup> While at the Horace Mann School, he arranged orchestra parts from piano scores so that the instruments could enrich the piano accompaniment. To do this, Tuthill mostly relied on the *Berlioz Book of Orchestration* that was part of his

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<sup>52</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson. Personal Interview.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

father's library.<sup>54</sup> His first published work was written while a senior at Columbia University. Tuthill and two of his classmates wanted to form a clarinet trio, and Tuthill wrote a *Scherzo and Trio* for the group. This work has been numbered Opus 1, No. 1 but because these were published separately they are sometimes confused with a different number.<sup>55</sup>

At this point in his career as a composer, Tuthill decided to study composition under Sidney Durst. His course of study included, "writing a book of exercises in counterpoint over a two-year period."<sup>56</sup> The last piece in this book was published as Opus 2 in 1933 with the name *Benedicite, Omnia Opera*. This was an eight-part setting for a *capella* choir. This work and a sonata he wrote for clarinet and piano qualifies Tuthill for graduate-level work.

Opus 3, *Fantasy Sonata*, was his first major instrumental work and in his opinion was his best work. The piece was for clarinet and piano and was the first of seven works that Tuthill wrote featuring a solo clarinet. The year the Tuthill came to Memphis, he composed the *Quintet*, Opus 15, for clarinet and strings. It was first performed in 1946 with the Gordon String Quartet led by Jacques Gordon, first violinist.<sup>57</sup> This was followed by the *Concerto*, Opus 28 which was written in 1949. In 1954, Tuthill wrote the *Rhapsody*, Opus 33. He wrote this for his son-in-law, Richard J. Reynolds, Jr., who played the clarinet.<sup>58</sup> *Rondo Concertante*, Opus 44, was written for his son-in-law and his grandson, Richard J. Reynolds, III, in 1961. *Chip's Pieces*, Opus 40, were written in 1959

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<sup>54</sup> J. L. Raines.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson, Personal Interview.

for his grandson.<sup>59</sup> *Two Snacks for a Lonesome Clarinet*, Opus 60, No. 2 was the last work that featured a solo clarinet.

There are many reasons that composers write music. Sometimes inspiration just strikes them, and sometimes it takes an outside muse to inspire. Tuthill was often inspired to write for his friends and family, whether they had a favorite instrument or simply loved his music. Though there were some rough times, Tuthill worked hard to make ends meet for his family throughout the years. During his study of composition, he worked as a concert manager of several musicians and even traveled giving recitals himself. Because he did not have the money to purchase a gift, Tuthill wrote his fourth work, *Nocturne*, for his daughter Anne in celebration of her fourteenth birthday.<sup>60</sup> The piece was for flute and strings and was published many years later in 1974.

*Bethlehem*, Opus 8, was Tuthill's first orchestral work. It is probably the best known work by Tuthill and premiered at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan in 1934. The conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony at that time, Eugene Goossens, earlier suggested that Tuthill compose the piece, urging him to write a piece for orchestra, preferably a pastorale. Though Tuthill really did not want to write a pastorale, he pursued the idea because he was required to write one orchestral piece for his music degree. The title was added after the completion of the piece and Tuthill said of the piece, "Here was a pastorale that ended in a climax and the only such scene that really had a climax was that surrounding the birth of Our Lord. Hence, the title."<sup>61</sup>

Three months after the first performance, the work was performed under the direction of Howard Hanson, a world renowned conductor and composer as well as close

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "Recollections of A Musical Life:1888-1973."

friend of Burnet Tuthill. *Bethlehem* is the most frequently performed large work by Tuthill. Orchestras that have performed it include the National Symphony under Hans Kindler, the St. Louis Symphony under Vladimir Golschmann, the Cincinnati Symphony under Eugene Goossens, and the Memphis Symphony under Tuthill himself.<sup>62</sup> A landmark performance for Tuthill was given by the Quincy Symphony Orchestra who played the piece for its fiftieth performance.<sup>63</sup>

Many of Tuthill's works were written or premiered at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan where Tuthill spent every summer for almost a decade. Opus 14, *Sailor's Hornpipe* was written for five of his colleagues at the camp: Edwin Lennig, flutist, Andre Andrand, George Rowe, James Stagliano, and Clark Kessler. *Overture Brillante*, Opus 19, is a work for symphonic band written in the ten days before the camp opened in 1937. The work was broadcast the next year by the University of Rochester Band, conducted by Frederick Fennell.<sup>64</sup>

The saxophone instructor at Interlochen, Cecil Leeson was the inspiration for Tuthill's saxophone *Sonata*, Opus 20. Leeson once asked Howard Hanson to write an alto saxophone sonata for him. Hanson was not particularly interested; however Tuthill overheard this request and took it upon himself to write the sonata. Tuthill did not tell Leeson that he was going to compose the work but mailed the piece to him when it was completed. Tuthill received no response about the composition, and he thought that Leeson was insulted by the fact that it was not written by Howard Hanson. Twenty-five years later Tuthill received a call from Leeson thanking him for the composition.<sup>65</sup> That

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<sup>62</sup> J. L. Raines.

<sup>63</sup> "Tuthill's Lyric 'Bethlehem' Will Get 50<sup>th</sup> Performance." The Commercial Appeal, December 1, 1971.

<sup>64</sup> J. L. Raines

<sup>65</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "Recollections of A Musical Life: 1888-1973."

day Leeson had found the composition on a shelf in his office at Ball State University. Leeson requested permission to publish the work because at that time he was working on a project to enlarge the repertoire of the saxophone and even commissioned Tuthill to write three more compositions for saxophone.<sup>66</sup> From this commission Tuthill produced the *Concerto*, Opus 50 for tenor saxophone and the *Sonata*, Opus 56 for tenor saxophone and piano.

Tuthill also composed a number of works for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Being the conductor of the large orchestra, Tuthill went back to writing the *Symphony in C*, Opus 21, which he had postponed work on a few years earlier. The work is, “in the traditional four movements: *Lento- allegro molto, Vivace, Andante, and Allegro.*”<sup>67</sup> After completing the work in 1940, Tuthill discarded the last movement the following year and rewrote the end.<sup>68</sup>

After the formation of the Memphis Symphony Chorus, Tuthill decided to write for chorus and orchestra *Big River*, Opus 22. Because of the success of *Symphony in C*, Tuthill premiered the *Symphony in C* and *Big River* in consecutive years in 1943 and 1944. He chose the text of his friend John Gould Fletcher, a Pulitzer Prize winning poet from Little Rock, Arkansas. The work is Fletcher’s poem, “Big River,” set for soprano soloist, women’s chorus, and orchestra.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the compositions that Tuthill wrote for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, he also wrote for the choir of St. Mary’s Cathedral where he was a member of the congregation. Many of the pieces are written for his friend Joe Morrow who played

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<sup>66</sup> J. L. Raines

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

the organ at St. Mary's. One particular anthem displays several characteristics that often appear in Tuthill's compositions. The *Fiery Furnace Anthem*, Opus 49, No. 1 is written for a chorus with an organ accompaniment.

Something that Tuthill used often in his compositions were frequent meter changes as well as asymmetrical meters. In the *Fiery Furnace Anthem*, the first six measures have five meter changes, alternating between 4/4 and 3/4. The top number of a time signature tells the number of beats that are in each measure. The bottom number defines what length of note gets the beat, such as a half or a quarter note. This quick change in the number of beats in a measure creates an uneven feeling because the downbeats are shifting so suddenly. Tuthill often changed the meter creating surprises as well as variety in rhythm. Tuthill's granddaughter, Helen Reynolds Patterson remembered that the rhythm was one of the most challenging things about playing his compositions.

Tuthill used a creative way in which to tell the story from the Book of Daniel in the *Fiery Furnace*. The scoring of a musical composition is simply the group of instruments or voices that the composer chooses to include in the piece. Tuthill used scoring in imaginative ways. The male voices are used distinctly to act as a narrator telling the story. The entire choir joins in when the "people" are speaking. Another feature of the scoring is a soprano solo. The soprano is singing about a flute and has a flute-like line as her melody on the vowel "oo." As the soprano imitates the flute, the organ imitates a harp in a section of this anthem. The melody of the organ flows upward in swift, graceful movements very similar to the typical melody of a harp.

The tonality of Tuthill's compositions is typically unusual. In music, compositions are either tonal or atonal. Tonal means that there is a set of notes that are arranged hierarchically and generally center around one note that is most important called the "tonic." The tonal center is generally defined by the key signature that is found at the beginning of a piece which tells the sharps or flats that will be used throughout the piece. Tuthill often chooses to leave the key signature out so as not to tie himself to one definite key. Instead, the lack of a key signature allows the music to change from one key to the next.

Tuthill was also fond of writing in modes which to a lay person sound "old" or "ancient" like in a Gregorian chant before key signatures were truly established. When a piece is said to be atonal, it simply means that there is not a tonal center recognized anywhere in the piece. Though Tuthill moves quickly from one key to a different mode, his music is not necessarily atonal. One could say that there are instances and occasions of atonality, but most of his music, as represented in the anthems, is tonal despite the fact that the tonal center is vague.

Tuthill wrote a series of technical exercises for the piano that demonstrate some of his most identifiable characteristics. The title of the set of seven is "Suite a la Mode." There are seven modes: Aeolian, Locrian, Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian. Tuthill wrote a small exercise based on each of these modes making them "Suite a la Mode."

One of the most interesting is the last of the set name "Mixolydian Frolic." The piece is in the time signature of 4/4 and is rhythmically interesting. There are commonly defined strong downbeats as well as the lighter upbeats in most music. The

stronger downbeats in this time signature are usually defined as the first and third beats of each measure. However, Tuthill decided to emphasize the upbeats by having the left hand play an accented block chord on the second and fourth beats of each of the first four measures. After this, the right hand and left hand trade so that the right hand plays the heavy block chords while the left hand takes the melody for a few measures. Apart from this feeling of disconnect that the ear detects, other rhythms are playing a part in making the piece sound very disjointed. Syncopation is a momentary betrayal of the natural rhythm of upbeats and downbeats. This piece contains a great deal of syncopation starting with the very first accented eighth note in the beginning of the piece. This is very appropriate considering the name of the piece is “Mixolydian *Frolic*.”

The tonality of this piece is intriguing. At first glance the piece seems to be written in G Major, except for it is missing an f-sharp. But because there are no sharps or flats in the piece, it is clear that it is written in a mode. The mixolydian mode begins and ends on g with all white notes between. If there are no sharps or flats throughout the piece and there is no key signature however, it can be difficult to discern what the tonal center is and it can very easily change quickly from one to another.

Looking at the tonality of the entire set, each exercise is written in a different mode with a different tonal center. The first exercise, “Aeolian Dance,” is written in the Aeolian mode of A. The second, “Locrian Canon,” moves from the A of the first exercise to B. The third, “Ionian March,” moves from B to C. This continues going up the keyboard until the seventh exercise reaches G. Each exercise begins with a new mode, but the tonal centers of each exercise put together form a mode of A. This means that is

one was to play the tonal centers of each exercise in order, they would be playing an A mode: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and A, is the Aeolian mode.

Burnet Tuthill was often asked to compose alma maters for different schools. He chose to write for two, possibly three, schools. As stated before, he composed the alma mater for the university in Shrivvenham when he was abroad. Tailoring the words around a song he had already written, "Song of the White Horse Vale," became the alma mater of the university.<sup>70</sup> The alma mater of what was then Southwester and is now Rhodes was also written by Tuthill. There were originally three verses written for the alma mater, however, only two verses are usually performed, Why the middle verse is not performed is most likely due to a difficulty to perform or teach a choir the tune.

Tuthill once explained his view on composition. He said, "My philosophy has been that, knowing that greatness as a composer could never be claimed, I would produce works to be of usefulness in supplying the need of better music for instruments that had been neglected."<sup>71</sup> From this belief, he wrote many different pieces for a variety of instruments that until then had little solo repertoire. In addition to his love of writing for his own instrument, the clarinet, he wanted to supply others like him who played atypical solo instruments. One of the most interesting is his *Toccata and Aria*, Opus 35, for accordion. He also wrote for double bass and piano, the trombone and piano, and the tuba and piano.

Tuthill composed a series of concertos as well for instruments that had been neglected. *Concerto* for clarinet, the *Rhapsody*, the *Rondo Concertante*, and the *Concerto* for tenor saxophone are all written for saxophone soloists. In 1962, Tuthill wrote a

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<sup>70</sup> J. L. Raines

<sup>71</sup> Burnet C. Tuthill, "Recollections of A Musical Life: 1888-1973."

Concerto for double bass and wind ensemble. Tuthill's friend Oscar Zimmerman asked Tuthill to write this piece. Zimmerman's son, Robert, premiered the work at the Eastman School of music later that year. This concerto was one of the Tuthill's attempts at twelve-tone composition. In this style, the composer must use each of the twelve tones once before one can be repeated. The goal of the style is to avoid any kind of hierarchy of tones in the form of a scale or mode in which there is a tonal center. After this, he composed more conservative concertos for the trombone and the tuba.

Throughout his career, Tuthill applied his philosophy in much of his chamber music, in which he wrote for unorthodox combinations of instruments. His *Fugue*, Opus 10, featured quartets. No. 3 was written for four brasses, No. 4 for four clarinets, and No. 5 was written for four cellos. He wrote for two harps in Opus 18, No. 1 titled the *Duo*. *Quintet* was written for four clarinets and piano. Tuthill composed *Family Music*, Opus 30, for his family to play together. On the manuscript, the first names of his immediate family appear instead of listing instruments.<sup>72</sup>

"Music Was His Hobby, Then His Life," is the title of a spotlight on Tuthill's career by David Stanley Smith, and could very well be the motto of Tuthill's life. He began at an early age with a love for music, encouraged by his mother and father. Constantly involved in performing groups, he made the acquaintance of people who would inspire him for a lifetime. After choosing music for his career, Tuthill pursued music in numerous ways. He was a performer, an educator, as well as a very prolific composer. In all three departments he made contributions throughout his lifetime,

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<sup>72</sup> Helen Reynolds Patterson, Personal Interview.

something that is not commonly done. Tuthill was a very productive and accomplished composer despite the fact that much of his time was spent educating others. His role in education played a large part in his philosophy of composition, determining that he would write for the education of musicians rather than the fame of being a composer.

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Addendum:  
 Burnett Tuthill's  
 Compositions

Op. No.	Title	Year	Location	MS
Op. 31	No. 2 Flute Song, flute and orch or pf	1954	Rhodes	Southern
Op. 32	Psalm 120 SATB	1952	Rhodes	MS
Op. 33	Psalm 4 SATB and organ	1954	Rhodes	MS
Op. 33	Psalm 104	1959	Rhodes	MS
Op. 33	Rhapsody for clarinet and pf or orch.	1954	Rhodes	MS
Op. 34	No. 1 Scherzo for 3 Clarinets	1959	Rhodes	MS
Op. 35	No. 1 Clarinet Trio	1959	Rhodes	MS
Op. 35	No. 2 Clarinet Trio	1957	Rhodes	MS
Op. 36	Benedictus for Double Choir	1937	Rhodes	MS
Op. 37	Fantasy Sonata for Cl and Pf	1937	Rhodes	MS
Op. 39	Nocturne for Flute and String Quartet	1938	Rhodes	MS
Op. 59	Requiem for SATB, baritone, and soprano	1933	Rhodes	MS
Op. 6	Sonata for Violin and Piano	1933	Rhodes	MS
Op. 39b	Sonata in a Canon for flute and clarinet	1937	Rhodes	T. Presser
Op. 8	Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano	1934	Rhodes	Fischer
Op. 40	Variations for Wind Quintet and Piano:	1934	Rhodes	MS
Op. 41	When Johnny Comes Marching Home	1959	Rhodes	Theo Presser
Op. 42	Festival Prelude for organ and 7 brasses	1960	Rhodes	MS
Op. 43	No. 1 Fantasy Piece for trombone and pf	1935	Rhodes	Fischer
Op. 10	No. 2 Scherzo for Trumpet and pf	1935	Rhodes	MS
Op. 44	No. 3 Fugue for 2 clarinets and band	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 10	No. 4 Fugue for 4 Clarinets	1935	Rhodes	MS
Op. 46	No. 5 Fugue for Clarinet and Wind	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 46	No. 6 Fugue for String Quartet	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 11	Concerto for Clarinet and Orch	1935	Rhodes	MS
Op. 42	Suite for Chamber Orchestra (incomplete)	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 48	Six String Quartets (incomplete)	1964	Rhodes	MS
Op. 14	No. 1 Divertimento for Wind Quartet	1936	Rhodes	Fischer
Op. 49	No. 2 Variations for Saxophone and Piano	1964	Rhodes	MS
Op. 49	Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet	1964	Rhodes	MS
Op. 16	Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet	1936	Rhodes	MS
Op. 50	Sonata for Violin and Piano	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 58	No. 1 Piece for Two Trumpets	1965	Rhodes	MS
Op. 52	No. 2 Piece for Clarinet and Bassoon	1966	Rhodes	MS
Op. 59	Overture for Big Band	1966	Rhodes	MS
Op. 30	Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	1939	Rhodes	MS
Op. 30	Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	1967	Rhodes	MS
Op. 21	Magnificat and Cuncta Dimittis SSA and Organ	1940	Rhodes	MS
Op. 55	Big River, Women's Chorus and Orch	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 56	Sonata for Treble Sax and Piano	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 57	Five Prayers for Brass Five	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 54	Santitas for Tuba and Band	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 58	Wedding March for Clarinet and Piano	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 26	Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	1945	Rhodes	MS
Op. 26b	Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 27	Waltz for Clarinet	1948	Rhodes	MS
Op. 28	Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra	1949	Rhodes	MS
Op. 29	Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	1950	Rhodes	MS
Op. 30	Family Service, Chants and Prayer	1952	Rhodes	MS
Op. 32	Three Pieces for Clarinet	1971	Rhodes	MS

Op. 62	No. 3 Anthem with Trumpet Stop	1973	Rhodes	MS
Op. 63	No. 1 Four Canons for 2 violins	1972		
Op. 63	No. 2 Lament for Violin and Piano	1973	Rhodes	
Op. 64	No. 1 Caprice for Guitar	1972		MS
Op. 64	No. 2 Ten Tiny Tunes for Tuba Solo	1973	Rhodes	Tenuto
Op. 64	No. 3 Piece for Tuba and piano	1973	Rhodes	MS?
Op. 64	No. 4 Music for Bass Trombone and Piano	1973	Rhodes	MS
Op. 65	Concerto for Tuba and band	1974		
Op. 66				
Op. 67				
Op. 68	Piece for String Bass Solo			

MS- manuscript