



For Immediate Release

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Emeritus Conductors Return to Celebrate 85th Anniversary of *Music and the Spoken Word*

Salt Lake City — On Sunday, August 11, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir will commemorate the 85th anniversary of its *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcast. Music director Mack Wilberg has invited two former conductors of the Choir, Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, to join him and associate conductor Ryan Murphy in conducting this week's broadcast.

"Music and the Spoken Word has endured as the world's longest continuously running network broadcast," says Choir president Ron Jarrett. "In the beginning, listeners strained to hear the program through the static of their crystal radio sets; now fans tune in through YouTube. *Music and the Spoken Word* has been a constant during a century of dramatic change."

Ottley conducted the Choir from 1974 to 1999 and Jessop from 1999 to 2008. Ottley, Jessop and Wilberg are the only surviving Mormon Tabernacle Choir conductors. The three conductors have collectively served for 34 years — comprising nearly half of the broadcast's 85 years!

During his tenure as Choir conductor, Jerold Ottley traveled internationally with the Choir on more than 20 tours, to places like Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Under his direction, the Choir also performed at the United States presidential inaugurations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Under the direction of Craig Jessop, the Choir received the Special Recognition Award from the International Radio and Television Society Foundation and the National Medal of Arts from

Mormon Tabernacle Choir Announces Summer Concerts – Page 2

President George W. Bush. In 2004, the Choir and the *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcast were inducted into the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

Music and the Spoken Word first aired on 15 July 1929 from the Salt Lake Tabernacle. On that summer day, a local radio crew ran a wire from their control room to an amplifier where the Choir was singing — more than a block away. With the station’s sole microphone suspended from the Tabernacle ceiling, 19-year-old Ted Kimball stood atop a ladder and announced each song. Kimball — the son of the Tabernacle organist — stayed perched in place for the duration of the entire program because the mike was “live.”

Today *Music and the Spoken Word* is produced by Bonneville Communications and is broadcast by more than 2,000 radio, television and cable stations worldwide. Each station donates the airtime, worth millions of dollars annually, as a public service. The 360 members of the Choir donate their services each week, continuing a tradition of volunteerism that has lifted hearts for three-quarters of a century.

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