



For Immediate Release

Mormon Tabernacle Choir to Record One of Greatest Oratorios: Handel's *Messiah*

Salt Lake City — The historic Tabernacle on Temple Square will double as a modern-day recording studio as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Orchestra at Temple Square and world-class soloists give voice to one of the greatest and most beloved oratorios of all time, Handel's *Messiah*. Using a new edition by music director Mack Wilberg, the Choir and Orchestra will spend the next year recording not just the choruses but Handel's entire oratorio. That includes 20 choruses totaling 55 minutes, with an additional 85 minutes of solos and orchestra music. If you're doing the math, that's an astounding two hours and 20 minutes of music that will be available on two CDs.

Music director Mack Wilberg said the recording will be a bit daunting. "*Messiah* is usually performed with about 25 vocalists, so keeping the 360 voices of the Choir in sync with the orchestra will be our greatest challenge. But we are up to the task and thrilled to pair this masterful work with the Choir's bold, distinct, resonate sound."

The Choir is no stranger to Handel's work. Over the years it has performed selections from and the entire *Messiah* multiple times. In fact, a 1959 recording of *Messiah* by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and Richard Condie and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was placed in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress in 2005 because of its historical significance. It was a best-selling album and one of the most successful classical recordings of its time, setting a benchmark for classical musical recordings that remains unparalleled.

“We are thrilled to be a part of this legacy,” said Ron Jarrett, president of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. “The mission of the Choir and Orchestra, to share music that brings joy and uplifts the human spirit, is in perfect harmony with Handel’s work that has resonated with millions of people worldwide.”

Handel’s *Messiah* is most often associated with Christmas, when its signature “Hallelujah Chorus” is frequently sung. But Jarrett hopes the Choir’s recording will familiarize listeners with the entire oratorio, which tells the story of Christ’s life in three sections, from His birth to His death and eventual Resurrection.

It was later in Handel’s life, at age 56, that he wrote *Messiah* in just three weeks. Charles Jennens had previously prepared the libretto, drawing on sources from both the Old and New Testaments. *Messiah* was met with great anticipation and enthusiastic crowds at its debut on 13 April 1742 in Dublin, Ireland. The proceeds of that remarkable performance were all donated to local charities.

Some 40 years after *Messiah*’s premiere, English musicologist Charles Burney wrote, “This great work has been heard in all parts of the kingdom with increasing reverence and delight; it has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphan and enriched succeeding managers of the oratorios, more than any single production in this or any other country.”

“We hope,” Wilberg said, “that our rendition of *Messiah* will continue to inspire in audiences feelings of peace, hope and compassion for others.”

The process for the Choir’s recording of *Messiah* will take place during several sessions spanning much of 2014. As additional information on the recording is available it will be shared with the public. Fans and supporters of the Choir are invited to frequently visit mormontabernaclechoir.org/messiah for updates on the progress of this historic recording.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has released over 200 recordings since its first album in 1910, resulting in both Grammy and Emmy Awards and gold and platinum albums.

Composed of 360 volunteer voices, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir serves as a musical ambassador for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Choir will be accompanied

on this album by the Orchestra at Temple Square, its companion 150-member, all-volunteer symphony orchestra organized in 1999. The Choir and Orchestra are heard by millions worldwide through television, radio, satellite and Internet broadcasts, concert tours and recordings. The Choir has performed all over the world, while remaining a truly iconic American institution. Highlights of its storied career include performances at such high-profile events as the inaugurations of six U.S. presidents, the 2002 Olympic Games and some of the most prestigious outdoor music festivals across North America. The Choir's key mission is to transcend cultural and generational boundaries to unite people around the world through music.

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Contacts for news media only. Please do not publish.

Michelle Moore

Deseret Book

(801)517-3444

mimoore@deseretbook.com

Kim Farah

Mormon Tabernacle Choir Publicist

(801)240-1977

kfarah@mormontabernaclechoir.org

