



MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

75 YEARS OF BROADCAST EXCELLENCE

As the nation has collectively celebrated and mourned the landmark events of the past 75 years, *Music and the Spoken Word* has endured as the world's longest continuously running network broadcast. The program's longevity is a tribute to its heartfelt messages and the desire of an increasingly global audience to find refuge in its weekly messages.

In the 1930s, as work was the only thing more scarce than food, families briefly shook off the shadows of the Depression by gathering around their radios and listening to a weekly musical program "from the crossroads of the West."

As bombs dropped and soldiers fell in the clutches of World War II a decade later, parents and children sat in living rooms as the deep, tranquil voice of Richard L. Evans and the peaceful hymns of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir comforted their wearied souls.

Later, while the miracle of television unfolded, the same program remained a broadcast companion to the achievements and tragedies of America and the world. On the same Sunday in 1969 that Neil Armstrong catapulted mankind into a race of

moon explorers, the Tabernacle on Temple Square resonated with angelic praises from Salt Lake City.

Music and the Spoken Word was broadcast the week when John F. Kennedy was shot, when American soldiers entered Vietnam, when the Challenger exploded, when the Twin Towers were destroyed and every week in between. The program has stood as a pillar of comfort and strength during times when the nation mourned collectively. Yet it has a universal appeal that millions of listeners over three-quarters of a century say speaks to them personally.

MIRACULOUS GROWTH

The program of inspirational music and short, peaceful messages 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."

Eleven months later, 24-year-old Richard L. Evans became the first regular program narrator. He was one reason the program never missed a week as he continued announcing for the next 41 years (1930–1971). Evans soon began to associate song titles with inspirational thoughts. He spoke from his life experience and crafted two- to three-minute “sermonettes” on uplifting topics including gratitude, happiness, duty and love.

Evans left an indelible legacy on the program recognized and appreciated today by individuals from all walks of life. Listeners continue to write letters expressing thanks and admiration for the program’s first announcer.

Since Evans, only two other men have filled the duties of program announcer: J. Spencer Kinard (1972–1990) and Lloyd D. Newell (1990–present). The Choir’s conductors select the music for the program, and several writers, including Lloyd Newell, contribute the spoken word portion.

THE PROGRAM TODAY

Today *Music and the Spoken Word* is produced by Bonneville Communications and is broadcast by more than 2,000 radio and television 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. Together, they contribute to the welcome reprieve that the program offers listeners of all ages and circumstances.