



## BECOMING A CHOIR MEMBER

You don't have to look long in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's loft to find people from almost every trade and profession. You'll come across secretaries, physicians, homemakers, teachers, nurses and salesmen, to name a few. All share a tremendous gift for music coupled with a love and a desire to share it with others. Choir members dedicate a substantial amount of their time to rehearsing, recording, touring and performing together – all without getting paid.

Before being accepted to the Choir, applicants undergo a rigorous, three-phase audition process. Prospective Choir members must be active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, be recommended by the bishop of their local congregation, live within 100 miles of downtown Salt Lake City, and be between the ages of 25 and 55.

The Choir accepts applications for new singers the first week of July every year. The first step of the audition process is to submit a recording of an a cappella song selected by Mack Wilberg, music director.

Wilberg and Associate Director Ryan Murpy review the mountain of submitted tapes to decide which singers they will invite to the next phase of the audition process.

The second stage of the audition, a written musical skills test, measures musical ability and aptitude. Candidates must score a minimum of 80 percent to progress to the third step of the audition – the in-person audition. Standing before Wilberg and Murphy, anxious singers perform a hymn of their choice, demonstrate their sight-reading skills and test their vocal range and ability to blend.

Final selections are then made. However, the process is not quite complete. The selected singers are brought into the Temple Square Chorale for a three-month period during which they sing with the Chorale and attend musical training classes taught by Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, both Temple Square organists with advanced degrees in music theory and composition who serve as Directors of the Choir Training

School. Upon successful completion of the Choir school training program and participation in a second three-month session of the Chorale, new members “graduate” to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. From start to finish, the entire process takes 15 months. Successful applicants will tell you that it is worth the wait.

Since the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is a prestigious organization, every year many talented singers try out for a handful of openings. In a typical year, nearly 300 singers try out for positions in the Choir, which, depending on the number of recent retirees, will have only 20 to 30 openings. Less than 10 percent are accepted into the Choir’s ranks.