



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Mormon Tabernacle Choir?

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has been called many things: an American icon, a symbol of freedom, a holiday tradition, the greatest choir in the world. Why is the Choir universally recognized and lauded? Of course, it makes great music, but perhaps more central to its success is the ability of the 360 members of the Choir to lift the spirits of people of diverse cultures, ages and religions all over the world.

One of the oldest and largest choirs in the world, the Choir has performed before presidents and kings, sold millions of records, won scores of awards and enthralled audiences in more than 28 countries.

The Choir is composed of 360 volunteer singers ages 25-60 – all exceptionally talented musicians.

When was the Mormon Tabernacle Choir formed?

The Choir originated in the mid-19th century in Salt Lake City. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moved west, musicians were among members of the first handcart companies to arrive in Salt Lake City. Consequently, a small choir first sang for a conference of the Church in the Salt Lake Valley on 22 August 1847, just 29 days after the first pioneers arrived. The Choir has been recording albums for 100 years -- longer than any other recording artist in the United States (and second in the world only to the Vienna Boys Choir).

Are Choir and Orchestra members paid for their service?

No. All 360 members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and all 110 members of the Orchestra at Temple Square are unpaid volunteers who practice and perform weekly. Choir members rehearse and perform about five hours in an average week – Thursday nights for two hours and Sunday mornings for more than three hours. This does not include touring, for which members often take time off from work, sometimes

foregoing personal vacations. All members must attend a minimum of 75 percent of rehearsals and performances.

Have I heard the Mormon Tabernacle Choir before?

Odds are that you have. The Choir is best known for its weekly radio and TV program, *Music and the Spoken Word*. First aired in 1929, *Music and the Spoken Word* is a weekly 30-minute broadcast of choral music and inspirational messages.

The program has since become the world's longest continuously running network broadcast. It is broadcast over 2,000 radio and TV stations and cable systems. You also may have heard the Choir's music at the Opening Ceremony of the Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games, or in patriotic selections and holiday songs for which they are also well known.

Every year at Christmas time, the Public Broadcasting System airs the Choir's Christmas Specials which have become an audience favorite.

Why is the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sometimes called "America's Choir"?

Ronald Reagan dubbed the Mormon Tabernacle Choir "America's Choir" in 1981 when the Choir sang at his inauguration. The name has remained because it truly embodies the purpose of the Choir. The Choir began in the mid-1800s on the American plains as the Mormon pioneers trekked across the country to reach Salt Lake City and has been part of American tradition ever since. One hundred and fifty years later, the songs and sounds of the Choir continue to delight people in the United States and all over the world. It is interesting to note that this American choir's focus — ever since its early days in the dusty desert of Utah — has been to reach out to the entire world. The music of the Choir is universal to people of every faith and culture.

What is the Tabernacle?

Just west of the temple in Salt Lake City stands the historic Mormon Tabernacle, completed in 1867 after four years of construction. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir got its name from the structure, which has been home to the Choir since its earliest years. It is said that Brigham Young suggested the Tabernacle's unusual design after contemplating a hollowed-out eggshell cracked length-wise. Brigham Young wanted the Tabernacle roof to be self-supporting, without pillars or posts to obstruct audience views. (The balcony with its supporting pillars was added later.) Because of its extraordinary acoustics and historical significance, the Tabernacle has been designated both a national historic landmark and a national civil engineering landmark. The

Tabernacle's design also accounts for its extraordinary acoustics — another reason the Grammy Award-winning calls the Tabernacle home. The Tabernacle is so acoustically sensitive that a pin dropped at the pulpit can be clearly heard at the back of the hall — 170 feet away. Accompanying the Choir in the great auditorium is the 11,623-pipe Tabernacle organ featuring prominent golden pipes made of round wood staves, hand-carved from Utah timber. Ten pipes from the original organ, built in 1867, are still functioning today.

What are the Orchestra at Temple Square and the Temple Square Chorale?

These organizations are two distinct groups that complement the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and also perform on their own. The Orchestra at Temple Square is made up of 110 outstanding volunteer musicians, many of whom also have professional music careers. Although only founded in 1999, it has already become one of the best volunteer orchestras in the nation.

Where can I find the Choir on the radio?

Many local radio stations carry the broadcasts of *Music and the Spoken Word*. For information about stations in your area, call Bonneville Communications at 800-247-6655 (or 801-237-2449 in Utah) or go to www.musicandthespokenword.com.

Where can I Buy recordings of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir?

The Choir currently records on the independently owned Mormon Tabernacle Choir® label. A complete listing of Choir label recordings may be purchased online at deseretbook.com, and at music stores and leading retailers everywhere.