One Voice

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In Israel, a land of conflicting voices, the music of the Tabernacle Choir on its recent tour was as one voice helping sound the anthem of peace.

The sun’s rays filter through the clouds over Shepherds’ Field near Bethlehem. The bleating of sheep and the occasional clanking of a goat’s bell fill the morning air as a modern-day Bedouin leads his flock over the rocky hill. The sloping field, looking much the same today as it did anciently when angels appeared to shepherds on the night of Christ’s birth, drops down into a valley with steep hills on either side. The hills, terraced with limestone, take on a momentary glow in the intermittent sunlight. Bethlehem, the Savior’s birthplace, sits atop the hill on the right—gleaming a lustrous white, even through the soft, shifting morning haze.

Gradually, the valleys and hills surrounding Shepherds’ Field are filled with the strains of “The Lord Is My Shepherd” sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. “The Lord is my Shepherd; no want shall I know. I feed in green pastures; safe-folded I rest.” After the final words of the hymn, “Oh, what shall I ask of thy providence more?” rise strong and clear through the air, the choir stops singing. To everyone’s surprise, the sound continues as a long, lingering echo rolls through the valley and rebounds from hill to hill. The music of the Tabernacle Choir has filled the land, and in turn, it seems that the land is reluctant to let it go.

The Tabernacle Choir’s 26 December 1992 to 6 January 1993 tour of the Holy Land, with its concerts in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa, filled the land with music, and the echoes continued as the concerts were broadcast live on Israeli television and radio. Audience reactions and media reviews confirmed that the people were reluctant to let the music go.

There are nearly five million Israeli citizens. Of these, 3,950,000 are Jews, and 750,000 are Israeli Arabs, of which 600,000 are Moslems and 150,000 are Christians (primarily Catholic and Greek Orthodox).

[See also the more complete map in the May 1993 issue.]
Unified by Music

The centerpiece of the Tabernacle Choir’s trip to Israel was the performance of the Berlioz Requiem with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra during its Liturgica 92 concert series. (See sidebar “The Berlioz Requiem,” p. 37.) This series, held in December and January each year, features performances of significant Christian choral or orchestral works.

Throughout the Tabernacle Choir’s tour, audience reactions were the best indication of the success of the tour. (See sidebar “The Concert Calendar,” p. 39.) Israel is a country of many musicians, but it is common knowledge that the nation’s sophisticated and educated audiences typically leave immediately after a concert. Following the Berlioz Requiem, the audience reacted to the sheer power and energy of this great music with applause in unison, the call for an encore, for more than five minutes.

Jerusalem’s longtime mayor Teddy Kollek said that the Tabernacle Choir’s concerts represented “bridge-building” and that music was “an important way to speak peace and brotherhood.”

The most dramatic audience reactions to the choir’s music, however, were at the a cappella concerts, where the choir sang a mixed repertoire of their general fare from Rachmaninoff to African-American spirituals. These concerts began with the audience standing as the choir sang “Hatikvah,” the Israeli national anthem. The music continued to draw audiences in as the choir moved through the first half of the concert, with especially tender audience responses to the combination of “By the Waters of Babylon” followed by “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” During the lively second half of these concerts, some members of the audiences began to lean forward in their seats. When the choir sang “Now Shout!” with the words “Clap your hands,” part of the audiences began to clap with the music. Slight grins grew into wide smiles. Applause grew louder with each succeeding number. By the final number, “Cindy,” with its syncopated rhythm, people in the audiences were tapping their feet, slapping their legs, or nodding their heads in time with the music. The organists and percussionist added the sounds of clopping horses, ringing bells, and a tambourine as the choir clapped and sang, “Get along home, little Cindy, I’ll marry you sometime.” The smiles remained as the audiences applauded, some with their hands held high, until finally they were again clapping in unison.

Then the encores began. As the first few notes of the haunting “Jerusalem of Gold” drifted through the concert halls, the audiences gasped, then applauded as the male soloist began to sing in Hebrew. It was easy to feel the audiences’ strong emotional attachment to this song. A woman put her hand over her mouth in ecstasy. A man with a stern face removed his glasses and wept openly. As the song continued, many in the audiences silently mouthed the words with the choir, and others wiped tears from their cheeks.

When the song ended, Jerold Ottley directed attention to the composer of “Jerusalem of Gold,” Naomi Shemer, who was in the audience in Jerusalem and also in Tel Aviv. As she rose, the audiences gave her a standing ovation. They were responding to a song that had won their hearts during the 1967 Six-Day War. Based on the legend of a sheikh who gave his wife a miniature model of the city of Jerusalem in gold, the song won a 1967 contest. Constantly on the airwaves and in the hearts of the people during the war, the song became a rallying point for Israeli soldiers and citizens alike as they reentered the previously closed areas of their once-divided city.

The applause in unison started again, and the choir began to sing the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Near the end of the hymn, the houselights came up, and the audiences began clapping in rhythm with the music until the applause drowned out the end of the song and everyone in the audiences stood up.

As the choir began their traditional final encore, “God Be with You,” the audiences remained standing, and many wiped tears from their eyes.

“Music transcends all barriers,” said Robert Cundick, host at the Jerusalem Center, in an interview printed in the Jerusalem Post. “Song is the building block to a colossal experience with the land of Israel.”
This proved to be true at all of the Tabernacle Choir concerts. In each concert, for one synergistic moment, an audience was transformed into something higher than they had been as individuals. The music of the choir wove its sounds with the emotions and memories of each listener, bonding them together into one great unit. And for that brief moment, they were suspended together in peace, held in place by the universal language of music.

**Overheard after the Concerts**

Applause and houselights gradually allowed reluctant audiences to leave. As they came down the stairs from the balcony or entered the lobby from the main floor, some glowed in silence as they left the building. Others gathered in groups and talked excitedly to one another, seemingly everyone speaking at the same time.

- “There are not words, there will never be words. It has been the most transcending experience of my life.”
- “I felt I was not breathing air. I felt I was breathing music.”
- “I’ve just spent two hours in heaven. Our whole kibbutz rented a bus and came down. We couldn’t let the Tabernacle Choir pass by and not hear them.”
- “You sing with the love of God.”
- “In this land of struggles, we are all craving peace. With your choir and your music, you are bringing us a little bit of peace. It is welcome.”
- “It was beautiful. It was magnificent. It was velvet.”
- “The heavens were open, the angels were singing.”
- “I came in feeling poor and weak in spirit and left feeling strong. You stirred something inside me I have not felt for a long time.”
- “I sat next to God tonight.”

**A Journey of the Spirit**

Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Ruth, traveled with the 588 members of the choir, their spouses, and the choir staff in Israel. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy, currently serving as area president of the Europe North Area, and his wife, Pat, joined the choir in Jerusalem. Their presence and leadership contributed to the spiritual dimension of the choir’s tour in Israel.

Elders James E. Faust and Jeffrey R. Holland represented Church leadership and traveled with the choir in Israel.

The spiritual growth that took place in the hearts of the choir members is an important part of the story of this religious odyssey. “This visit had deep religious significance to us,” says choir president Wendell M. Smoot, “because we viewed our spiritual roots; our Savior was born, lived, and was crucified there. These sites evoked great emotion in us.” In fact, many choir members discovered that “coming unto Christ” was more than a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; it was a journey of the spirit.
For choir members and their guests, that journey of the spirit began on December 27, shortly after their arrival in Israel, as they attended a sacrament meeting at the BYU Jerusalem Center. They saw Jerusalem at night as they sat in the center’s auditorium, with its glass walls on three sides. Before them spread a full view of many of the places where Jesus walked, from the road to Bethlehem on the left to the area of Gethsemane on the right. Every facet of the meeting was filled with a strong spirit, from the opening prayer and partaking of the sacrament to the talks by Truman Madsen, director of the Jerusalem Center; Ann Madsen, a faculty member; and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.

“I helped set up the sacrament trays,” says Stephen Bardsley, a choir member. “I was asked to bless the bread. How can I express in words the tender feelings that swelled up in my soul? I wept every time I thought about the singular privilege of blessing the sacrament as the Savior had done so many years ago near here. As I prayed, each word was sweet as it flowed slowly out of my mouth. To speak his sacred name and to plead to Heavenly Father to bless the bread filled me with great emotion.”

After the sacrament, Brother Madsen spoke. “We dreamed it, we hoped it, and now it is happening,” he said of the choir’s visit. “The Lord has called you here.”

Elder Holland told the story of Orson Hyde’s dedication of this land for the return of the Jews as he stood on the Mount of Olives on 24 October 1841. “You are making memories and history for a dispensation,” he said. “I testify of that.”

Another spiritual highlight came two days later in Haifa in the form of an apostolic blessing. The physical and professional demands had been overwhelming for everyone involved with the tour. The following comments of a choir member are representative of similar stresses experienced by others: “Three months of arduous rehearsals, several performances, a dozen broadcasts, personal preparations for the tour, family Christmas activities, and the death of my mother had taken their toll. When I boarded the plane on December 26, I was utterly exhausted. That’s no way to begin a choir tour.” Then after arriving in Israel, the choir had four major rehearsals, including three rehearsals of the Berlioz Requiem (nearly an hour and a half long) and a rehearsal and a performance of the a cappella concert.

Before the choir’s first concert in Haifa, Elder James E. Faust pronounced a blessing upon the group. He blessed them that their bodies would be renewed and that they would have the strength to perform.

“I could physically feel the strength gradually come into me,” says choir member Toni Davis. “By the time we were on the stage, we were there in power. I believe that after you do all you can do, the Lord fills in the rest. When I returned to the hotel, I dropped to my knees and gave thanks to the Lord for the strength, not just the spiritual but also the physical.”

A week later, during a sacrament meeting in Tiberias near the Sea of Galilee, Elder Faust testified of the divinity of the work in which the choir was engaged and pronounced a second apostolic blessing upon them. Echoing the words of Helaman 10:4–5, Elder Faust’s blessing emphasized the Lord’s promise that because “thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed.” [Hel. 10:4–5]

Rehearsals and Concerts

Though the choir members spent most of their time in rehearsals, concerts, and filming for a television special to be aired this year, the spiritual experiences continued.

One special moment for the choir occurred December 28 during a rehearsal at the Jerusalem Center, the first rehearsal with David Shallon, director of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. The choir sat facing the draped front wall of glass in the auditorium, and Mr. Shallon had his back to the windows as he worked with the choir. Partway through the rehearsal, someone pulled open the drapes, giving the choir a view of the old city in the daylight. As Mr. Shallon turned to look, he gave an audible gasp and paused for a moment with his hands together under his chin as he and the choir absorbed the wondrous view. It was a stirring moment for both choir and director.
During the concerts, the thrill of singing the Berlioz Requiem and the a cappella concerts filled members of the choir with great emotion and joy. But for at least one choir member, Michael McOmber, singing in Israel had powerful personal meaning.

“I sang to Jews, Moslems, Christians, and to my great-grandfather’s brother, John Alexander Clark,” he says. Elder John Clark, who had been called to the Turkish mission in 1894, died of smallpox in 1895 at Haifa, in present-day Israel. He was one of two missionaries buried there who, it seemed, had died in vain. In modern times, however, these graves served as evidence of the Church’s prior presence in Israel and were helpful in its gaining approval for the Jerusalem Center to be built.

“We sang a moving number based on a text from Psalm 137, ” says Michael, “ ‘By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, O Zion.’ I stood and wept. The unanticipated sense of irony gently overwhelmed me as I thought of my ancestor John: ‘How shall we sing the Lord’s song,’ the Psalmist had said of captive Israel, ‘in a strange land?’ Yet I felt hauntingly at home here singing the Lord’s song to my ancestor. I had come to sing a requiem in memoriam: I shall never forget thee, O Jerusalem, nor John Alexander Clark.”

Singing “By the Waters of Babylon” in Israel also took on new spiritual meaning for many other choir members. “In Haifa, we could hardly sing ‘By the Waters of Babylon’ because the Spirit was so strong and so many people were crying,” says one choir member. “It was an incredible experience. When we sang ‘Come, Come, Ye Saints,’ I realized that these words applied to the Jewish people too, and I felt a bond with them.”

Filming at Holy Sites

For many choir members and leaders, the Spirit was strongest as the choir gathered at sites for the filming of the television special. Since the sites were closed to the public during the filming, the choir enjoyed some privacy while they performed as a group.

“Today the choir sang ‘How Great Thou Art’ from the majestic heights of Dominus Flevit, near where Jesus wept over Jerusalem prior to his triumphal entry,” wrote Ken Wilks in his journal. “Tears filled my eyes as I thought of my ancestors who are buried in the cemetery next to the little country church in Alabama. I felt so grateful to Christ for providing the blessings of the temple to bring families together.”

Before filming at the Mount of Beatitudes, the choir boarded two boats at Tiberias and crossed the Sea of Galilee. About halfway across the sea, which can give rise to sudden storms as it did the night Christ calmed the waters, the boats stopped, a prayer was offered, and the choir and others sang “Master, the Tempest Is Raging.”

“I really felt the Spirit when we stopped out on the Sea of Galilee,” says one choir member. “I’ve really never felt it that strongly before.”

Complications caused the choir to arrive late at the Mount of Beatitudes, with only about an hour of daylight left. By then the sky was slightly overcast as the sun began to set over the Sea of Galilee. Several observers noticed that each time the crews began to film the choir, the sun came out from behind a long, narrow cloud and provided full, warm sunlight—an added testimony of the Lord’s hand in staying the weather for each filming. In fact, the weather was dry and sunny for nearly every day of the choir’s visit. It rained only once, and that was during the night.

At Shepherds’ Field, the choir entered the fenced area of the field near where the angels appeared to the shepherds. Peter Vasko, one of the Franciscan priests who cares for the area, visited the choir during the filming and told them, “I granted you permission to sing here because I recognize you as a witness for Christ.”

“I was overwhelmed when I heard the echo of our singing at Shepherds’ Field,” says Carter Knapp. “ ‘Angels we have heard on high …, And the mountains in reply Echoing their joyous strains.’ I’ll never sing those words again without remembering this experience and the echo.”
But the strongest spiritual feelings came for many at the Garden Tomb.

“The choir was placed in an area in front of the Garden Tomb to do the filming,” says choir member Fay Mason. “I was standing directly in front of the empty tomb. The music had been prerecorded, but on the last run-through, Jerold Ottley allowed us to sing ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’ in full voice. During this song, I felt the Spirit of the Lord very near. For a moment I felt that if I reached out, he would put his hand in mine.”

“I have gained a much greater understanding of and love for my Savior,” says choir member Tom Porter. “He lives! For, as another song tells, ‘I walked today where Jesus walked, and felt his presence there.’ We were all overwhelmed by the last few lines of the song [‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’] as we faced the empty tomb. ‘Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!’ My hope is that I can continue with this change in my life, for I am truly a different person for coming to this land.”

Seeing Israel

Though time was limited for the choir, they still visited many important sites in Israel: Dome of the Rock, the Citadel of David, and other sites in the old city; the Church of the Nativity; the Garden of Gethsemane; the Shrine of the Book; the Orson Hyde Garden; Masada; Qumran; the Dead Sea; and many others. Choir members enjoyed the intellectual and spiritual excitement of visiting these sites. But the visit to Yad Vashem, the memorial dedicated to the memory of those who died in the Holocaust, was an emotional experience for everyone.

The Children’s Memorial there had a powerful impact on everyone who entered it. Only a simple darkened room with more than 150 mirrors reflecting the light of one white burning candle, the memorial nevertheless creates in the visitor a feeling of stepping out into deep space. Millions of lights flicker in the darkness, as far as the eye can see above, below, and around the darkened room. Visitors are encased in a womb of remembrance as they hear the names, ages, and birthplaces of some of the 1.5 million Jewish children who died during the Holocaust. Reading alternately in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English, taped voices come over speakers positioned at various levels around the room so that listeners never quite know from which direction the next name will come. A low, mournful cry, which occasionally changes pitch, echoes in the background.

“We Spoke to Them with Music”

All those on the Tabernacle Choir tour signed a nonproselyting agreement, as do all those who attend the Jerusalem Center. Elder Faust explains the reason for this agreement: “Incident to the acquisition of the land for the Jerusalem Center, when we entered into negotiations for that lease, we also entered into an agreement not to proselyte. We prefer to call this a covenant because that word reflects our serious commitment to honoring this agreement. One day as we were discussing this with Mayor Kollek, he reminded us that the world lost six million Jews in the Holocaust. ‘We just can’t afford to lose one more Jew,’ he said.”

Choir members, spouses, and staff meticulously honored this agreement, yet everyone still found plenty to talk about as they visited with the people of Israel. Many gave the people they met a previously approved tape of some of the popular music of the Tabernacle Choir, appropriate for the Israeli people because there were no references to Christ. “We didn’t proselyte. We spoke to them with music,” said one choir member. “We left them our love,” said another.

The generous action of a choir member’s spouse brought lasting results. Four choir members and two spouses had taken a taxi to the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Centre in Kadesh to see the famous Chagall windows portraying the Twelve Tribes of Israel. “All of Jerusalem is talking about your choir,” said Yocheved, the receptionist. But when asked if she would be attending the final concert that night, she stammered that “complications” would not allow it.

After the six left, they realized that the “complications” meant that she did not have the money for a
ticket. Quickly, they returned, and one of the spouses gave her his concert ticket. Her joyful response was spontaneous, and during the concert that evening, she was moved to tears. She embraced each of her new friends after the concert and said, “I didn’t have any way to repay you for your kindness. I did not even know your names, so today I planted a tree at the Hadassah Hospital in the name of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. It will continue to live and grow, and the next time you come to Jerusalem, you can see your tree. Your being here has brought us joy and peace.”

Kay Lynn Wakefield learned an important lesson from a woman who worked at the Garden Tomb. “As I entered the Garden Tomb,” Kay Lynn says, “I almost missed the ‘other gardener.’ As we were hurrying along, the sounds of a clear soprano voice filled the air. I felt so drawn to the ethereal sound that I left the crowd and went to find out where it was coming from. And then I saw her! A little English lady sweeping one of the paths in the garden and wearing a dark green sweatshirt that said ‘Other Gardener’ on the back. I knew I had to meet her.

“As I visited with her, she expressed to me the joy she feels each day as she sweeps the paths at the Garden Tomb, often singing all the way. I told her that the Tabernacle Choir was going to sing at the Garden Tomb that day. Her eyes filled with tears and she said, ‘Yes, I know, and I feel so privileged to be here today to hear them.’ Then I embraced the ‘other gardener’ and left to again join the crowd. Once again I had been reminded not to be so intent on reaching the final destination that I forget to enjoy the journey.”

When one choir member visited an olivewood shop in Bethlehem, she gave the shopkeeper a tape of the Tabernacle Choir. He put it on immediately. In a few minutes, he came running out onto the street after the choir member, shouting with joy, “Listen to what your music has done to my store.”

And so the music of the Tabernacle Choir filled Israel for ten short days, and, in turn, Israel seemed reluctant to let the music go. Like the lingering echo at Shepherds’ Field, the music of the choir continues to be heard in homes throughout the land as families play tapes of the choir and listen to radio and television rebroadcasts.

As Elder Faust told the choir at the sacrament meeting in Tiberias, “The end of the good which you have done will never come.”

The Berlioz Requiem

The Requiem Mass, Opus 5 (Grande Messe des Morts) was written by the French composer Hector Berlioz in 1837. “I flung myself with a kind of fury when [the Requiem] was put within my grasp,” Berlioz wrote in his memoirs. “My head seemed ready to burst with the pressure of my seething thoughts. No sooner was one piece sketched than another presented itself. Finding it impossible to write fast enough, I adopted a sort of shorthand, which helped me greatly.”

Represented in the ten sections of this Catholic mass for the dead are musical descriptions of the moment of death, the day of judgment, redemption, and resurrection. The original score for this monumental piece calls for a 210-voice choir and a large orchestra with 110 stringed instruments, 8 pairs of timpani, a bass drum, 10 pairs of cymbals, and an augmented brass section—with everything doubled or tripled in number, if desired.

David Shallon, the music director of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, conducted the combined choir and orchestra. “His charismatic quality drew us to him and made us want to perform,” says choir member Lynn Farrar of the rapport between the choir and Mr. Shallon. In fact, the choir gave him a standing ovation after the first rehearsal.

Music critic Hanoch Ron described the performance of the Berlioz Requiem in the Hebrew newspaper Yediot Aharonot: “The sound wraps around you in human stereophonic harmony and the singing opens the gates of heaven. … The Mormon choir [performs] Berlioz’ dramatic, colorful Requiem with gentleness and wonderful sensitivity. … They sound like an opening flower. … This is a landmark in the history of the Jerusalem Orchestra, a human musical prayer.”
Dr. Robert Breault, assistant professor of voice and opera at the University of Utah, sang the tenor solo with clarity and conviction. The Jerusalem Post of 5 January 1993 stated: “With a voice as pure as the dawn, Robert Breault broke through the ordinary to behold the supernal light.”

But perhaps one of the greatest compliments regarding the Requiem came from a choir member. “The Berlioz Requiem was by far the most difficult musical challenge of my life, but I worked through it. I can’t say I completely mastered it, but in the process of getting to know it, I learned to love it.”

The Concert Calendar

The mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, met with President Howard W. Hunter and Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in February 1992. At that meeting, held in Brigham Young University’s Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, Mayor Kollek extended an official invitation to the First Presidency for the Tabernacle Choir to come to Israel. The First Presidency subsequently approved the trip. By June 1992, the request had been made for the choir to perform the Requiem Mass, Opus 5, by Hector Berlioz, with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. (See sidebar, “The Berlioz Requiem,” p. 37.)

The choir’s itinerary included the following concerts:

The Berlioz Requiem was performed by the choir and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of David Shallon, to sellout crowds in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. A reception followed the performance of the Berlioz Requiem in Jerusalem, with prominent community leaders in attendance.

A cappella concerts under the direction of Jerold Ottley, music director and conductor, and Donald Ripplinger, associate director, were performed by the Tabernacle Choir to full houses in the 3,680-seat Binyanei Ha’Ooma Convention Center in Jerusalem, the 2,100-seat Fredric R. Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv, and the 1,172-seat Haifa Auditorium in Haifa. Organists John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Richard L. Elliott accompanied the choir on piano and synthesizer. Ron Brough, from Brigham Young University, accompanied the choir on percussion. (These concerts were referred to on the tour as a cappella concerts because they were performed without an orchestra.) In addition, the choir performed an a cappella concert at the Jerusalem Center for invited guests from the area, including members of the Christian and Palestinian communities, with a reception held prior to the concert.

In addition to these concerts and receptions, the choir participated in the taping of an Easter television special celebrating through music the life of Christ. Edward J. Payne of Bonneville Communications filmed the choir at the following sites: at Shepherds’ Field singing “The Lord Is My Shepherd” and “Once in Royal David’s City”; at Dominus Flevit on the Mount of Olives singing “How Great Thou Art” and “Hallelujah Chorus” from Mount of Olives; on the Mount of Beatitudes near the Sea of Galilee singing “Lord, I Would Follow Thee”; and at the Garden Tomb singing “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”

In order to maintain sixty-four years of continuous broadcasting, “Music and the Spoken Word” originated from the Jerusalem Center on Thursday, 31 December 1992. The taped broadcast aired in North America on 3 January 1993, and it was also transmitted throughout Israel. It was produced under the direction of Brother Payne, who was assisted by radio and television crews from the Israel Broadcasting Authority.

The planning and logistics of this tour were under the direction of choir president Wendell M. Smoot, business manager Udell E. Poulsen, and administrative assistant Herold L. Gregory.

Preparing for Israel: A Conversation with Jerold Ottley

Ensign: Did the choir have any specific challenges preparing for the tour?

Jerold Ottley: The staff and choir were under great duress simply because it was the third major tour in eighteen months. And we struggled with the Requiem. It’s a very difficult work which the choir had never done before. It required a different mind-set for the choir because of the long choruses and long
phrases. In addition, it’s in Latin. Vocally, it’s very difficult because it is high for many voices and it
requires a lot of full voice for long periods of time. There’s only one solo in the entire work, so the choir is
on stage and working all the way through.

Ensign: How did you prepare for the vocal demands?

Jerold Ottley: JoAnn Ottley, our vocal coach, prepared the choir by holding special workshops to build
choir members’ vocal strength. They learned to maximize the resonance for the effort produced and that
they shouldn’t try to sing every note. Then they learned relaxation techniques for the few moments they
were not singing. Also, JoAnn counseled them to save their voices by not laughing loudly or talking too
much.

The keys to surviving this kind of grueling schedule are a sense of humor and flexibility. In Tel Aviv we
were running late, so the choir had a rehearsal at the restaurant between the salad course and the
entrée. They just stood at their places and JoAnn led them in exercises to warm up their voices. Then
they sat down and finished their entrée, but they had to skip their dessert.

Ensign: What adjustments did you have to make when selecting the music for the a cappella concerts?

Jerold Ottley: We had to draw exclusively on things from the Old Testament. In the Jewish culture, you
never speak the name Jehovah aloud, so you don’t sing it, either. It’s too sacred. We complied with that
tradition. And we had to be sensitive to singing for a non-Christian audience. For instance, when we
sang “God Be with You Till We Meet Again,” we could sing the word God because that is not necessarily
a reference to Christ. But in the chorus, instead of singing “Till we meet at Jesus’s feet,” we sang “Till we
meet at our Redeemer’s feet.” The word Redeemer is all right because it is an Old Testament name. We
had to go through every lyric and make those kinds of adjustments.

Ensign: In how many languages did you sing on the tour?

Jerold Ottley: We sang in Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, German, and English. As usual, we did it all
with Lingua Tone, a method developed and copyrighted by our own Dennis Mead. With it, the choir can
learn to sing in another language without actually knowing the language, and their accent is generally
excellent.

Media Coverage: Speaking Comfortably

Anciently, Isaiah wrote, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” (Isa. 40:2) Music, the language that
transcends all barriers, is certainly the language the Tabernacle Choir used to “speak comfortably” to
Israel during this concert tour.

Knowing that Israel is a country of enthusiastic music lovers, Iain B. McKay, director of international
media relations for Bonneville Communications, recognized the importance of making the music of the
choir available to everyone. Radio and television broadcasts are an important source of music for those
living in Israel and the surrounding area. Therefore, Iain’s meeting in Jerusalem with Avi Hanani, head of
music for the Israel Broadcasting Authority (the umbrella organization for Israeli radio and television, and
the Jerusalem Symphony), was a very important event.

“Robert Cundick, Tabernacle organist emeritus, attended the meeting with me,” says Brother McKay.
“We walked in, and I handed my card to Mr. Hanani. When he saw Salt Lake City on the card he said,
‘Let me tell you about Salt Lake City.’ ”

Mr. Hanani proceeded to tell them about his own experience at Temple Square thirty-two years earlier.
During the summer, his family toured the western United States and stopped at Salt Lake City. A music
student, sixteen-year-old Avi got up early the next morning to visit the Tabernacle and hear the
Tabernacle Choir’s broadcast of “Music and the Spoken Word.” When he got there, all the doors were
locked, but he could see through a window that the choir was rehearsing. Timidly, he began knocking on
each door, and at about the fifth door an usher opened it. Avi simply said, “I am a music student from
Jerusalem and I’d like to hear the choir.” At that point, the usher could have told the young man to come
back later. Instead, he invited him in. The rehearsal stopped, and Richard P. Condie, the conductor of
the choir, shook hands with Avi, introduced him to the choir, and invited him to sit in one of the empty
choir seats and listen. When the rehearsal ended, someone took Avi to the front row of the Tabernacle,
where he sat next to Church officials during the broadcast.

"Mr. Hanani told me, with some emotion, that that was one of his most profound musical experiences as
a young man," says Brother McKay. "And then Mr. Hanani asked, ‘What can I do for you?’ I said that
Mayor Teddy Kollek had invited the Tabernacle Choir to come to Israel. Mr. Hanani replied, ‘Well, we
must have them on Israeli broadcasting.’ And I said, ‘That’s what we’re here to discuss.’ ” This meeting
opened the door for the outstanding media support of the Tabernacle Choir’s concerts in Israel.

During the week of December 10, Israel Television sent their North American Bureau chief, Yair A.
Stern, to Salt Lake City to record interviews with Church and choir officials and to film the choir in
rehearsal. Accompanying him was Avi Granot, counselor for church affairs from the Embassy of Israel in
Washington, D.C.

"We aired the interviews with Church and choir leaders in prime time on nationwide television on Friday
and Saturday prior to the choir’s arrival," says Dalia Meroz, Public Relations and Communication director
in Tel Aviv. "It served to introduce the choir and Salt Lake to our television viewers. We also began
playing selections by the choir on television and radio five weeks before the choir arrived. The response
was out of this world."

During the choir’s tour, both the Berlioz Requiem and the a cappella concert performed in the Binyanei
Ha’Ooma Convention Center in Jerusalem were broadcast live on the Israel Radio network. Both
performances were also recorded by Israel Television for broadcast on a delayed basis. Oren Schindel,
head of the director’s department at Israel Television, supervised the television coverage. He said, “The
word is that whatever Bonneville and the choir want, the answer is yes.” The broadcasts were also
received in countries bordering Israel, with a potential audience of millions in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria,
and Egypt.

Uzi Peled, managing director of Tel-Ad Jerusalem Studios Ltd., said, “The Berlioz Requiem in Jerusalem
was one of those rare moments in music history where both a choir and orchestra celebrate great music
together. I do not remember such an event in the last thirty years. It is an event which one can only
dream of, and the dream came true.”

Yeheskell Beinisch, chairman of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and Gideon Paz, managing
director, were pleased with the response to the choir. Mr. Beinisch noted, “We have rarely sold out the
Binyanei Ha’Ooma Convention Center. But when I heard the choir rehearsing, I could see why we did.”

A Light on the Hill

A large, gnarled olive tree stands in the sunlight near the entrance of Brigham Young University’s
Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies; the tree’s dark, twisted limbs provide a stark contrast to the
glistening white stone of the center. Though the tree looks dead compared to the green grass at its
base, it is not. A closer look at the 800-year-old tree, moved here from Galilee, reveals shoots coming
out of its weathered trunk. Olive trees, whose roots can live for centuries, are among the most enduring
of plants, and this one serves as a reminder to those who see it that when we sink our roots deep into
the truths taught by the Savior, we can be nourished by the gospel and reach toward eternal life.
“Nothing is too good for our students who want to deepen their spiritual roots in the Holy Land,” says Truman Madsen, director of the Jerusalem Center. “When they leave this study-abroad program, they are transformed.”

This kind of spiritual transformation has been happening ever since the program began in 1968. “I recognized the impact this program was having on our youth,” says David Galbraith, former director of the study-abroad program. “They were coming away having a spiritual as well as a cultural experience.”

As the young program grew, it became increasingly difficult to find places to house and teach the students. So the First Presidency made the decision to build a center in Jerusalem to house the study-abroad program. Since that time, the Jerusalem Center has been a First Presidency project and, eventually, its construction was under their direction. “Our purpose was to make a place for young people to come to build faith and testimony and have an experience that would direct and guide their whole lives,” says President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Quorum of the Twelve. “The spirit of these young people is really the spirit of the Jerusalem Center.”

The arches of the Jerusalem Center are visible on the horizon near the center of this photograph of Jerusalem. This kind of spiritual transformation has been happening ever since the program began in 1968. “I recognized the impact this program was having on our youth,” says David Galbraith, former director of the study-abroad program. “They were coming away having a spiritual as well as a cultural experience.”

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The Jerusalem Center, overlooking the old city, is located on the southernmost part of Mount Scopus, a northern extension of the Mount of Olives. The 120,000-square-foot building sits on four and one-half acres. Its seven levels span a steep 100-foot drop. With classrooms, a library, a multipurpose room, a cafeteria and dining room, two auditoriums, and dormitory rooms for 175 students, the center was designed by Franklin T. Ferguson of the firm of Fowler, Ferguson, Kingston, and Ruben, architects in Salt Lake City, in cooperation with David Reznik, associate architect of David Reznik Architects in Jerusalem. This was “a collaboration of friendship,” says Frank Ferguson of the joint venture.

The architectural message of this building is light and peace. Unlike any other architecture in Jerusalem,
the windowed auditorium invites in the view of the old city of Jerusalem. At night, when viewed from across the valley, the lighted building with its layers of arched windows looks like a lantern on the hill.

![Image](Image_88x576_to_244x695)

The multiple arches of the center, such as these across the front of the auditorium, repeat an architectural design that is common in Jerusalem.

After the building was completed, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, took Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, on a tour of the building. For forty-five minutes, Mayor Kollek was virtually silent as he walked through the center. Finally he said, “You have taken the most beautiful piece of property we could have given you and have done more with it than I thought possible. I consider it the most beautiful building built in Jerusalem in recent years.”

![Image](Image_103x349_to_259x467)

Marble and teakwood cover many of the surfaces inside the center, and Jerusalem stone covers the outside.

**Free Musical Concerts**

Robert Cundick, formerly Tabernacle organist for twenty-six years, and his wife, Charlotte, are hosts at the center, which houses one of the finest organs in Israel. A series of free musical concerts have helped increase acceptance of the Jerusalem Center. Begun as student concerts and expanded by previous hosts Earl and Marcene Jardine, the concerts are now sometimes broadcast by the Israel Broadcasting Authority. “With more musicians per square kilometer than anywhere else in the world,” says Brother Cundick, “members of the community not only come here to listen to fine music but to perform it.”

**Part of a Pluralistic Society**

Mayor Teddy Kollek, a strong advocate of a pluralistic society in Jerusalem, put his political career on the line over and over again during the construction of the center. He said on 16 February 1992, when he invited the Tabernacle Choir to Israel, “Of all the struggles during my twenty-five years as mayor of Jerusalem, the one concerning the BYU-Mount Scopus campus was perhaps the most difficult and certainly among the most important. This was not a struggle for the Mormons but rather a struggle for tolerance in a city that should set an example to the world—a city in which everyone may pray to his God in his way without restriction. How could we Jews, who were cut off from our holy places for centuries, refuse the right of others to establish a legitimate educational institution and place of worship in Jerusalem?”
Today, Brigham Young University students are free to study at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. It is, indeed, a light on a hill for those students, who come to gain knowledge and sink their spiritual roots deep into the enduring truths of the gospel and life of Christ. Architecturally, it is also a light on a hill as its arched presence sits high on Mount Scopus and whispers peace to the city below.

[photos] Photography by David and LaRene Gaunt, except as noted

[photo] Background: A shepherd watches over his flock on a Bethlehem hillside near Shepherds’ Field. Inset: A total of 306 members of the Tabernacle Choir, shown here at Shepherds’ Field, traveled to Israel. Upper right: A young Bedouin girl. (Photo by Scott Knudsen.)

[photos] The Tabernacle Choir, tenor Robert Breault, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, all under the direction of David Shallon, performed the Berlioz Requiem in Jerusalem (upper left) and Tel Aviv (above). Anxious to hear the choir, audiences such as this one in Jerusalem (upper right) not only filled every seat; many people also sat on the stairs and stood along the walls.

[photos] Above: The lights of the old city, seen through one of the three glass walls of the 330-seat auditorium of BYU’s Jerusalem Center, provide a dramatic backdrop for the choir’s a cappella concert there. Upper left: Donald Ripplinger conducts the a cappella concert at Haifa as soloists Dan Knudsen and Beth Monson perform “Hymns of Praise.” Upper right: The faces of enraptured concert-goers like this woman tell their own story.

[photos] Above: With an Arab village directly behind them and the old city of Jerusalem rising up across the Kidron Valley, the choir gathers on the patio of BYU’s Jerusalem Center. Upper right: A thirteen-year-old Israeli boy participates in his bar mitzvah. (Photo by Scott Knudsen.)

[illustration] Upper left: The flag of Israel, adopted in October 1948, is based on the design of the tallith or prayer shawl—a white background with two blue horizontal stripes. Centered between the stripes is the Shield of David, also in blue.

[photos] Upper left: Jerold Ottley leads the choir in singing “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” at the Garden Tomb (above) for a television special. Right: Overwhelming feelings of love for the Lord filled the hearts of many choir members as they sang at the Garden Tomb. Upper right: A Jewish man in prayer at the Western Wall. (Photo by Scott Knudsen.)

[photos] Above and upper left: The warm light of the sun setting over the Sea of Galilee illuminates the faces of the Tabernacle Choir as they sing on a windy bluff on the Mount of Beatitudes. Upper right: Both men and women serve in the Israeli military when they turn eighteen years old—women for two years, men for three. Lower right: The choir rehearses for the Berlioz Requiem in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah.

[photos] Left: Producers from Bonneville Communications position the choir at the Garden Tomb prior to filming for a television special. Above: A young Jewish boy. (Photo by Scott Knudsen.)

[photo] Inset, upper right: A Muslim woman. (Photo by Scott Van Kampen.)