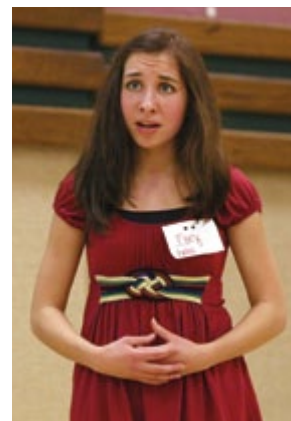




Performing in Savior of the World helped these California teens focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

FINDING A *Message* IN THE *Music*



By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

Most people don't start thinking about Christmas until jolly songs play on the radio and festive decor fills the malls. But Rachel H. was thinking about it back in May of 2010. She wasn't waiting for any physical present; instead, she was preparing to audition for and perform in *Savior of the World: His Birth*, a musical production depicting the birth of Jesus. When she auditioned for the stake production, she didn't realize how much of a gift the experience would be.

When the cast list was posted a few weeks later, Rachel was excited to see that she had been given the part of Mary in one of the two casts. "I was so happy to have been chosen to play the part of Mary. I was excited but very nervous," she recalls. Rachel was just one of nearly 300 youth who participated in the production.

Getting Ready

Preparing for *Savior of the World* was a daunting task, especially with so many youth participating. The teens

were grouped into two casts—the red cast and the blue cast—to allow more youth to participate. Each cast had over 40 assigned parts, a dance ensemble, and an angel choir with about 50 performers.

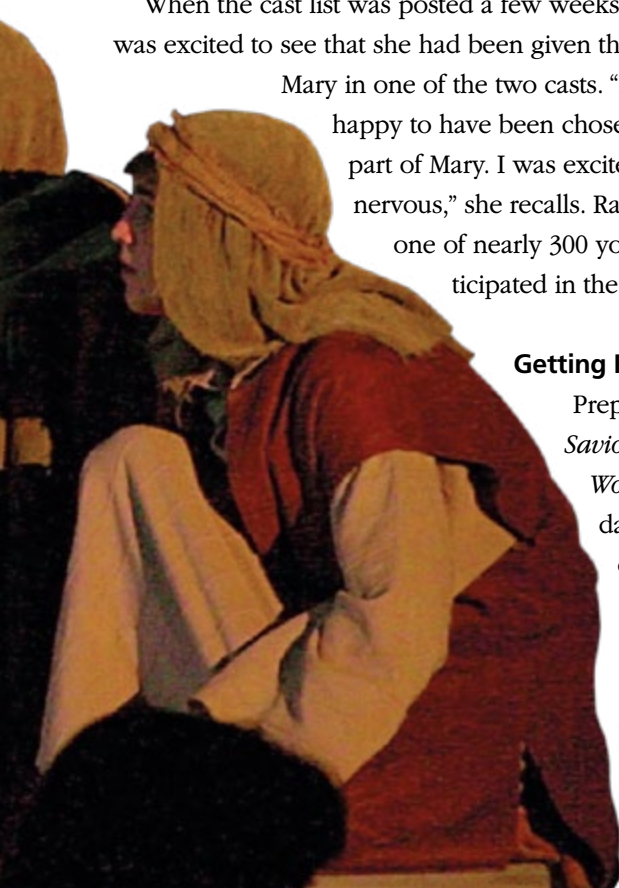
Rehearsals began in mid-August and continued until the show's performances started in mid-November. Brie S. (Mary's Mother, red cast) recalls her initial feelings on the amount of time they had to put into the production. "The four-hour practices every Saturday afternoon were not very appealing," Brie says. "But whenever I chose to fulfill my promise of attending rehearsal, I was always blessed with a happy feeling. I'm so grateful for the opportunity I had to be in *Savior of the World*. I gained a stronger testimony of the divine truths our Savior has given us."

Relying on Divine Help

Throughout the months of practice and especially on the days leading up to and during the six performances, the cast members relied heavily on prayer. "Before every performance, my counterpart and I would pray to perform with the Spirit and that we could help those in the audience feel the same Spirit we felt throughout all our rehearsals," says Taylor H. (Zacharias, blue cast).

When problems arose, the cast members and production staff noticed many blessings that allowed them to perform the musical.

Shawn G. (Joseph, red cast) remembers how one of his props would malfunction whenever he prepared to go on





MUSIC AND YOUR PERSONAL PROGRESS

Working on your Personal Progress? The Individual Worth value experience 5 and value project bullet 4 both involve participating in or directing a performance. *Savior of the World* can be a great resource to use.

stage. “Every time I would attempt to turn on my battery-powered candle, it would quickly turn off. No matter how many times I pushed the button and fidgeted with the batteries, the candle would not light backstage,” he says.

“However, every single time I went out on stage, it always lit perfectly without fail.”

On the final night of the performance, one of the microphones wasn’t working.

“With minutes to go until the start of the show, the directors still couldn’t get this person’s microphone to work. One of the backstage managers began to walk through the halls and ask everyone in sight to say a prayer, asking for help with the technical difficulty,” Brie recalls.

“Before bowing my head, I looked around me to see every single cast member humbly bowing his or her head to pray in faith to our Father in Heaven. Sure enough, as we sang the opening number and started the show, all of the microphones were working perfectly.”

Finding Strength in Song

In addition to witnessing miracles, the cast members felt spiritually uplifted by the music of the show.

Jamie V. (Elizabeth, blue cast) shares her experience, saying, “I remember the music



in particular and what a huge role it played in delivering the message of the Savior. When I performed my scene with music, I was so overcome with the Spirit and I knew that it was the Lord's work we were doing."

Catherine H. (Angel Choir, red cast) had similar feelings about the impact of the music: "*Savior of the World* brought on such a constant powerful and spiritual feeling every time we worked on it," she says. "When we sang 'Come Deliver Us,' you could just feel the power of the music and the emotions of the song. I was so grateful to bear my testimony through song."

Even after the production had finished, the cast members found strength and comfort in the music from the show. Lauren A. (Shepherd Jeshua, blue cast) talks about the testimony meeting that followed the final performance: "After we bore our testimonies, our leaders decided to close by singing one of the songs—'Come, Lord Jesus.' The second we stood up and began singing, the Spirit in the room was strengthened even more."

Testifying of Christ

For many of the youth, performing in *Savior of the World* had a profound effect on their testimonies of the gospel and of Jesus Christ.

Taylor recalls his experience as one of growth. "*Savior of the World* has forever changed how I will think about Christmas," he says. "As I knelt as at the scene of Mary,

Joseph, and the infant Savior, the Spirit testified to me that my Savior lives. The experience I had brought me more joy and happiness than I ever imagined. I now have a much deeper understanding for why Christ's birth was heralded by angels and mortals alike."

Daniel M. (Joseph, blue cast) says, "I felt so grateful to be a witness of this special moment that testifies to me that the Savior of this world did come to us in a humble stable to loving parents who knew of the sacredness of their calling. I now know so much more about my Savior's birth and about how Mary and Joseph must have felt to be the ones chosen to raise this holy child."

Rachel's greatest Christmas gift was her strengthened testimony as a result of the production. "I grew so much closer to the Savior through prayers, scripture study, and pondering. He blessed me with a calm assurance that He cares about me. I was so worried, but when I just trusted in Him, He helped me to replace my fear with faith." **NE**

Download the Scripts and Sheet Music

Savior of the World is a two-act musical depicting Christ's birth (act one) and Resurrection (act two). Each act can be performed separately. The script follows the timeline of Jesus's birth and includes excerpts from both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. You can find the full script online at lds.org/go.211.

These youth in California saw the results of their efforts and hard practice, but more important, they strengthened their faith in Christ as they performed the musical Savior of the World.

