

Mexico followed in 1958, Finland and Germany in 1962, Japan in 1963, Panama in 1964, and more countries over the years. Most recently, seminary classes were established in 2008 in the countries of Benin, Georgia, and Morocco.

As seminary spreads around the world, a worldwide community of seminary students is developing. No matter where seminary students live, they memorize the same scripture-mastery verses, study the same passages of scripture, feel the same Spirit as their testimonies grow, and work to build the same kingdom.

The blessings they receive are as real today as they were 60 years ago, and seminary in all its forms continues to bless the lives of youth all over the world. ■

Bells Choir's Testimonies Ring Clear

By Natasia Garrett

Church Magazines

Twenty-eight pairs of eyes focus on the leader. Muscles tense; fingers flex; attention sharpens. At the signal, the group springs into a well-designed blur of color and sound. Their work requires total concentration—the uniting of many minds to a single effort. Their goal is lofty: to invite the Spirit of the Lord through the use of their talents. For these performers, bells give voice to the skills they've worked hard to develop.

Every Wednesday night, the members of the Bells on Temple Square rehearse in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. Their music represents a wide range of genres, and all of the pieces are demanding. The visually thrilling “Holiday for Strings” requires complex high-speed maneuvers, while the slower, more contemplative notes of “Amazing Grace” need perfect timing.

There's a lot of work involved in bringing the

Jennifer Probert rehearses with the Bells on Temple Square. Bell ringing can be similar to an intricate dance.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON

individual bells into harmony, especially with a group this big. Rehearsing can be difficult and even frustrating, but, like living the gospel, the result is worth the effort.

Trusting the Leader

During one rehearsal, within only a few measures, conductor Tom Waldron stops to coax more volume from the B notes. He has plenty of technical experience, both from his 28 years as a high school bell choir director and as the original conductor of the five-year-old Bells on Temple Square, but he also recognizes the spiritual aspect of what the bell choir does.

Bell ringer Scott Hixson says that rehearsals led by Brother Waldron are similar to devotionals. “Tom stops and shares his testimony, he shares stories from the scriptures . . . He really knows the mission of this organization.”

The ringers respect their conductor and admire him for what he helps them accomplish.

Bell ringer Jennifer Probert says, “We rely heavily on following our conductor . . . because the moment that clapper strikes, we get the sound of the bell.” The conductor has to coordinate the ringers so that the bells

sound at exactly the right time. The ringers trust Brother Waldron to let them know what they need to do.

Maintaining Good Relationships

The bell choir has a strong feeling of camaraderie. Sister Probert describes the group as a family. In some cases the sentiment is literal. The bell choir boasts two married couples, an engaged couple (they met in the bell choir), a set of fraternal twins, and a pair of sisters.

The good relationships are necessary because the ringers, all volunteers, have a difficult job to perform. They have to watch their conductor, the music, and their bells at the same time, while switching between bells. The music requires a variety of playing techniques, such as plucking or malleting.

Occasionally the ringers even have to ring a neighbor's bell on a difficult part. Trust has to exist between the ringers in order for them to perform well.

Focusing on the Savior

In spite of the challenges, the ringers are able to blend their individual parts into a whole that is not only cohesive, but beautiful.

Creating this harmony is only one part of the bell choir's purpose, but it is important to achieving their main purpose—bearing testimony of Jesus Christ and serving Him through their music.

Just as members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir are set apart as musical missionaries, so are members of the bell choir.

Brother Hixson calls performances opportunities to “bear our testimonies through the use of our talents,” explaining that performances are “all about the Savior.” ■

WORLD BRIEFS

Elder Perry Creates First Stake in Guam

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited Guam in December 2010 to create the Barrigada Guam Stake, the first stake in the Territory of Guam.

While there, Elder Perry, who served in the United States Marine Corps in the area during World War II, also visited the Pacific War Museum and the neighboring island of Saipan.

There are 1,971 members of the Church living in Guam. The Territory of Guam is part of the Asia North Area of the Church.

Triple Combinations Now Available

Editions of the triple combination in Indonesian and Thai are now available for the first time in print and online. New editions of the Book of Mormon are also available. The scriptures site includes footnotes, maps, and photographs, and allows readers to mark the scriptures and perform key word searches. The Japanese triple combination is also now online at scriptures.lds.org. The scriptures site now includes 21 languages.

First YSA Conference Held in Cyprus

A first-ever young single adult conference for the Nicosia Cyprus District was held in the Troodos Mountains on October 16, 2010. Attending the conference were 20 young adults and 15 leaders, representing seven different countries. Workshops taught tactics for conquering opposition, successful job interview techniques, and how to conquer fear through faith. Other activities included games, service projects, and a devotional and testimony meeting.

Young Men in Bangalore Commit to Duty to God

More than 30 young men from the Bangalore India District gathered in the hills of Kanakapura to learn about the new Duty to God program and to learn spiritual lessons from challenging physical activities. The young men used a rope and pulley system to cross a pond. They went for a morning run, climbed a mountain, and learned to rappel. The activity was concluded with a testimony meeting. ■