

stunting the physical and mental development of children and greatly increasing their susceptibility to diseases such as measles. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, “undernourishment and deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals cost more than five million children their lives every year.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2003 the Church joined the international Measles Initiative and Partnership. In addition to financial contributions, the Church has played a significant role in organizing, promoting, and conducting local vaccination campaigns using Church volunteers. Since 2003, approximately 56,000 Church members have provided more than 600,000 hours of service in 32 nations. Since 2001, the Measles Initiative and Partnership has vaccinated 600 million children and youth. Measles deaths worldwide have decreased from 750,000 in 2000 to 197,000 in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

The Church’s humanitarian efforts have always included helping to feed the hungry. But now chronic hunger and malnutrition are also being addressed by a food initiative that teaches communities in both rural and urban areas how to grow vegetables and to raise small animals for protein. Many of the techniques being taught are based on years of research by the Benson Institute, which became part of Latter-day Saint Charities in 2007.

Initiative manager Wade Sperry said that when people’s physical health improves, their emotional and spiritual health improves as well.

### Following Jesus Christ

When they see suffering and need in the world, followers of Christ instinctively desire to help. These humanitarian initiatives

provide an organized and effective way for Church members to act on their desire to follow the Savior’s admonition: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do” (3 Nephi 27:21).

#### NOTES

1. See World Health Organization, Fact Sheet no. 286, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs286/en/>.
2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Undernourishment around the World 2004,” [http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5650e/y5650e03.htm#P26\\_3460](http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5650e/y5650e03.htm#P26_3460).
3. See “Members Assist with Measles Initiative,” *Liahona*, Feb. 2010, 76; *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 77.

## Tabernacle Choir Marks Anniversary of First Recordings

By Richard E. Turley Jr.

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A century ago this month, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and organ were first recorded in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. To mark the anniversary, the choir has released a three-disc set, *100: Celebrating a Century of Recording Excellence*, including selections from its 100-year history of recorded music.

Today, many would agree with famed director Eugene Ormandy, who said, “The Mormon

Tabernacle Choir is the greatest choir in the world.”<sup>1</sup> But in the first few decades after it was formed in the mid-19th century, the Tabernacle Choir remained largely unknown because few people around the world had heard it perform. Then in 1909—32 years after the invention of the phonograph—the Columbia Phonograph Company agreed to



attempt to capture the majestic sounds of the choir and organ. It would be a difficult task given the limited technology of the time, which worked well enough for soloists but generally failed to produce quality recordings of large groups.<sup>2</sup>

Over three days in late August and early September 1910, Alexander Hausmann, the recording engineer who supervised the operation, suspended two long recording horns “from a rope stretched across from gallery to gallery, the flaring bells of the two horns covering—the one the sopranos and altos, the other the tenors and basses.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Salt Lake Herald* reported that Mr. Hausmann made 25 recordings: 12 selections by the choir, 10 by Tabernacle organist John J. McClellan, 2 by Brother McClellan and violinist Willard E. Weihe, and one by former Tabernacle organist Joseph J. Daynes Sr.<sup>4</sup>

While it is not known how many finished discs were ultimately sold or how broadly they were distributed, the public response was positive. J. A. Vernon, a missionary serving in Larned, Kansas, USA, reported in a letter printed in the February 1911 *Improvement Era*: “We recently received some phonograph records containing songs and solos by the Tabernacle Choir and organ. On hearing them played, the people become inquisitive, which gives us many opportunities to explain the principles of the gospel.”<sup>5</sup>

Since those first rudimentary recording sessions in 1910, the Tabernacle Choir has released more than 175 albums, including two that have sold more than a million copies each. One of the choir’s recordings received a U.S. Grammy Award in 1959, and another album garnered two Grammy nominations in 2007. More important than awards and honors, however, is the effect of the choir’s music upon its listeners. Though technology has changed dramatically over the past century, the recorded music of the choir continues

to move and inspire, just as it did in 1910. ■

#### NOTES

1. In Charles Jeffrey Calman, *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (1979), 178.
2. See “Big Choir Sings into Phonograph,” *Deseret Evening News*, Sept. 2, 1910, 5.
3. “Music and Musicians,” *Deseret Evening News*, Sept. 3, 1910, 15.
4. See “Last Records Secured,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, Sept. 3, 1910, 14.
5. “Messages from the Missions,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1911, 354.

### CHOIR RECORDING MILESTONES

- 1910:** First acoustic recordings made.
- 1925:** First electrical recordings made.
- 1949–50:** First two albums released. An album was originally a collection of individual records (one or two songs to a side) that were packaged together in a binder.
- 1959:** Recording of “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” included on the album *The Lord’s Prayer*, won a Grammy Award.
- 1963:** The 1959 albums *The Lord’s Prayer* and *Messiah* reached gold record status in the United States, selling more than 500,000 copies.
- 1979:** The 1963 album *The Joy of Christmas* reached gold record status in the United States.
- 1981:** First digital recording, *The Power and the Glory*, released.
- 1985:** The 1965 album *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir Sings Christmas Carols* and the 1970 album *Joy to the World* reached gold record status in the United States.
- 1987:** *Christmas Sampler*, a musical special starring opera singer Shirley Verrett, received a regional Emmy Award.
- 1991:** The 1989 Hallmark album *Carols of Christmas*, which featured the choir as well as other artists, reached platinum record status in the United States, selling more than one million copies.
- 1993:** The 1992 Hallmark album *Celebrate Christmas!*—which featured the choir as well as other artists—reached platinum record status in the United States.
- 2003:** The choir founded its own recording label, which has issued nearly 30 titles to date.
- 2007:** *Spirit of the Season* released. This Christmas album, which featured Norwegian singer Sissel, reached number one on the Billboard Classical Charts and was nominated for two Grammy Awards. ■