

Seventy-Five Years of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's *Music and the Spoken Word*, 1929–2004: A History of the Broadcast of America's Choir

Lloyd D. Newell

Many years ago, my mother gave me an old upright Philco radio that she listened to on the farm in Central, Idaho. It belonged to her parents, my Grandpa and Grandma Lloyd, and is a cherished family heirloom. Even with antique tubes and wiring, it still works. Its wooden frame is smooth and mostly unmarked for all the history it embodies. Only the station identifier for KSL is missing, perhaps from repeated use. Today, the radio is prominently displayed in our home. For me, it is a visual and aural link between the early years of *Music and the Spoken Word* and today.

In my mind's eye, I can see my grandpa, the grandma I never knew, and my mother and her siblings gathered around the Philco in their clapboard farmhouse. My mother told me that on Sundays they would tune in to Salt Lake City radio station KSL and the Tabernacle Choir broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*. Life was not easy on that vast expanse of farmland in southeastern Idaho. The tiny town of Central was far from everything except Grace and Soda Springs, and even they seemed worlds apart. So on Sunday when they could listen to the Tabernacle Choir from hundreds of miles away, it was a small miracle. Week after week, they came to look forward to the program's soothing tones and inspired messages. Like a trusted friend, the familiar refrains of *Music and the Spoken Word* were invited into their home.

"From the Crossroads of the West, we welcome you to a program of inspirational music and spoken word. . . ." Those words, first delivered by Richard L. Evans so long ago, still open the program—not only to farm families in southeastern Idaho but now to a weekly audience in the millions. The program is carried on some two thousand television, radio, and cable

stations all over the globe and is the longest continuous network broadcast in the world. Its remarkable historic legacy, reaching back seven and a half decades to the earliest years of broadcasting, still lives today.

The Beginnings

In the 1920s, radio was a new medium that fascinated the public. All across the country, people began to recognize its tremendous possibilities. In Utah, KSL began as a tiny station that broadcast from the roof of a building in downtown Salt Lake City. The radio station—known then as KZN, an NBC radio affiliate—was started in 1922 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an offshoot of the Church-owned newspaper, *The Deseret News*. The initial broadcast on 6 May 1922 was a message from LDS Church President Heber J. Grant. Two years later, thousands of LDS faithful listened to the first radio broadcast of LDS general conference. The next year, radio listeners in Salt Lake City could tune in to Tabernacle Choir rehearsals every Thursday evening.¹

About then, KSL station manager Earl J. Glade had a brilliant idea—a nationwide, weekly broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. First, he convinced the choir it could be done, and then he convinced the management of NBC. Beginning in 1929, the nation could hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir every week. The broadcast continued for three years on the NBC network, the time and day varying from week to week. In 1932, despite efforts by NBC to retain the broadcasts, KSL switched to the new CBS Radio Network when CBS President William Paley offered to carry the weekly nationwide broadcasts of the Tabernacle Choir on a regular Sunday morning time slot.

First Broadcast

The first broadcast of what would become known as *Music and the Spoken Word* (MSW) was on Monday, 15 July 1929, at 3:00 p.m., a hot summer afternoon in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. KSL ran a wire from its control room to an amplifier more than a block away in the Tabernacle. The only microphone KSL owned was suspended from the ceiling in the Tabernacle to capture the choir sound, and nineteen-year-old Ted Kimball was obliged to climb a stepladder to speak into the microphone and announce the songs. The mike was “live” throughout the broadcast, and Ted stayed perched on the ladder for the duration. NBC headquarters informed a KSL engineer by telegraph when to start the program. Hand signals to Ted Kimball marked the cue to begin. Anthony Lund was the music conductor;

Edward P. Kimball was at the organ; and his son Ted was the first announcer.

Just five years ago, when we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of *MSW*, we used an early microphone much like the one for the first broadcast. Speaking into this mike—one that was used by Richard L. Evans for so many years—was a thrill I will not soon forget. As it turned out, television personality Oprah Winfrey was in the audience that Sunday and came up after the broadcast to speak briefly to the choir. She thanked them for inspiring her and said that she grew up listening to the choir. (The import of having a famous broadcast personality in the Tabernacle, in awe of the choir, on the Sunday we were commemorating seventy years is a memory to long cherish.)

All of this should come as no surprise. From the first time *MSW* was sent out over NBC's thirty-station network, the program was favorably received. It was an immediate success. On 23 July 1929, a telegram was received from M. H. Aylsworth, president of NBC: "Your wonderful Tabernacle program is making great impression in New York. Have heard from leading ministers. All impressed by program. Eagerly awaiting your next." The program was off and running. Ted Kimball announced the first few broadcasts and then left to serve a full-time Church mission. Several other announcers followed until June of 1930 when a twenty-four-year-old announcer from KSL, Richard L. Evans, was chosen to be the program announcer. Who could have imagined that just four years later he would receive a national award as the best radio announcer in the country?

Richard L. Evans—Announcer from June 1930 to October 1971

Like his predecessors, Richard L. Evans began by announcing the titles of compositions and the station identification. In time, he began to relate the title of a song to some point of philosophy or moral profundity. These short thoughts flowed from the music and evolved into two- to three-minute nondenominational "sermonettes." Listeners were so pleased with the additions he made that he began crafting weekly inspirational messages. His trademark "sermonettes" were known for their simple eloquence and uncommon wisdom.

In 1954, to commemorate the choir's twenty-fifth year of weekly broadcasts, *Life* magazine editorialized on the program's legacy with these words:

Those who know this program need no arguments for listening to it, or no introduction to its producer and commentator, Richard L. Evans . . . or to the disciplined voices. . . . Millions have heard them, and more millions, we hope, will hear them



Richard L. Evans was the announcer for Music and the Spoken Word for forty-one years. Photograph courtesy of LDS Church Archives.

in years to come. It is a national institution to be proud of, but what matters more is that Americans can be linked from ocean to ocean and year to year by the same brief respite from the world's week, and by a great chord of common thoughts on God and love and the everlasting things.²

For forty-one years, until his death, Richard L. Evans continued as announcer, writer, and producer of *MSW*. His name and voice are forever linked to the broadcast. His indelible contribution is still imprinted on each broadcast. The closing words he wrote many decades ago remain unchanged today, "Again we leave you from within the shadows of the everlasting hills. May peace be with you this day and always."

Because of his role in shaping the broadcast through four of its seven decades, an

overview of the broadcast would not be complete without a short history of his life. Truly, he was the individual who created *MSW* as we know it today. He became a famous man in his time, yet few would ever know of his humble, even inauspicious, beginning.

A descendant of hardworking, faithful pioneer ancestors, Richard Louis Evans was born in Salt Lake City on 23 March 1906. He was the ninth child of goodly parents, John and Florence Evans. His father had worked up the ranks as an errand boy at the *Deseret News* to the position of general manager. Ten weeks after Richard was born, his father returned from a late meeting, tried to get off a streetcar just before it reached a full stop, missed his footing, and fell to the ground. With a brain concussion and other injuries, he died several weeks later. Richard's widowed mother was left behind with nine children under eighteen years of age. Although Richard never knew his father, his mother always taught the children that their father was still with them as the head of their eternal family.³

Richard and his siblings learned to work hard in a variety of jobs to help support the family. From the early years of grade school to the time he left on his mission, he delivered newspapers, sold flowers, washed dishes, drove truck, and worked as a traveling salesman, to name but a few of many jobs. At this early age, he learned about thrift, frugality, and the value of hard work (all of which would become common themes in his future Spoken Word messages). He excelled in school and was the editor of his high-school newspaper and yearbook, a champion debater, and recipient of the Heber J. Grant scholarship award.

Just after Richard turned eleven years old, he was wounded in a mock battle with neighborhood playmates. Unbeknownst to Richard, one of the boys was playing with a loaded BB gun. A pellet struck Richard in his left eye. With blood streaming down his face, he ran home, pleading with his sister, "Don't cry; pray for me." He lost the eye and was fitted with an artificial one. Few knew he was blind in one eye for the rest of his days. Occasionally, I have asked people if they knew that Richard L. Evans was blind in one eye. Rarely has anyone known about that or about the untimely death of his father. I have searched in vain for any references to those two events in his writing and speaking. Elder Evans's son told me that he found out about the accident from his mother when he was a teenager. It seems that Richard did not spend much time with self-pity. He just went forward with his life. However, those disadvantages seemed to give him an extra measure of spiritual sensitivity and empathy for others who struggled with adversities. Perhaps they also made him more determined to work hard and succeed.

Throughout life, Richard was known for his loving devotion to his mother. The circumstances of his birth and his father's death established a special bond and deep mutual affection between them. Years later, as a grown man, he would speak of his mother on the Tabernacle Choir broadcast:

The Lord God had given her to me, and me to her, and she seemed to be as the extended arm of his influence. . . . She had nourished and sheltered me in infancy; nursed me in illness; heeded my cries and quieted my fears; had taught and counseled and encouraged, and dulled the sharp edge of disappointments. . . . We thank mothers for life given and for lessons learned, and for the constancy of their sacrifice and service. And best we honor them when we become the best of what they have taught us to be.⁴

At his mother's knee, Richard was taught the principles of the gospel and the importance of strong faith. When he was sixteen years old, an inspired patriarch blessed him that he had a "bright career" ahead of him, that he would "stand in holy places and mingle with many of the best men

and women upon the earth,” and that he would serve the Lord in “distant lands, travel much and see many wonderful things.” The patriarch also blessed him that “his tongue [would] be loosened and become as the pen of a ready writer in dispensing the word of God and in preaching the gospel to [his] fellow men.”⁵

At twenty years of age, Richard L. Evans was called to the British Mission where he served for nearly three years. While serving, he was given many opportunities to hone his writing skills, such as being associate editor of the *Millennial Star*, first under Elder James E. Talmage and later Elder John A. Widtsoe (both of the Council of the Twelve Apostles). Elder Widtsoe also appointed Elder Evans to be secretary of the European Mission and persuaded him to write the centennial history of the mission.⁶ He was rigorously taught, lovingly mentored, and warmly embraced by these two giants in LDS Church history.

Richard L. Evans continued a close association with Elder and Sister Widtsoe until their deaths. He became as a son to them, the Widtsos having lost their last surviving son only a few months before arriving in England. When he said goodbye to the Widtsos at the conclusion of his mission, he wrote in his journal: “This morning I parted company with the best man I have ever known. . . . Before we parted, he gave me the most wonderful blessing I have ever had and promised long, full service, health and achievement and told me in certain terms that the Lord was pleased with my labors. We put our arms around each other and parted as father and son.”⁷

The Widtsos gave Richard a key to their home, and he carried that key in his pocket until the day he died as a symbol of what they had meant to him.⁸

During the years after his mission and continuing through his thirties, opportunities and blessings poured into Richard’s life, as he worked hard and prepared for all that lay ahead. He married Alice Thornley from Kaysville, Utah, in 1933, and together they would have four sons. Richard earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees, with honors, from the University of Utah. He got a job as an announcer with Radio Station KSL, began announcing the Tabernacle Choir broadcast, and became editor of the *Improvement Era*.

At age thirty-two, he was called by President Heber J. Grant to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of J. Golden Kimball and became a member of the First Council of Seventy, the youngest man called as a General Authority of the Church in more than thirty years. (The average age of the other six members at that time was sixty-five; the youngest was fifty-seven). In his address given at general conference in October 1938, immediately after being called as a General Authority, he said:

I spent a sleepless night Thursday night, burning old bridges and building new ones. I think that perhaps this call would have come easier to me a little later in life, after I had had a better opportunity to make substance of more of my dreams, but perhaps this is not so. Perhaps I must just exchange old dreams for new dreams. . . . Furthermore, it is all part of a great plan. The Lord still chasteneth whom he loveth, and all those things which come into our lives in spite of our best-laid plans, are part of the education and enriching experience of every child of God who walks the earth.⁹

Elder Evans's various assignments allowed him to develop a close relationship with President Heber J. Grant. On one occasion, prior to his call as a General Authority, Richard spoke with him about a desire to work on a doctorate and possibly pursue job opportunities in broadcasting that had opened up to him in several large eastern cities. Richard reported that when he asked President Grant's advice, the prophet looked at him with a twinkle in his eye and said, "I think I'd stick around if I were you." And so he did.¹⁰ Richard's brother commented that "as his life unfolded, Richard recognized that . . . the President's advice had changed his whole life—and for the better."¹¹ Indeed, many years later he would say on the *Spoken Word*:

No man ever lived his life exactly as he planned it. There are things all of us want that we don't get. There are plans that all of us make that never move beyond the hopes in our hearts. There are reverses which upset our fondest dreams. . . . There are many things in life beyond the present power of anyone to alter or to answer or to understand. And what we cannot understand we shall have to accept on faith—until we do understand. In any case, rebellion isn't the answer. But neither is hopeless resignation. Resignation may retreat too far. But somewhere between bitter rebellion and beaten resignation there is an effective fighting ground where a man can make the most of whatever is; where he can still face each day and do with it whatever can be done.¹²

In addition to the weekly broadcasts, Richard L. Evans accompanied the choir as it traveled to sing in concert halls throughout the world. As the choir announcer, he would introduce the music and add well-chosen words of commentary and humor. Today, as I travel with the choir, occasionally I will use some of the same lines in my concert commentary and announcing that Richard L. Evans coined decades ago. At an appropriate moment in the concert, after I tell a little about the choir, I say something to this effect: "These are wonderful people. In fact, I'd like you to meet each one of them." I then turn to the back row and say, "Starting at the top, we have" People always laugh and respond heartily to the thought of introducing 360 singers. Or I might say, "You may not know that some members of the choir are married to each other." Then I turn to the choir and ask, "Would you please stand if you are married to someone in the choir." More than a dozen

couples stand as everyone applauds. Then I say, “Now if you counted quickly, that should have come out even.”

After Elder Evans had served for fifteen years in the First Council of Seventy, President David O. McKay announced Richard’s name at the October 1953 general conference as the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve. After a sustaining vote, President McKay introduced Richard by saying, “Elder Evans whom you know and have known because of his work on the radio and his service in the stakes, and whom the entire nation knows,—Richard L. Evans,—will now speak to us.”¹³ The new Apostle came to the pulpit in the Tabernacle and said:

I have frequented these beloved walls for a period now approaching a quarter century in many situations and assignments. But this is the most difficult thing I have here had to do. It seems that this chapter was not in the script which I had written for myself. In the brief, but in some respects too long a time since first I became aware of this possibility, I have measured the full measure of my life many times over. There are those here who know much better than I the weight of this work. There is none here who knows better than I my own limitations, inadequacies, and imperfections, and the feeling of smallness which I have. But if you and my Father in heaven will accept me as I am, with your help and his, I shall earnestly endeavor to be better than I am or have ever been.¹⁴

As a special witness of Jesus Christ to the world, Elder Evans would take on new and demanding activities and assignments. All the while, he would remain the voice for *Music and the Spoken Word*, rarely missing a broadcast, still producing it, and writing and announcing its weekly message—but now as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

His spoken word messages are still having an impact today. For example, in 1997, twenty-six years after his death, the *Wall Street Journal* carried a front-page article and picture about the enduring appeal of Richard L. Evans. Among other stations, his messages have been featured on Radio Station KMOX in St. Louis drive-time programming. In response to a question from management, listeners called and wrote in by the hundreds, telling the station to continue broadcasting Richard L. Evans’s taped inspirational messages—as they had done for several decades.¹⁵

One writer expressed his regard for Richard Evans this way: “His deep, soothing voice and his genius for composing moving messages have made him famous and well loved in countries throughout the world. His expressed thoughts have seemed to be exactly what people wanted and needed to hear, and the response of so many has been, ‘He seemed to be talking only to me.’”¹⁶

Richard L. Evans spoke on a wide variety of subjects, but each message was filled with hope and truth, the good news of the gospel. He often spoke of such principles as work, gratitude, duty, industry, civility, happiness, and

love. He stood for timeless values, constantly urging his vast audience to focus their lives on the everlasting things. He said on the broadcast, “Life is largely a reflection of what people believe plus what they have the courage and conviction to stand for, to live for.”¹⁷

His voice and the broadcast were a constant in good and bad times. Like trusted friends, Richard L. Evans and *Music and the Spoken Word* have seen their audiences through war and depression, peace and prosperity. They have steadied troubled hearts, assuaged disappointments, added upon joys, lightened loads, and led one generation after another to God.¹⁸

Still today, I receive scores of letters—mostly from non-LDS individuals—expressing gratitude for the program. Often, some three and a half decades after his death, the letter writer expresses love and admiration for Richard L. Evans and remembers, with fondness, his voice and his messages. “I grew up listening to the spoken word with Richard L. Evans,” one person wrote me years ago. “Through the radio he became my friend during both happy and difficult years. Sometimes I can still hear his voice softly giving me some much needed counsel.”¹⁹ Elder Evans was so closely connected with the broadcast for so many years that untold numbers still cherish his memory and honor his name. During the seventy-fifth commemorative year, I have selected and delivered one of Richard L. Evans’s “Spoken Word Classics” the last Sunday of every month. Many have appreciated listening to these timeless messages, brought back from the past. I am continually struck by the relevancy and enduring appeal of his words, even though some were given by Richard L. Evans more than sixty years ago.

Among others, Richard L. Evans was instrumental in bringing MSW to a television audience in 1949. In 1959 the broadcast was voted America’s most popular classical and religious program in a national listeners’ poll. Elder Evans understood the awesome power of broadcasting and other media to shape opinions and spread goodwill, so he worked tirelessly to share these gifts with a broader audience.

In addition to producing and writing the weekly choir broadcast, Elder Evans wrote a syndicated newspaper column for William Randolph Hearst’s King Features Syndicate for five years. It was circulated to millions of homes and had one of the largest readerships in the nation. He wrote articles for *Reader’s Digest* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* and was asked to write an article for *Look* magazine to define the Church’s beliefs.²⁰

He wrote seventeen books, most of them compilations of his messages and quotes nationally published by Harper and Brothers. His books were read by millions and reviewed by the most prestigious media outlets of the time, including this *New York Times* review: “[They] reveal an Addisonian charm which lifts them into literature. . . . Here is a classic, an example of how to put ancient realities to a modern world.” And this from the *Los*

Angeles Times: “There is a classic simplicity here which makes meaning clear, and an eloquence which drives home a point.”²¹

Richard L. Evans was also busy with civic affairs, most notably with the Rotary Club. Over three decades, he rose from local offices to be president of Rotary International in 1966. During that year, he and his wife addressed audiences in sixty countries on every continent and in twenty-five states in the U.S. It would be impossible to calculate the goodwill he generated as he traveled, spoke, and met with dignitaries and officials from around the world. The people with whom he met came to love and trust him—and the broadcast he so loyally served.

People often wondered how he could do all that he did. They attributed his accomplishments to talent and genius. He had much God-given ability, to be sure, but those who knew him best “recognized the working garments in which the genius was clothed.”²² He was an extremely hard worker, seldom rested from his labors, and often rose between 3:00 and 5:00 a.m. to work for a few hours before going to the office.

Richard L. Evans’s death was unexpected. He was only sixty-five years old when he died, just after midnight, on 1 November 1971. Elder Evans worked vigorously, as usual, up to his final days, when he became ill from a viral infection. Just before he died, he lay in his hospital bed when the Sunday morning broadcast, by recording, came on. His voice and words, on nationwide broadcast, encouraged faith in the future. “There are times when we feel that we can’t endure—that we can’t face what’s ahead of us . . . that we can’t carry the heavy load. But these times come and go . . . and in the low times we have to endure; we have to hold on until the shadows brighten, until the load lifts. . . . There is more built-in strength in all of us than we sometimes suppose.”²³

I was fifteen at the time and remember little about Elder Evans’s passing, except the suddenness of it. But others have eulogized his life so well. Upon his death, the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued a statement to commemorate his life and contribution:

Numerous people the world over have happily boasted that “Richard Evans is my church.” For forty-two years, under intense pressures, Elder Evans has returned to the microphone nearly every week with a message of depth and faith and freshness and inspiration.

As limitless approaches are made with the people all over the world by missionaries and others of us, we are greeted with the statement: “I listen every Sunday morning to Richard L. Evans.” This apostle touched the hearts of millions.²⁴

At the first session of the April 1972 general conference, President Harold B. Lee, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted. In his

opening remarks, he extended cordial greetings and then spoke of one who was missing:

It is with subdued hearts that we remember our beloved Richard L. Evans. His voice, his spirit, and his admonitions and counsel were one of the highlights of his association as a General Authority of the Church. Richard L. Evans didn't just belong to the Church; he belonged to the world, and they claimed him as such. We know that there are heavenly choirs, and maybe they needed an announcer, and one to give the Spoken Word. If so, maybe the need was so great that he is called to a higher service in that place where time is no more.²⁵

President Lee's words must have comforted those who had been mourning the death of this remarkable man, Richard L. Evans. *Music and the Spoken Word*, the broadcast that he shaped, would ever remain his legacy. As the First Presidency of the Church eulogized: "While others may be raised up to shoulder part of the heavy load he carried, there will never be one to take the place of Richard L. Evans, apostle, philosopher, thoughtful friend, wise counselor, loving husband and father."²⁶

J. Spencer Kinard—Announcer from February 1972 to October 1990

Onto these legendary footprints walked J. Spencer Kinard. As a reporter for KSL Television in November of 1971, Spence Kinard was assigned to cover the funeral of Richard L. Evans. Ironically, he was also determined to break the story of who was going to replace Richard L. Evans as announcer of MSW. Several months earlier, Spence Kinard had returned to Salt Lake City after working with CBS in New York. Meanwhile, Alan Jensen, a man who had substituted for Richard L. Evans from time to time, continued to announce the weekly broadcast from November 1971 through mid-February 1972.

Beginning in January of 1972, the Church conducted tryouts for the position of announcer left vacant with the passing of Elder Evans. About this time, Spence Kinard was invited by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley to try out for the position. Upon the passing of Elder Evans, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley—another man who loves the choir and its broadcast—was assigned to take Elder Evans's place as overseer of the choir. President Hinckley has retained direct supervision of the choir to this day. A brief history of the choir's broadcast could not be written without commenting on the visionary leadership and unfailing support of President Hinckley over more than three decades. He is affectionately referred to as the choir's and MSW's number one fan.

On 21 February 1972, President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency



*Lloyd D. Newell, CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite, and J. Spencer (Spence) Kinard, 15 December 2002. Cronkite was the guest narrator for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's Christmas 2002 Christmas program. Kinard narrated Music and the Spoken Word for eighteen years (1972-1990). Newell has been the voice of Music and the Spoken Word for the past fourteen years.
Photograph courtesy of Lloyd D. Newell.*

extended the call to Spence Kinard to be the new announcer for MSW. The following Sunday, Spence was given a blessing by President Tanner, introduced to the choir, and began the weekly announcing assignment. President Tanner encouraged him with these words: "Spence, we don't want you to start over, we want you to pick up where Richard Evans left off." It was a frightening thought for thirty-one-year-old Spence Kinard. He knew he could not fill Richard L. Evans's shoes; he could only do his personal best, relying on inspiration and divine help.

A few months after becoming the official announcer, Spence Kinard took on additional responsibilities in his professional life. He was promoted to be news director of the ever-growing KSL television station. For the first few years, he, like his predecessor, continued to write the Spoken Word message every week. Then, the inspired idea was born to invite other writers into a rotation and to turn production over to Bonneville Communications.²⁷ The system of multiple writers submitting scripts remains in effect to this day. I write messages regularly, and a few other writers submit scripts. Then, Craig Jessop (musical director of the choir), staff at

Bonneville Communications, and I oversee and edit them.

During Spence Kinard's eighteen years of service, *MSW* continued to be a national treasure, more awards were received, and, as broadcast outlets expanded across the country, more stations began to carry the program.

Lloyd D. Newell—Announcer from November 1990 to Present

In November of 1990, I began serving as the announcer of *MSW* on what I thought would be a temporary basis. Several months earlier, I had been asked to audition for the position of Spence Kinard's backup. When I began announcing the program, I was told by the choir president to serve "until further notice." In the meantime, they would open the position for Church-wide auditions. Hundreds of people applied, and more than seventy-five formally auditioned in front of the camera. All the while, I continued to do the weekly announcing. In January of 1992, based on the recommendation of the search committee and a final decision by President Gordon B. Hinckley, I was officially called (under the direction of President Hinckley) by the president of the choir, Wendell Smoot, and set apart to the calling as the "voice of the spoken word and announcer for the Tabernacle Choir."

People both within and outside the Church are always surprised to find out that this is my Church calling—that I am not paid for my service. Like my predecessors, I occasionally receive letters to "Reverend Newell" at addresses such as "Church of the Crossroads of the West." Most think that this is my full-time job. I explain that, like members of the choir, I serve as an unpaid volunteer and that our program is meant to inspire and uplift through music and message. This is not our "LDS worship service"; it's not a sacrament meeting. It's an inspirational program of music and message to feed a spiritually hungry world. Frequently, it prompts a desire for more information about who we are and what the teachings of the Church are; always, it creates goodwill and builds bridges of understanding, respect, and appreciation.

In various halls and in different languages, *MSW* has been broadcast away from the Tabernacle at locations from San Diego to New York City with more than a score of U.S. cities in between. It has been sent over satellite from many locations outside the United States, including Mexico, Germany, Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia, Hungary, Austria, and Israel. I will never forget giving the Spoken Word from the BYU Jerusalem Center on the Mount of Olives, delivering the Spoken Word from Royal Albert Hall in London, broadcasting from the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., or participating in the amazing Palau de la Musica in

Barcelona, Spain—to name just a few. The highlights never end when associated with the Tabernacle Choir, and, I believe, the best is still ahead of us. The broadcast has originated from World Fairs around the world, including Montreal, Toronto, San Antonio, Seattle, San Diego, and Chicago. In 2002, the choir leadership entered into an unprecedented, joint arrangement with Bonneville Communications to produce, market, and distribute the program. A wonderful, synergistic teamwork occurs as the choir leadership and Bonneville work together in the design and production of the program.

In the short fourteen years of my association with the choir and its broadcasts, I have seen how one year builds upon the next. The choir continues to receive more and more recognition, winning countless awards over its seventy-five years. In November 2003, the choir received the National Medal of Arts (the nation's highest award for the arts) from President George W. Bush in an Oval Office ceremony. In April 2004, the choir and its broadcast were inducted into the Hall of Fame of the National Association of Broadcasters. But perhaps its most remarkable award is its longevity. In a world so noisy and full of distraction, *Music and the Spoken Word* is a welcome reprieve, a faithful companion. For all who seek to make their days more meaningful, this program of music and message gently reminds its audience of life's purposes and points to the everlasting things.

All who have been involved with *Music and the Spoken Word* and all who will come after us owe unbounded gratitude to the giants who went before—their names number in the thousands. Always, whether at home in the Tabernacle or abroad in the world, we feel humbly grateful for that legacy and for the honor of participating in its continuing success. We know we are here only for a season, as we extend our offering to the Lord, the Church, and the world. I am certain that I speak for all our predecessors when I extend heartfelt gratitude for the choir and staff, the production and behind-the-scenes people, the administrative help, the Tabernacle facility personnel, and the loyal audience.

Time and again, we host dignitaries or feature celebrities on the program, and so many of them get nostalgic. Famous folk and regular people alike continually say that they grew up listening to this broadcast, imagining what it must be like in the Tabernacle; and almost invariably, they say their experience with the broadcast has been one of the highlights of their lives. For example, in December 2002, Walter Cronkite was the guest narrator for our annual Christmas concerts and for the Sunday morning broadcast. Each evening he spoke to the capacity audience in the Conference Center about fond memories of growing up in Kansas City and listening to the Tabernacle Choir broadcast on an old crystal radio set.

Every Sunday, about two-thirds of the live audience for *Music and the*



*Lloyd D. Newell giving the Spoken Word from the pulpit of the
LDS Conference Center, April 2002.
Photograph courtesy of Lloyd D. Newell.*

Spoken Word raise their hands in response to my question, “Who is here for the first time?” Week after week, people gather from far and wide to see and hear this beloved program, and they want to take what they feel home with them. Through all the ups and downs and the twists and turns of the past seventy-five years of humanity, the essence of this beloved broadcast remains essentially the same: inspirational music and message that lifts hearts, comforts souls, and brings us closer to the Divine.

Notes

1. The author acknowledges the use of Charles J. Calman, *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); Gerald A. Peterson, *More Than Music: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979); and Richard L. Evans Jr., *Richard L. Evans: The Man and the Message* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973) in the preparation of this article. Parts of this article were published previously in *Messages from Music and the Spoken Word: Richard L. Evans, J. Spencer Kinard, and Lloyd D. Newell* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain and Mormon Tabernacle Choir, 2003); and Lloyd D. Newell, “Richard L. Evans: A Light to the World,” in *Out of Obscurity: The LDS*

Church in the Twentieth Century (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 260–73.

2. Richard L. Evans, *From the Crossroads* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), 14.

3. See David W. Evans, *My Brother Richard L.* (Salt Lake City: Beatrice Cannon Evans, 1984), 2.

4. Richard L. Evans, *From Within These Walls* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 229–30.

5. Evans, *Richard L. Evans*, 23.

6. The history was subsequently published in 1937 under the title, Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1937).

7. Evans, *Richard L. Evans*, 35.

8. Evans, *Richard L. Evans*, 36.

9. Conference Report, October 1938, 90.

10. Evans, *Richard L. Evans*, 45–46.

11. Evans, *My Brother Richard L.*, 27.

12. Richard L. Evans, *Tonic for Our Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 43–44.

13. David O. McKay, in *One Hundred Twenty-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 128.

14. Richard L. Evans, in *One Hundred Twenty-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 128.

15. See *Wall Street Journal* (New York, New York), 12 February 1997, A1, A11.

16. Petersen, *More Than Music*, 51.

17. Richard L. Evans, *May Peace Be with You* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 20.

18. Lloyd D. Newell, “A Trusted Friend,” message from *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcast, 15 September 1996.

19. Personal correspondence.

20. The article appeared originally in *Look* 18 (5 October 1954): 67–68. A condensed version was printed in *Reader's Digest* 66 (June 1955): 143–46.

21. Evans, *May Peace Be with You*, book jacket.

22. Marion D. Hanks, “Elder Richard L. Evans: Apostle of the Lord (1906–1971),” *Ensign* 1, no. 12 (December 1971): 7.

23. Evans, *Richard L. Evans*, 85.

24. “Statements from the Leading Councils of the Church,” *Ensign* 1, no. 12 (December 1971): 11.

25. Harold B. Lee, in *Official Report of the One Hundred Forty-Second Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 3.

26. “Statements from the Leading Councils of the Church,” 11.

27. Since the 1970s, MSW has been produced by Bonneville Communications’ parent company, Bonneville International Corporation, and distributed internationally as a public service broadcast. Bonneville International Corporation is a holding company for numerous broadcast properties and has supported the broadcast since 1964.