

and practice until you can play this piece decently.” It is a common assumption that if you do not push your children, they will never learn anything. Yet how easily we get locked in awful struggles of will with our children, spending huge amounts of wasted energy, building hostility and rebellion. Authoritarian persons may not be able to swallow Dr. Landau’s policy of loving permissiveness, but this book should prove a cautionary voice for each thoughtful parent. In this affluent age, when people depend increasingly on the beauty and accomplishments of their children as final symbols of status, we need constant warning lest we exploit our greatest treasures.



A MORMON RECORD

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Mormons know Governor Romney, Billy Casper, Gene Fullmer, and Grant Johannesen. Most have heard of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms. Fewer know of Gershwin, Bernstein, Copland, Bloch.

But who can name the Church’s only living composer of national and international stature? Better still, how many can walk into a record shop and order the only significant commercially recorded “Mormon” composition of the Church’s 137 years and identify performers, conductor, label?

The answers: Leroy Robertson’s *Book of Mormon Oratorio*, performed by Utah Symphony and University of Utah Choruses under Maurice Abravanel with soloists and chief Tabernacle Organist Alexander Schreiner. Label: Vanguard VSD-2099.

Robertson has had a distinguished and productive career. He is chairman of the General Church Music Committee. Former head of both University of Utah and Brigham Young University Music Departments, he has been a nationally recognized composer for over three decades, prominent world-wide for over two.

The Depression produced his greatest works. Two were prize-winners: the *Quintet* won the New York Music Critics Circle Award (1936); the *Trilogy* won the largest cash prize (\$25,000) in history (1947). The latter was belated recognition, for the three-movement symphony was completed years earlier (1939) and gathered dust until the Reichhold Competition.

On receipt of the prize the Mormon composer was quoted as saying: "By the time Internal Revenue and tithing are taken care of, there's not going to be a whole lot left for me." In fact, on advice of counsel, he appealed income tax payment on grounds that the actual work involved in the 1947 prize work was done nearly a decade before under different tax laws. The case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where he lost on a 5-4 decision.

The *Book of Mormon Oratorio* may not be Robertson's best work in strictly musical terms, but it is apt to be the most enduring. I feel the *Trilogy*, *Quartet*, and *Quintet* are all more unified and better, musically—but none are available on recordings yet. The only other Robertson work on commercial disc is his Violin Concerto—on the flip-side of Stravinsky's Concerto (Vanguard). Or, as Robertson buffs say: "The Stravinsky is on the flip-side of the Robertson album." Both are beautifully played by one of the handful of current violin greats, Tossy Spivakovsky.

I am convinced the *Oratorio* will be the most enduring because of its indigenuous nature and textual subject matter and because of its potential emotional appeal to all Mormons. It is set to Book of Mormon texts freely selected and adapted by the composer. Its high point textually, though not musically, is the appearance of the Savior as recorded in III Nephi.

Narrative action moves via tenor Kenly Whitelock in the role of Evangelist. The major solo role goes to Roy Samuelson, finest baritone in Mormon history and a faculty member at Indiana University's prestigious, opera-gearred Music School. As Samuel the Lamanite prophet—one of Mormondom's most colorful figures—he dominates the performance vocally, both by weight of the role and by his forceful, artistic performance.

The Savior's piercing words to the Nephites are effectively—and carefully—set by the composer and movingly sung by basso Warren Wood. Soprano Jean Preston does well in a short solo.

Maurice Abravanel and the Utah Symphony are superb. One of the nation's top dozen recording orchestras (especially in the connoisseur literature), they premiered the *Oratorio* in 1953 with University of Utah Choruses in the Tabernacle, repeating it in subsequent months throughout the state. That 1953 performance was recorded by a fledgling Salt Lake company but didn't attain much circulation. The *Oratorio* has been revived in several Utah Symphony seasons through the years.

Its most listenable sections—and probably best—are the familiar *Lord's Prayer*, in my opinion the Prayer's best setting, which has enjoyed a lengthy, profitable life of its own apart from the *Oratorio* for decades; the peaceful, modulatory, and chromatic *How Beautiful Upon the Mountain; Old Things Are Done Away's* simplicity and poignancy as scored for ladies voices; and the orchestral interlude, *Pastoral*, performed as encore on the Utah Symphony's 1966 European Tour.

Some sections will cause problems for most listeners: the rather severe opening (and, interestingly enough, one of the last written) baritone recitative with surging orchestral undertow, and the *finale*—a magnificent, but musically involved, Gloria (in English).

University of Utah Choruses (David A. Shand and J. Marlowe Nielson, conductors) and South High Girls' Chorus (Armont Willardsen, conductor) do commendably. The still immature college voices make one wish for greater depth, power, and richness of tone quality, particularly in climactic moments—as in the *finale*, which fails to reach its potential.

This leads one to the question: *Why not the Tabernacle Choir?* Its 375 mature, routined voices would seem the answer. I've asked this question for years—ever since the *Oratorio's* completion in 1947.

Robertson completed the *Oratorio* with the Tabernacle Choir and the Brigham Young University Symphony (which he then conducted) in mind. He wrote a special Tabernacle organ part for Alexander Schreiner. A few months later he won the Reichhold Award, left Brigham Young University for the University of Utah—and the *Oratorio* went on the shelf.

It remained—years later—for non-Mormon-Greek-Portuguese-Swiss-French-Jewish Maurice Abravanel (“Salt Lake City is the *only* city in the world where I'm a *gentile*”) to bring it off the shelf to performance.

The day will—and should—come when the Tabernacle Choir and the Philadelphia Orchestra or Utah Symphony bring out another—better—stereo *Book of Mormon Oratorio* pressing. It would seem to be a logical recording project for the Church's “most effective missionary.” One hopes that the Choir's tight, demanding schedule could accommodate such a venture.

And while we're at it, why not annual July 24th Tabernacle performances by Tabernacle Choir and orchestra as a serious counterpart to Crawford Gates' popular Mormon folk-musical, *Promised Valley*, which enjoyed a successful sixty-day tourist run under Church sponsorship last summer? What an improvement on the annual Days of '47 pageant.

Until a new, better *Oratorio* recording is made, the Vanguard album, with Arnold Friberg cover-drawing, is available—but not moving briskly—at some record dealers or the Utah Symphony office. We might hope the M.I.A. would consider offering the *Oratorio* as a mass-listening project some year in the Church's myriad cultural halls. The existing enviable physical culture program might be persuaded to move over for a week or so.

SHORT NOTICE

The Latter-day Saint Family. Compiled by Blaine R. Porter. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1966, xii, 438 pp. \$4.95.

This book is a compilation of forty selections on family life in general and Mormon family life in particular. Dr. Porter has wisely selected representative writings from well-known authorities outside as well as within the Church, thus adding a commendable scholarly dimension to the book.

As the author states in his preface, the book is not a comprehensive picture