

## *Notes from the Cobbler*

If you're looking for "How Lovely Was The Morning: The Story of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," as Brother Brigham said, "This is the right place. Mouse on!"

I am happy to offer this free and ready-to-perform telling of the Joseph Smith story, in "Oratorio" or "Cantata" format, with narrators, soloists, chorus and chamber orchestra. Preparing this work has been one of the sweetest experiences of my life. I claim only the credit of being the simple cobbler who took materials given to him by night and assembled them by day--and sometimes late at night--into something hopefully pleasing to God and helpful to man in teaching and testifying of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each original song and each hymn arrangement has its own story, some given to me almost whole cloth, some requiring a little cobbling. To mention a few, "Small Hands" is a gift, inspired by a Dixie State College art tour (thank you Glen Blakely). "His One Begotten Son" is a gift given within an hour of learning that another song which I'd wanted to use had copyright issues. This setting of "Praise to the Man" is a gift given for stake conference choir. Sister Francene Rex's song, "Thy Perfect Lullaby," is based on her personal experience of having lost a child, like Emma. "May Thy Peace Be As The River" springs from a genuine desire to leave a blessing on all who attend, and this setting of "I Believe in Christ" is written as my personal tribute and thank you to Elder Bruce R. McConkie who penned the words.

The script too has its own story. The project began with the simple thought to write out the points I like to make when I tell the story. Slowly it grew, in pageantry yes, but more in making Joseph's story personal. With Joseph came Lucy, Joseph's mother, and Emma, "the choice of" his "heart." I hadn't thought to give Emma such a central role but it felt right. In our stake we chose a couple to narrate the presentation together.

Later came the thought that the story should include Joseph's friendship with Stephen A. Douglas, his prophetic statements regarding the future of the United States, and Brother Brigham's choice to lead our forebears out of Nauvoo and away from the pains of the prophesied civil war. Few of us appreciate how central "the Mormon question" was to the development of the early United States. I felt a need to include a small part of that story.

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A note about chapel appropriateness: if you intend to perform this in a meeting house chapel, clear it with your priesthood authorities. My intent was to create a chapel appropriate presentation with two possible exceptions: optional percussion on several songs, and a toe-tapping fiddle number as part of "A Night in Nauvoo." Both were acceptable for the inaugural performance in the Tabernacle in St. George, Utah. If necessary, for "A Night in Nauvoo" you can easily leave out the fiddle number and use only the men's quartet version of "Oh What Songs of the Heart."

Finally, a big thank you to everyone in the Washington Utah East Stake who helped with the inaugural performance, and a special thank you to my three muses:

My daughter Richelle--still a sparkly bubble of light and awe.

My son Richard--my percussionist, my tech expert, and the best and most courageous son a father could ever hope for.

My sweetheart Jolene--who teaches me what it must have been like for Joseph and Emma.

Ed Robbins

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