

Inspired Melody and Chosen Word: The Wedding of Music and Scripture in Leroy Robertson's *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*

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The *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* by Leroy Robertson is a dramatic presentation of certain events in the Book of Mormon which are portrayed by key personages and tied together by a compact narrative. As such, it resembles an unstaged opera. Robertson himself described it as “a fresh, new American approach to the greatest, age-old story ever told” and further stated that in this composition he hoped to

crystallize the powerful events concerning the prediction, the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Book of Mormon, at a high level of art which would give it [the story] a degree of permanence as a work.¹

Brief History of Its Composition

The idea for an oratorio based on material from the Book of Mormon was first planted in Robertson’s mind by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard circa 1919 when this high church dignitary chanced one day to sit by the young violin-toting musician during a ride to Salt Lake City on the old interurban train.² Although the concept never left him, Robertson was unable to begin serious and consistent work on the *Oratorio* until the 1940s. It was virtually completed in 1947 and premiered in 1953 by University of Utah choruses, the required soloists, and the Utah Symphony, all under the direction of Maurice Abravanel.³ It was recorded by a local company at that time, and then again in 1961 by Abravanel and his loyal forces under the auspices of Vanguard Recording Society, Inc. This latter recording gave the *Oratorio* national and international exposure and elicited widespread and favorable reaction.⁴

After Robertson’s death (1971), the *Oratorio* was performed for the first time by the Tabernacle Choir in 1978, again with the Utah Symphony, Abravanel conducting. It was also recorded once more, this time under the aegis of Columbia Records.⁵

From its inception, this work has met with unprecedented success. Beyond Utah it has been performed in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; Independence, Missouri; Rexburg, Idaho; and at the Old North Church in Boston, Massachusetts. It stands yet today as a landmark composition in the musical literature of both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and twentieth-century America.

Challenges of Composing This Oratorio

Once, when describing the composition of the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*, Robertson remarked: “As soon as I could get a libretto that would work, the music was there. I didn’t have to worry about the music at all.”⁶ With revealed scripture providing the basis for his text, one may naturally wonder what problems the composer could have faced in constructing his libretto.⁷

The fundamental challenge proved to be that of choosing material which would fit within the confines of a modern oratorio, i.e., Robertson needed a well-focused story of universal interest, clearly narrated, and expressed through powerful characters—all to be contained in a work of about an hour's duration. With the Book of Mormon story spanning about one thousand years (if we exclude the book of Ether), traversing the world from Jerusalem to America, and replete with innumerable events and impressive personages, the composer faced a text almost overwhelming in its scope. Only after many months, even years, of intensive daily study did Robertson decide which material would best suit his needs.⁸ Ultimately he chose what constitutes for many the apex of the entire Book of Mormon: the birth and death of Christ, and his appearance on the American continent as described in Helaman and 3 Nephi.

Having selected which events to depict, Robertson then had to arrange them in a logical sequence. This he outlined as follows:

Part I: The prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites concerning the birth and death of Christ.

Part II: The signs of the birth of Christ as witnessed by those on the American continent.

Part III: The signs of the death of Christ as witnessed by the Nephites, and Christ's ministry on the American continent.⁹

As the *Oratorio* unfolds, three characters emerge: Samuel the Lamanite; the Evangelist, who narrates some events and ties the story together; and Jesus Christ the Lord, who ministers to the Nephites and is worshiped in his glory. The Nephites are represented by the choruses.

Wedding the Words and Music

Robertson's ultimate and most detailed task—and one that likely came concurrently with making his outline—was to choose the pertinent passages from the Book of Mormon, put them in order, and then hone them line by line as he set them to the music that constantly came to his mind. He soon realized that he could not always follow the text exactly as written in the Book of Mormon, for whenever music enters the picture, both music and words must combine so as to enhance each other. Some astute and respectful adaptation of the scripture would be needed.

Therefore, two questions immediately arise: (1) What sort of adaptations did Robertson make? and (2) Did these adaptations in any way change the message of the Book of Mormon text?

A careful examination of Robertson's libretto reveals the following:

1. The composer abandoned all use of words in favor of the orchestra so as to express the mood of the event being depicted; or,
2. he followed the text exactly, making no changes whatsoever; or,
3. he repeated given words and phrases for emphasis; or,
4. he omitted a few words and phrases from the Book of Mormon text, usually to avoid repetition; or

5. he extracted salient phrases from many passages, which he then juxtaposed in order to condense and dramatize the events in question.

Throughout the score, Robertson conscientiously cited the exact scriptural reference for each line of his libretto, thereby leaving no doubt as to the original source (for this concordance, see the appendix, pp. 149–58).

Obviously, a word-by-word, line-by-line comparison of the entire libretto with the corresponding scriptural passages would far exceed the scope of this article.¹⁰ However, a brief analysis of a few illustrative passages will be given herewith as an indication of Robertson’s adaptation of the Book of Mormon text:

Abandoning words completely. A vivid example of using only the orchestra occurs at the very beginning of the *Oratorio*, where a brilliant introduction by full orchestra sets the stage for the work to follow.¹¹ In less than three minutes, Robertson evokes the turmoil, disobedience, pride, and anger then rampant among the Nephites—all described over many pages of Helaman. The listener awaits and is prepared for righteous Samuel’s bold entrance, which holds everyone spellbound (see below).

Robertson, again using only the orchestra, sets a very different mood when the rejected Samuel departs from the Nephites. Immediately following the Evangelist’s remorseful, “And he [Samuel] did go into his own country and was never heard of more among the Nephites,” the short, eloquent “Epilogue” ending Part I bespeaks Samuel’s sorrow for the Nephites’ attitude and the tragedies surely to befall them.¹²

Another orchestra number worthy of mention—if for no other reason than that it has gone on to have a life of its own apart from the *Oratorio*—is the “Andante” (or “Pastorale”) that concludes Part II.¹³ With this tender piece, Robertson depicts the miracle of Christ’s birth, which, in this setting, evokes the sweet calm and comfort of the Christ child’s loving spirit. Robertson had felt and had never forgotten this calm while herding sheep as a lad for his father in the Western Desert of Utah. Referring to a whispering clarinet figure in the “Andante,” he once remarked that it was like “a gentle wind blowing across the desert.”¹⁴

Keeping the original text intact. From among many passages, one may cite two wherein Robertson used the words exactly as printed in the Book of Mormon. The first is his well-known and much beloved setting of the Lord’s Prayer (see 3 Nephi 13:9–13; see also Matthew 6:9–13). Because both the text and music speak for themselves, any analysis or further discussion here would be superfluous.¹⁵

The other passage, however, deserves some comment because, for Robertson, it stood out as one of the most powerful utterances in the entire Book of Mormon. For this text, the composer provided only an accompaniment of organ chords. There is no tempo marking, hence the vocalist is free to express his own phrasing and feeling as full attention centers on the gravity of the words. Robertson marked this passage *serioso*. The source is 3 Nephi 26:3:

He [Christ] did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that He should come in His glory—Yea, even all which should come upon the face of the earth, until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away.¹⁶

Repeating words and phrases. Robertson repeated phrases in his libretto either to build or diminish momentum. One example of building momentum and emotion can be found during Samuel’s rebuke of the Nephites when he

predicts the destruction facing them unless they change their ways. At this point Robertson wrote a lament for the chorus—now representing the Nephites—in which the beginning phrase, “O that we had repented,” is sung four times; then, a few bars later, the plaintive line, “O that we had remembered the Lord our God” (Helaman 13:36, 33), is also sung four times, this time in imitation. In fact, nearly every phrase in this passage is repeatedly tossed back and forth throughout the chorus, even to the final lines:

O Lord, cans't Thou not take away Thine anger? O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, take away, away Thine anger, away. (Helaman 13:37)¹⁷

Another choral piece in which Robertson repeated phrases is found at the conclusion of Part I, Section 2, this time with a quiet, diminishing momentum. Samuel has just predicted the birth of Christ, which is to occur in five years, and concludes with these words of comfort: “And whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life” (Helaman 14:8). The believers confirm their feelings as they sing a soft lyrical melody, whose initial motif itself repeats, then finally fades away:

How beautiful upon the mountains, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings— How beautiful upon the mountain, How beautiful upon the mountain, the mountain, Are the feet of him, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, good tidings. (see 3 Nephi 20:40 and Isaiah 52:7)¹⁸

Omitting words and phrases. A good example of Robertson’s omitting words and phrases comes at the outset of the *Oratorio*, in Samuel’s rebuke to the Nephites (the asterisks [*] show where a word or phrase of the Book of Mormon text has been omitted from the libretto):

Behold, I, Samuel a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord,* And He hath put it into my heart to say* the sword of justice hangeth over this people. And four hundred years pass not away that the sword of justice falleth,* And heavy destruction awaiteth* and it surely cometh,* And nothing can save* but* repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, Who surely shall come into the world and be slain for His people. (see Helaman 13:5–6)¹⁹

At seven points in this passage, Robertson has omitted a word or phrase. At the first point, which comes immediately after Samuel’s bold introduction of himself, Robertson omitted this phrase: “which he [the Lord] doth put into my heart.” However, at this juncture, three brilliant bars in the orchestra are heard, which serve to punctuate Samuel’s announcement (as does the omitted phrase). Thus, in a sense, the music not only complements, but also replaces the text.²⁰ At the next five points, words referring to “this people” have been omitted.²¹ Sharp, very short chords in the orchestra punctuate each of these omissions. And with the strident and frightening orchestral flourish that follows the phrase, “the sword of justice hangeth over this people,” the music gives the needed emphasis, leaving no doubt as to whom Samuel’s message is directed.

In the last two lines of this passage, the tone of rebuke suddenly changes with Samuel singing a lyrical melody to a quiet string accompaniment, hinting at Christ’s forgiveness and suffering. At the last point, Robertson shortened the Book of Mormon’s “save it be” to “but.” This in no way changes the meaning and better suits the musical context.

Extracting pertinent phrases from several passages. Robertson usually extracted such phrases from long descriptive passages and then juxtaposed them so that the music would heighten the drama of the events narrated in the Book of Mormon. As an example, one may cite the beginning of Part III, where Robertson has taken some salient phrases from 3 Nephi 8:5–24 and put them together so as to present in a few lines the destruction witnessed by the Nephites at Christ’s death: the great storm and terrible tempest; the earth divided asunder; the people drowned, slain, and carried away in a whirlwind; the impenetrable mists of darkness; the Nephites crying: “O this day, this terrible day.”²² Needless to say, the music vividly depicts these events by creating the impressions of the storm, the whirlwind, the overpowering blackness. But one must hear these passages, for their effect cannot be adequately described.

For the “Finale” of the *Oratorio*, Robertson again employed this technique. From passages in 3 Nephi, Helaman, and Isaiah (as quoted in the Book of Mormon), he extracted four lines, as follows:

The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. (3 Nephi 16:20; see also 3 Nephi 20:35 and Isaiah 52:10)

All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (3 Nephi 20:35; see also Isaiah 52:10)

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. (3 Nephi 20:36; see also Isaiah 52:1)

Thy King cometh unto thee. (a paraphrase of Helaman 5:9)

To each of these lines the composer gave a distinctive melody, developing them one at a time, then putting them together, one after the other, to construct a great quadruple fugue.²³ The fact that these four short lines occupy twelve pages of the orchestra score bears witness to the extent and power of the music.²⁴

An extended “Glory” immediately follows this piece, with the music for this single word growing until it covers ten pages of the orchestra score.²⁵

The *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* then concludes with a resounding chorale setting of the Doxology, wherein the audience is invited to sing as well:

Glory unto the Father and the Son, Glory unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, As it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever, Is now and shall be forever. Amen. Amen.²⁶

Conclusion

Even as a youth, Leroy Robertson proved himself to be a master at setting words to music, and in the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*, he put those talents to a quintessential test. As the composer once stated, in fashioning this work, he indeed found “a beautiful wedding” of text and melody.²⁷ The foregoing analysis is but an attempt to show this linkage and may serve as a guideline to Robertson’s thinking. But truly, one must hear the *Oratorio* in order to feel its full effect and comprehend its meaning. Then does one come to realize how, by means of his music, Leroy Robertson celebrated the greatness of the scripture upon which it is based.

Samuel the Lamanite prophesies concerning the birth, death, and resurrection of the Christ. Samuel also rebukes the Nephites for their sins and prophesies their destruction.

Section 1

SAMUEL

Hel. 13:5 Behold, I, Samuel a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord.
And he hath put it into my heart to say that the sword of justice hangeth over this people,
And four hundred years pass not away that the sword of justice falleth,
6 And heavy destruction awaiteth and it surely cometh,
And nothing can save but repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who surely shall come into the world and shall suffer many things and be slain for His people.
7 For behold an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me,
And he did bring glad tidings to my soul.
And behold I was sent to declare it unto you that ye might also have glad tidings,
But ye would not receive me.
29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation,
Ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people,
How long do ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you.
22 Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you,
But ye do always remember your riches,
Yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord,
But they do swell with great pride unto boasting, envying, strife, malice, persecution and murder
and all manner of iniquity.
23 For this hath the Lord caused that a curse should come upon the land and also upon your
riches,
32 And in the day of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord, but in vain shall ye cry.
For your desolation is already come upon you and your destruction is made sure.
And then shall ye weep and howl in that day,
And then shall ye lament and say:

CHORUS

36 O that we had repented,
33 And not killed the prophets
And stoned them and cast them out.
O that we had remembered the Lord our God
In the day that He gave us our riches for our riches are gone.
36 O that we had repented.
37 Behold, we are surrounded by demons,
Encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls.
O Lord, can'st thou not take away Thine anger?
O Lord, take away Thine anger, away.

Section 2

SAMUEL

Hel. 14:2 Behold, I give unto you a sign;
For five years more then cometh the Son of God
To redeem all those who believe on His name
3 And at the time of His coming there shall be great lights in heaven
4 And the night shall not be darkened,
The night before He is born.
5 And behold, there shall a new star arise
6 And there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven.
7 And ye shall all be amazed and fall to the earth,
8 And whosoever shall believe on the Son of God
The same shall have everlasting life.

CHORUS

3 Ne. 20:40 How beautiful upon the mountain
(Isa. 52:7) Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.

Section 3

SAMUEL AND CHORUS

Hel. 14:14 Again, another sign I give unto you,
A sign of His death.
15 For He surely must die to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead
That thereby man may be brought into the presence of the Lord.
20 Behold in the day that He shall suffer death
The sun shall be darkened;
The moon and the stars shall refuse to give light unto you.
There shall be no light upon the face of the land
Even from the time that He shall suffer death unto the time that He shall rise again from the
dead.
21—23 There shall be thunderings and lightnings,
The earth shall shake and tremble.
The rocks broken up and mountains laid low,
27 And darkness shall cover the earth.
25 The graves shall be opened and yield up their dead.

EVANGELIST

Hel. 16:1 And there were many who heard the words of Samuel
Which he spake upon the walls of the city.
And they who believed on His name went forth
To be baptized unto the Lord.
2 But those who believed not were angry
And cast stones and shot arrows at him
As he stood upon the wall;
But the spirit of the Lord was with him
And they could not hit him with their stones and their arrows.
6 And when they saw this they cried unto their captains saying:

CHORUS

6 Take this fellow and bind him
For behold he hath a devil
And because of that power
We cannot hit him with our stones and our arrows.
Therefore take him and bind him,
Away with him.

EVANGELIST

7 And as they went forth to lay their hands upon him,
He did cast himself down from the wall
And did go into his own country,
And was never heard of more among the Nephites.

PART II

The birth of the Christ

Section 1**SOPRANO (or TENOR)**

Hel. 16:14 The angels did appear and declare glad tidings,
Glad tidings of great joy,
3 Ne. 1:4 And miracles were wrought among the believing.

Section 2**EVANGELIST**

Hel. 16:15 But those who believed not hardened their hearts and came to depend on their own strength
and wisdom.

23 For Satan did get hold upon them
3 Ne. 1:6 And they did rejoice over their brethren saying:

CHORUS

Your joy and your faith hath been vain.
The words of Samuel are not fulfilled.

Section 3**EVANGELIST**

3 Ne. 1:9 Now there was a day set aside by the unbelievers that all those who believed should be put to
death,

Except the sign should be given.

10 And now when Nephi saw this wickedness
His heart was exceedingly sorrowful,
11 And he went out and bowed himself upon the earth and cried to God.
12 Yea, he cried all the day.

And the voice of the Lord came unto him saying:

JESUS

13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer
For on this night shall the sign be given.

CHORUS

13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer,
For behold the time is at hand.
For on this night shall the sign be given.

EVANGELIST

15 And the words which came unto Nephi
Were fulfilled according as they had been spoken,
For at the going down of the sun
There was no darkness.

Andante for Orchestra

PART III

The death of the Christ
The ministry of the resurrected Christ upon the American continent
Prophecies from Isaiah as quoted in Book of Mormon
Gloria Patri
Amen

Section 1**RECAPITULATION SUNG BY SAMUEL**

3 Ne. 2:1 Now the people began to forget
The wonders from heaven

2 Saying they were wrought by man
And the power of the devil.
3 Ne. 8:5 There arose a great storm
6 And a terrible tempest
And the whole earth did quake
As if to divide asunder.
9, 15 And many were drowned and slain
16 And carried away in the whirlwind.
21 There could be no light
22 For so great were the mists of darkness.
23 There was mourning, weeping, howling and groaning,
For destruction had come upon them
24 And they were heard to cry:

CHORUS

24 O this day, this terrible day.
3 Ne. 9:2 The devil laugheth and his angels rejoice.
(The chorus and orchestra develop this text into a tumultuous climax after which the voice of the resurrected Christ is heard.)

JESUS

15 Behold I am Jesus Christ the Son of God.
I created the heavens and the earth
And all that in them are.
21 I have come to bring redemption
To save the world from sin
22 And whoso cometh to me as a little child
The same will I receive
For of such is the Kingdom of God.

Section 2

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

3 Ne. 11:1 A multitude gathered about the temple,
Wondering and marveling
One with another,
8 And they cast their eyes up to heaven
And saw the Lord descending.

EVANGELIST

16 And they cried with one accord:

CHORUS

17 Hosannah! Hosannah!
Blessed be the name of the most high God!

EVANGELIST

9 He stretched forth his hand and spake unto them:

JESUS

3 Ne. 9:18 I am the light of the world,
The beginning and the end.
22 I have laid down my life
And taken it up again
Therefore repent and come unto me.

Section 3

CHORUS—SOPRANOS AND ALTOS

3 Ne. 12:47 Old things are done away
(3 Ne. 15:3) All have become new
46 Fulfilled in the coming of our Savior.
45 The Father maketh his sun to rise
And smileth down in favor.

CHILDREN'S SOPRANO CHOIR

3 Ne. 17:9 They brought forth their lame, their blind and all that were afflicted,
And He did heal them.
12 Then they set their little children
Upon the ground about Him
14—15 And the multitude did kneel
As Jesus prayed.

CHORUS (The Lord's Prayer)

3 Ne. 13:9 Our Father who art in heaven,
—13
(Matt. 6:9—13)
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever.
Amen.

3 Ne. 17:24 They saw the heavens open,
Angels descending, encircling the children about,
Encircling the children about.

Section 4

3 Ne. 26:3 He did expound all things even from the beginning
Until the time that He should come in His glory.
Yea, even all which should come upon the face of the earth,
Until the elements should melt with fervent heat
And the earth be wrapt together as a scroll
And the heavens and the earth shall pass away.

Finale

CHORUS

3 Ne. 16:20 The Lord hath made bare His holy arm
(Isa. 52:10) In the eyes of all the nations.
All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God!

3 Ne. 20:36 Awake, awake, put on thy strength O Zion,
(Isa. 52:1)
Hel. 5:9 Thy King cometh unto Thee!
Glory!

Doxology: Glory unto the Father, unto the Son and the Holy Ghost.
Glory unto the Father and the Son,
Glory unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever!

CHORUS

World without end.
Amen.

Notes

1. Leroy Robertson, as quoted by L. Brent Goates, *Deseret News and Telegram*, 11 February 1953.

2. For details of this meeting, see Marian Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson: Music Giant from the Rockies* (Salt Lake City: Blue Ribbon Publications, 1996), 38.

In addition to the published text herewith cited, there is a companion manuscript, which, while having the same narrative, contains much more complete documentation comprised of many pages of extensive endnotes and eleven appendices. Copies of this companion manuscript can be found in the Special Collections and Manuscripts of the Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library, the Manuscripts Division of Special Collections at the University of Utah Marriott Library, and in the Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

3. To give a hint of the complexity and magnitude of a presentation of this *Oratorio*, here is a synopsis of Robertson's outline of the performers needed: The *Oratorio* is scored for a large mixed chorus, dividing into a double chorus and a children's chorus; soloists: bass baritone, baritone, tenor, and soprano; full orchestra as follows: three flutes (piccolo); two oboes (English horn); two clarinets in B-flat; two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns in F; three trumpets in B-flat; two trombones, bass trombone and tuba; timpani; percussion (three players); celesta, piano, harp, organ; and strings (i.e., a full complement of first and second violins, violas, 'celli, and basses). The entire work lasts a bit more than one hour. See Leroy Robertson, *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*, photocopy of the holograph score (henceforth referred to as orchestra score), notes penciled inside front cover. The holograph score can be found in the Leroy Robertson Collection in the Manuscripts Division of Special Collections at the University of Utah Marriott Library. Photocopies of it can also be found in the Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

4. For more details about the history of the *Oratorio* during Robertson's lifetime, see Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson*, 123–24, 141–42, 200–207, 215, 234, 248–52, 292, 298, and 309.
5. This performance and recording could only have occurred through the genial cooperation of Choir Director Jerold Ottley; the Choir management; the Utah Symphony management; the Choir-Symphony liaison, Herold Gregory; and Maurice Abravanel. The Tabernacle Choir-Utah Symphony recording was later released on cassettes. In 1996, the Vanguard recording was released on CD by Vanguard Classics. At present all recordings are sold out. For a discography, see Marian Robertson Wilson, "Leroy Robertson and the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*: Reminiscences of a Daughter," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999): 13.
6. Leroy Robertson, "Creativity in Music . . . Other Thoughts on Creativity" (unpublished reprint of manuscript from the Institute for Behavioral Research in Creativity, n.d.), 83. This piece was later edited and published in *Expanding Awareness of Creative Potentials Worldwide*, ed. Calvin W. Taylor (Salt Lake City: Brain Talent-Powers Press, 1990), 124–29.
7. Robertson's libretto is sufficiently original that when it became necessary to apply for a copyright, the First Presidency granted Robertson permission to copyright both the words and music in his own name. See David O. McKay, Stephen L Richards, J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The First Presidency*, letter to Leroy Robertson, 28 February 1955. Robertson's libretto has since become a standard for gauging the originality of other musical compositions based on scripture. See James Cohn, on behalf of ASCAP, letters to the author, 18 May 1979, 11 June 1979, and 11 October 1979. All these letters are in the Addendum to the Leroy Robertson Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.
8. These were the years when every night after supper, Robertson would take his well-worn copy of the Book of Mormon, go to his chair in the living room, and intently pore over the text, blocking out various passages for further consideration (author's memory). Robertson's copy of the Book of Mormon is now in the possession of his son, Jim (James Leroy).
9. Both Parts I and II are subdivided into three sections; Part III has four sections. See the entire text in the appendix.
10. Such an in-depth study would be of sufficient scope to merit a graduate thesis or postgraduate monograph.
11. For this attention-getting introduction, Robertson has all the strings play their notes *tremolo*; flutes have triplet figures; all the lower instruments, including organ, announce one of the main musical themes of the *Oratorio*, which is repeated and developed into a climax over twenty-two bars. See Robertson, orchestra score, 3–6.
12. Beginning softly with winds alone, then with strings, brass, and harp added, the musical theme heard at the *Oratorio's* outset is developed into a *fortissimo* climax that quickly diminishes to *pianissimo*. The entire passage is marked *espressivo*, then *espressivo molto*. See Robertson, orchestra score, 51–54.
13. Under the name "Pastorale," this piece quickly became a favorite of Maurice Abravanel, who often performed it in his concerts either as a programmed number or as an encore. It is, in fact, the slow movement from an earlier Robertson work, his *Symphony No. 1 (Desert Symphony)*, which he incorporated virtually intact into the *Oratorio*.
14. Leroy Robertson, remark to the author, ca. 1953.

15. For details about the inspired composition of this setting of the Lord's Prayer, and its subsequent popularity, see Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson*, 123–24, 236–37, and 298.
16. See Robertson, orchestra score, 135–36. Impressed by its depth, Robertson often recited this passage by heart to the author. It directly precedes and leads into the *Oratorio's* "Finale," an extended, heartfelt, ever-growing "Glory."
17. For music relating to this scripture and that of the foregoing paragraph, see Robertson, orchestra score, 15–29.
18. See *ibid.*, 32–34.
19. See *ibid.*, 6–9.
20. The author well remembers hearing her father sing forth these words as he sat one day in his living-room chair. Even in that quiet home, and without audible orchestral accompaniment, it was a benumbing, awe-inspiring experience to sense the power at hand.
21. The omitted phrases are, respectively: "unto this people," "upon this people," "this people," "unto this people," and "this people."
22. See Robertson, orchestra score, 96–109. Interestingly enough, Robertson has Samuel sing these descriptive passages as a recapitulation of his prophecy. Musical reasons also prevailed, for the composer needed a voice of this range and power and did not wish to introduce yet another evangelist as narrator. The Nephites are represented by the choruses.
23. The fugue is a centuries-old and well-recognized form of musical composition in which imitation figures prominently. A given theme—known as the subject—is introduced according to more or less strict rules, then developed according to the skills and imagination of the composer. In a quadruple fugue, four subjects are employed. For standard, academic analyses of this venerable musical form, see Ebenezer Prout, *Fugal Analysis* (London: Augener, 1892). For a masterful discussion highly prized by Robertson, see Iwan Knorr, *Lehrbuch der Fugenkomposition* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911).
24. See Robertson, orchestra score, 136–47.
25. See *ibid.*, 148–57.
26. See *ibid.*, 160–70. For the final "Amen," Robertson wrote a very low pedal note on "C" for the organ. When the great pipe that produces this sound is played, one can feel the vibration more than hear the note. With a slight smile, Robertson used to explain how he purposely held that note in reserve until the very end of the *Oratorio* in order to create this thrilling effect.
27. Robertson, "Creativity," 125.