



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
December 1, 2021

The Face of Fillmore is traditionally filled with music, especially during the Christmas season. This year a combined choir of older Primary children introduced the season with a performance in the Millard High Auditorium on November 21. “Children’s Prelude to Christmas”

The evening of the tree lighting ceremony was full of music with the Fillmore Middle School Sixth Grade Chorus performing in the city square to kick off the Christmas season celebration there. The lights in the park were lit and revelers enjoyed hot chocolate, donuts, and a visit with good ole St. Nick.



Pyper Stott models her costume at dress rehearsal.

On Monday, November 29, again at the high school, the Half Notes Girls Choir performed a family night Christmas devotional – Let There Be Joy! - to get everyone in the Christmas spirit. Under the direction of Lisa Crosland, this program was especially inspirational.

In the early days of Fillmore, choirs were well known throughout Utah for their musical expertise. The earliest of those was the Beeston Choir.

William Beeston was born in England in 1832 and converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1861. He was sent to Fillmore by Brigham Young in 1864. Soon after his arrival he recognized the musical talent in town and organized the choir which he would lead for 30 years. After just four years of practicing, the choir had the reputation of being one of the best in the territory. It continued under his direction until 1903. This was the beginning of great music in Fillmore.

Being the choir director was not an easy job. Beeston and his daughter Eliza would go to the church an hour before practice time, carrying armloads of music as well as a lantern to light their way in the dark, winter hours. They would light a fire to make sure the building was comfortable when the choir members arrived. He bought all of the music himself and even copied some of it by hand.



Kyra Moat, Aria Robison, and Lauren Christensen getting some help from last year’s choir member Bryn Rasmussen.

The choir was accompanied by the Mason and Hamblin organ which is now housed in the Territorial Statehouse Museum. This organ was very unusual. Middle “C” was not in the normal position in the center of the keyboard, but a few spaces to the left where “A” usually is located. This would have been a problem for many organists but not for Mr. Beeston who transposed the music to allow for that.

In 1893 the Beeston Choir was given special recognition. They were invited to sing “Song of Redeemed” by Evan Stephens with the Tabernacle Choir at the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple.

Other choirs from the Fillmore area have had the privilege of singing in Church conferences. In 1950 the Beehive Choir from the Millard Stake was invited by the General Board of the Mutual Improvement Association to sing at MIA General Conference. Under the direction of Marilyn Brunson with Marjorie Robison as their accompanist, the group sang at Barrett Hall and at the Tabernacle on Temple Square. This group of 100 young voices was the only single stake Beehive Chorus in the entire church. Over fifty years ago 24 Relief Society members from the Millard Stake sang as part of a larger choir for two sessions of General Conference in Salt Lake. Seven states participated and practiced regularly in Nephi under the direction of Florence Jepperson Madison.

While all of these performances are impressive memories of the talents here in town, Christmas music is still my favorite.

I am always excited when a group of carolers comes down our street. Last Christmas one group stopped their trailer in front of our house and sang just for us.

I look forward each Sunday to the favorite hymns of Christmas and the bells on the organ.

One of my favorite shopping trips to the grocery store here in town brought a great musical surprise a few years ago. While I walked down the aisle, a young person began to sing and was soon joined by others, in other aisles and soon the whole store was filled with “Sleighbells”.

One holiday tradition familiar to many is the annual performance of Handel’s Messiah, which is performed in both Fillmore and Delta spotlighting the amazing talents of our county singers and musicians. With CoVid still being widespread in our communities, the group opted to cancel this event as it did last year. These performances were begun in 1986 under the direction of Dallin Nielsen and Joe Moody, music educators in our county. It is hoped that this favorite will again return next year.

The Messiah has always been a special memory to me. As a teenager, I had the privilege with other musicians in the Price area of joining the string section from the BYU orchestra to accompany the community choir for the Messiah performances. I was new to my instrument, the bassoon, and felt very uncomfortable with the pages filled with notes and dozens of expert musicians. After weeks of practice, the time came. The whole experience was quite breathtaking, especially when we played the Halleluiah Chorus. I will admit, I omitted several of the notes that I couldn’t see through the tears.

May your Christmas season be filled with music!

