mormonartist

ISSUE 8

JANUARY 2010

Julie Wright

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: Robison Wells, Scott Jarvie, Jonathan Hoffman, Crawford Gates, Tomoko Shimada, Matt Whitaker, and Michael Flynn, with an essay by Jon Ogden and a review of *An Offering to Please God.*

mormonartist

COVERING THE LATTER-DAY SAINT ARTS WORLD

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CONTACT US
WEB MORMONARTIST.NET
EMAIL EDITOR@MORMONARTIST.NET

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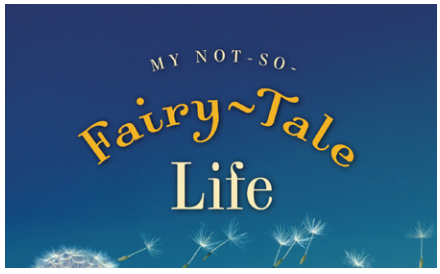


Editor's Note

With the new year, we've realized that publishing Mormon Artist four times a year just wasn't enough. As of our next issue in April, we'll be back on a bimonthly frequency (apologies to the catalogers who'll have to deal with this) and will remain that way (really). Publishing every other month will let us feature more people, which is what we're all about, after all.

We also saw that there's a lot of Mormon arts news that we aren't able to cover in the magazine simply because we still only go to press every two months and because the magazine can't be infinitely long. But a blog can. So, we've resurrected our blog at http://blog.mormonartist.net and we'll be blogging about events (like the 24-hour filmmaking marathon at the LDS Film Festival a few weeks ago), previously featured artists (to see what they're up to nowadays), contests, Mormon arts-related blogs and sites, and much more.

You may have noticed that our issues haven't followed any specific themes or topics other than Mormon arts in general. Starting with our next issue, however, that will only be half true. We have three themed issues coming up this year: New York City (April), pageants (June), and international Mormon arts (October). We'll also have three regular issues in January (this one), August, and December.

You know, I'm continually blown away by how many Latter-day Saints there are in every single creative discipline — and not only that, but by how good their work is. Thanks to all of you who make this magazine possible.

— Ben Crowder

Submission Guidelines

LITERATURE

PERSONAL ESSAYS, POETRY, SHORT STORIES
NO LONGER THAN 1,500 WORDS

SUBMIT WORD/PDF TO
literature@mormonartist.net

VISUAL & APPLIED ARTS

PAINTINGS, ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS
NO LARGER THAN 1 MB

SUBMIT THUMBNAIL JPEGS TO
visarts@mormonartist.net

MUSIC & DANCE

SONGS, COMPOSITIONS, DANCE VIDEOS
NO LONGER THAN 5 MINUTES

NOTE: FOR VIDEOS, SEND US A LINK TO YOUR VIDEO, NOT THE VIDEO FILE ITSELF. THANKS!

SUBMIT MP3/LINK TO
music@mormonartist.net

FILM & THEATRE

SHORT PLAYS, SHORT FILMS
NO LONGER THAN 15 PAGES/15 MINUTES

NOTE: FOR FILMS, SEND US A LINK TO YOUR FILM, NOT THE VIDEO FILE ITSELF. THANKS!

SUBMIT WORD/PDF/LINK TO
film@mormonartist.net

GENERAL NOTES

WORK IN ANY GENRE IS FINE AS LONG AS IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR AN LDS AUDIENCE.
ANYTHING YOU SUBMIT MUST BE YOUR OWN WORK.
SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSIONS ARE FINE.
IF YOUR SUBMISSION HAS BEEN PUBLISHED BEFORE, LET US KNOW.

QUESTIONS?
editor@mormonartist.net

mormonartist:
A Sign We're Arriving

ESSAY BY **JON OGDEN** | JONBLOGDEN.COM

Like hundreds of thousands of starry-eyed teens since the Beatles mopped the States with their gleeful ditties, I joined a rock band in junior high school. And like hundreds of thousands of starry-eyed teens since the Beatles, we were altogether unqualified for the part. We performed a few incoherent covers — U2's "With or Without You" (a song two octaves beyond my vocal range) and Pink Floyd's "In the Flesh" — but we really aimed to write our own stuff.

So when I wrote my first song for our band — a masterpiece that in one earnest verse rhymed "broad sword" with "fjord" — I felt a sense of elation. I decided that if I could write rock songs with Church-approved lyrics, or even better, lyrics that channeled my testimony, I could revolutionize the world; I could tug thousands of listeners toward Mormonism.

It wasn't a bad impulse, but as I began crafting churchy songs and listening to EFY music for the first time, I noticed (with some exceptions[1]) that even though I *wanted* to listen to and write overtly Mormon music, I mostly kept listening to the melodies and rhythms and metaphors of secular artists. I certainly wasn't morally opposed to the stuff on the EFY albums, nor was I listening to secular music to rebel (unless Paul Simon or Cat Stevens is rebellious listening). What my introduction to EFY music did, more than anything, was cause me to question what good Mormon art is.

It's a complex question, one I'm still wrestling with to this day and will likely wrestle with for a lifetime. It's also the central question that this magazine, *Mormon**Artist,*** works to answer. These interviews and articles, at their core, have been exercises in pinpointing what good Mormon art is.

Additionally, there's an argument in the magazine title's design, intended or not, that has helped me better understand how Mormons should approach art. The bolded word **artist** in the design raises an intriguing question: What makes someone a Mormon**artist**? While there are likely hundreds of answers to that question, I believe that Mormon**artists** are Mormons who create art with the primary intent to push at the frontier of the worldwide artistic endeavor (meaning that *as artists* they value aesthetics, inventiveness, etc. over didacticism), while **Mormon**artists are Mormons who create art with the primary intent to win converts or help troubled teenagers.

There's potentially a lot of overlap between these two terms. In many cases art created with

*Whether we celebrate **Mormon**art or Mormon**art,** "Mormon" comes first.*

1 Peter Breinholt's "What About," Jon Schmidt's "Waterfall," and Tyler Castleton's "One Voice," among others, stand out.

an overt agenda is also inventive and artistically compelling (think about "Because I Have Been Given Much" or "I Know that My Redeemer Lives," among many other hymns). It's clear from hundreds of examples that being a Mormon**artist** doesn't mean shying away from Mormon topics. It just means that while creating art, the Mormon**artist** favors artistry over orthodoxy. Mormon**artists** — and I'd put some overtly Mormon artists like Mack Wilberg in this category — hope that their art will lead people to goodness and that in turn it will lead them to the Church, but they don't produce art primarily for the purpose of winning converts — they seem intensely and primarily interested in artistry. This is a good thing.

We Mormons have the same expectations of Church members in almost all other professions. We expect, for instance, that dentists will favor dentistry over promoting religious orthodoxy while they are at work. To illustrate, we don't expect dentists to give the missionary discussions to clients strapped, mouths agape, in the dentist chair. Nor do we expect accountants to slip copies of their testimonies in with their client's tax returns. Dentists and accountants may be inspired in certain instances to share their beliefs, but we generally don't expect such acts to be a mainstay of their professions. We shouldn't expect it from artists either.

While the dentist and accountant analogies admittedly have some flaws — working with teeth or numbers is morally neutral in ways that creating art can't be — I believe that Mormon culture will produce better art the more we (consumers and creators) long for Mormon**artists**. I believe this in part because it seems that President Kimball had Mormon**artists** in mind in his legendary (at least in artistic circles) talk, "The Gospel Vision of the Arts."

When President Kimball envisioned the day when our artistic talents will flourish until "the eyes of all the world will be upon us," he couldn't have been calling for more **Mormon**artists. If the world generally rejects our orthodoxy, they won't be sold on a piece of art simply because it conveys our orthodoxy with terrific clarity. They will be drawn to it, as they were drawn to Shakespeare and Milton, because the artistry is nonpareil. Like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the content of the art President Kimball envisioned might very well be religious in nature, but it will not be lauded because it mirrors the common religious tenets of the time. It will be lauded because, like *Paradise Lost*, it will contain brilliant psychological insights and because it will push at the frontier of a long artistic tradition. Such art, again, will not be primarily concerned with preaching orthodoxy as much as it is concerned with artistic innovation. "Make it new" has been the motto, whether realized or not, for all memorable artists throughout history. All memorable artists have caused us to see the world anew.

When President Kimball said that "if we strive for perfection — the best and greatest — and are never satisfied with mediocrity, we can excel," he was likely referring to artistry. When he said, "to be an artist means hard work and patience and long-suffering," he was likely referring to what it takes to achieve true artistic talent, not what it takes to accurately convey orthodox messages. His vision was for Mormon**artists**.

I should reiterate that I'm not arguing for a retreat from Mormon themes in art. I'm thinking of the fantastic musician Sufjan Stevens, an artist who does not shy away from subtly visiting Christian themes in his songs while making innovative contributions to contemporary music (his album *Illinois* was deservedly on nearly every major list for the decade's best albums.) The artists interviewed in this magazine have struck a similar balance in their respective genres. *Mormon**Artist*** is a sign we're arriving.

Finally, I'm not arguing that artists should get so caught up in their work that they soften their commitment to Mormonism. After all, whether we celebrate **Mormon**art or Mormon**art**, "Mormon" comes first. I believe that at church meetings all Mormon artists should be **Mormon**artists, the same way all church-goers put aside their profession on Sunday.

Who knows — Mormons could lead the next century in intelligent and innovative rock music. I hope that *Mormon**Artist*** will help bring it about. The rock world is ready for a band of Mormon artists as innovative and as universally appealing as the Beatles. We certainly have the suit and tie thing down pat. ▪

FILM REVIEW

An Offering to Please God: Bringing the Music of Bali to BYU

BY **MYRNA LAYTON**

Student film directors Valerie Charlton and Heidi Hansen were thrilled when their professor Robert Walz offered them the chance to learn about creating documentary film by acting as directors of a BYU news documentary entitled *An Offering to Please God: Bringing the Music of Bali to BYU*. Valerie, who has a huge CD collection and very eclectic taste in music, commented that while she definitely wanted the experience of making a documentary, the fact that it would be about music made the project even more appealing. Valerie and Heidi have created an important documentary which introduces the music of the gamelan within the context of religious life in Bali, where 93% of the people follow Hinduism and the name of the island itself denotes *offering*.

It all started when BYU's College of Fine Arts approached Robert Walz, assistant professor of communications at BYU, with the request to produce a documentary — the decision had been made that the university would be getting a gamelan, so why not begin at the beginning and make a documentary about the process? Walz was intrigued with the idea. During the summer of 2008, he and his colleague Dale Green, an Emmy-award winning photographer, traveled to Bali with Dr. Jeremy Grimshaw, ethnomusicologist in BYU's School of Music, to learn about and record gamelan music in its home setting and to observe and record the creation of the custom-made gamelan instruments for BYU. Unfortunately, Bali was on the do-not-travel list at the time, so no students were able to participate in the travel experience, but once the gamelan arrived at BYU, Walz involved Charlton and Hansen in the project.

The word *gamelan* refers to a set of musical instruments that are a distinct entity, created and tuned to be played together. In Balinese gamelans, instruments are paired, and the tuning of each twin is deliberately a little bit "off" so that when they are played together, an acoustic beat occurs, creating the shimmery sound that is unique to the Balinese gamelan. Not only are Balinese craftsmen concerned about musical sound, but every available space on the instruments is elaborately carved. The Balinese believe that empty spaces should be filled with beauty, so that there is no room for evil. The carvings depict scenes from the Hindu Ramayana, although for BYU's gamelan Mormon iconography — specifically the Nauvoo temple sunstone — has been incorporated into the carvings on the gamelan instruments.

KYLE CLAWSON

RIGHT: ERIC TORRIE
BELOW: TANIELLE BENCH ALVAREZ

Charlton and Hansen filmed BYU's Gamelan Bintang Wahyu in rehearsal and performance and interviewed members of the gamelan: students who are music majors, engineering majors, biochemistry majors, etc., who comment on why participating in Balinese gamelan is meaningful to them. They mention the opportunity to participate in the musical traditions of another culture as an initial reason, but they quickly learn to appreciate the importance of cooperation. Cooperation is a vital aspect of Balinese culture, from sharing water for crops to flying kites to producing gamelan music. In the latter, cooperation is imperative, as the *kotekan* or melodies and harmonies of the gamelan require cooperation to create. One person cannot do it alone.

Gamelan Bintang Wahyu's March 2009 performances at Holi, the Festival of Colors, at Utah's Sri Sri Radha Krishna Temple are featured in the documentary. Although Krishna's Hinduism is not precisely the same as the Hinduism of Bali, they are related. Caru Das of the Krishna Hindu Temple explains stories behind some of the carvings on the gamelan instruments, particularly one about a turtle whose life and death illustrate the maxim that pride goeth before a fall. Gamelan practitioners have only to look at the carvings on their instruments to be reminded of the importance of living virtuous lives.

Balinese composer and gamelan expert I Ketut Gede Asnawa is also featured in the film, explaining the importance of *rasa*, the ability to communicate emotion through music. Viewers can see that happen for the members of Gamelan Bintang Wahyu in their performances, and for Valerie Charlton and Heidi Hansen in their fabulous work of art about the gamelan, *An Offering to Please God*, which I highly recommend. ▪

KYLE CLAWSON

Julie Wright

INTERVIEW BY **KATHERINE MORRIS** | PHOTOS BY **TIFFANY TERTIPES**

WEB: **JULIEWRIGHT.COM** | TWITTER: **@SCATTEREDJULES**

Julie Wright is the author of To Catch a Falling Star, Loved Like That, My Not-So-Fairy-Tale Life *and* Eyes Like Mine.

How did you get started writing?

In seventh grade, my teacher, Mrs. Brown, asked us to keep little "writing journals." One day she asked me to stay after class. I was terrified. I thought I'd done something wrong and was now in huge trouble. I spent the whole class worrying over what I could have done to earn the punishment of staying after. I trudged to the front of the classroom and said, "You wanted to see me?" She pulled out my writing journal and told me I was a beautiful writer and that I had talent. No one had ever told me I had talent, of any kind, in my entire life. It was a big moment for me.

Later, in tenth grade, another teacher told me I wasn't much of anything special. He told me I'd never be a writer. I started writing my first book out of spite toward him. That book went on to be published and won the best fiction award with my first publisher.

So I guess you could say I got started because of others: one who told me I could and another who told me I couldn't. It's a good lesson to beware who you listen to.

How long did it take you to write your first book, and what was it like getting it published?

I wrote the first sixty pages of my book when I was fifteen, then I got lost in the story and didn't know where to go next, so I fiddled with it for several more years. Fiddling isn't the same thing as writing and it took a long time to finish the novel. During that time, I had to grow up and get some real life experience. I was twenty-four when I finished it. Wow, that sounds horrible! Nine years? I'm sure glad it hasn't taken that long for any of the others! Getting published wasn't as easy as I'd thought. I received three rejection letters that sent me to the depths of despair, and then a fourth letter saying yes. That

first publication was a great stepping stone for me — I don't think I could have moved forward as a writer and improved in that area of my life without that first taste of validation. I never would have been able to handle the vastness of the national market without it.

Your young adult novel *My Not-So-Fairy-Tale Life* deals with a young woman's decision about whether or not to give her child up for adoption. How did you get the idea for that story and what was it like researching and writing it?

My Not-So-Fairy-Tale Life is actually a spin-off from that first book I wrote when I was fifteen. One of the characters in the book was horrible. My aunt called me one day and said, "You made Suzie so bad. You really made me hate her. It would really show some real skill as a writer if you could write a book about her and make me love her." The idea fascinated me and I began Suzie's story.

Writing Suzie's story and doing research to make it as realistic as possible was heartbreaking. So many women find themselves in situations similar to Suzie's, and they feel so entirely alone. I wanted to show them they weren't alone — that there is a world of people waiting and wanting to help. There were many times where my husband would come into the room to find me sobbing over my manuscript. He'd ask what was wrong and I'd blubber about just how sad the story was, and how it just broke my heart. He'd then, with a look of absolute confusion, say, "You do know you're making this up, right? You do know she isn't real and that all these sad things aren't really happening and that because you're making them up, you can take them out if you think they're too sad."

He still makes fun of me over that. But I couldn't have changed the story. Being the author doesn't mean I'm in control of the things my characters do. I also cried a lot while writing *Eyes Like Mine.* Cried and laughed. What fun is any story if you can't do a little of both?

What kind of feedback have you gotten from readers on *My Not-So-Fairy-Tale Life* as well as your other novels?

My Not-So-Fairy-Tale Life and *Eyes Like Mine* have received the best feedback, and they deserve it the most, so it's fair. Both books tap into raw emotion and humanity at its best and worst. I am always amazed by the e-mails from people who walk away from these books feeling like I've written their own personal stories. *Eyes Like Mine* is a little more exciting for me because the fan e-mails all profess a desire to learn more about ancestry and to work on genealogy. I love genealogy and it's exciting to be able to share that love while entertaining and connecting with the reader at the same time.

You're currently working on a fantasy series and a science fiction series for young adults. How has this experience been different from previous projects?

I love reading science fiction and fantasy. Because of that, it's only natural that I gravitated toward writing it as well. Writing fantasy and science fiction isn't really all that different, but it allows a creative flexibility that writing contemporary fiction doesn't have. In contemporary fiction, I am bound by the rules of the world we live in. In fantasy or science fiction, I am bound by the rules of the worlds the characters live in, but *I* get to make up the rules of those worlds. It is awesome to build societies with histories and legends. The book I'm working on now has such a rich heritage and backstory that I'll very likely have to write that

It's amazing what you can do a little at a time if you're consistently doing it every day.

into its own book. These genres allow me to tap into myths, legends, and mysteries that fascinate me, and allow me all the wonder of exploring the possibilities of "what if . . . ?"

Some of your new books are written for the national market. How does writing and publishing in a national market differ from your experiences writing and publishing in the Mormon market?

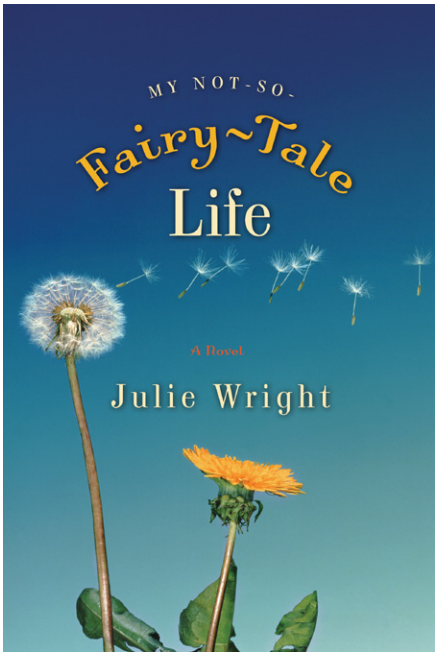
I made a vow a long time ago, before I even had children, that I would never write anything that I'd be ashamed to have my daughter read. So it isn't like I have to edit myself more for one market than another. I start with a character or idea and follow the path that character or idea leads me, whether I'm writing in or outside my own culture. So as far as writing goes, nothing's really different — publishing, however, has been different. In the national market, it's important to have an agent. In the local market, an agent would not be of much use. I am genuinely grateful for my agent and all she does to help my national career. She has been invaluable in guiding me through the national market and helping me to understand how things work.

How has being involved with LDStorymakers influenced you as a writer?

LDStorymakers has been my own personal writing Shangri-La. They are cheaper than paying a therapist and more effective, too. They influence me in every way for the better. I've made some of my very closest friends through writing and LDStorymakers. These are the people who cheer me on when I succeed, mourn with me when I fail, and offer to help hide bodies for me when I'm angry. They are the first to learn when I have news of any kind — be it good or bad. We trade manuscript edits. They save me from embarrassing myself in print and offer me insights into writing, publishing, and marketing books. I don't think I would be who I am today without them. I can never repay them for all they are.

How do you balance your work, church, and family responsibilities with your writing?

James Christensen has a painting called the "Balancing Act." Sometimes I think of that painting when I feel like I'm juggling too much and laugh at the appropriateness of such a painting — hoping I don't accidentally drop a teacup full of piano practices, or a plate of Boy Scouts. When I'm at book signings, I always have at least one person confess his or her desire to someday write a book "when I find the time." I have found that people *make* time for whatever is important to them — whatever that may be. Writing is my important



JULIE WRIGHT

thing. I am happier when I'm moving forward with a book. I'm a better wife, mother, church member, neighbor, friend, and worker when I'm writing. Writing is important enough to make time for in my life.

Even if I only progress a little bit each day, even if I can only write one sentence, that's a sentence more than I had the day before. I can always find at least fifteen minutes a day — fifteen minutes of writing a little at a time.

It's amazing what you can do a little at a time if you're consistently doing it every day. I can write a whole page in my fifteen minutes a day. By the end of the year I have at least 300 pages — that's a whole book!

What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

Don't give up. That doesn't mean it's easy. Giving up is easy; not giving up is hard. Some days you might have to make the decision to not give up several times.

Write one book, work on getting it published, and then while you're waiting for responses from publishing houses, get busy and write another book.

Jessica Day George is one of my favorite authors and dearest friends. She has a stack of rejection letters. Obviously, those publishers and agents were insane, because everything she writes is amazing. She is a great author.

Lots of great authors get rejected before they are discovered. The gatekeepers of agents and slush pile readers are human, after all. They have bad days and different tastes.

A rejection really isn't personal. It *feels* personal, but it isn't. Of course it hurts. Cry yourself to sleep if you have to, eat your favorite comfort food, and get over yourself so you can get back to what's important — the writing.

How do you see your work as a writer helping to build the kingdom?

I think we each have gifts that we bring to the table of humanity that can lift each other up. I can't cook, sew, paint, sing, or do anything else like that. I can't provide those things for myself, but am glad to be able to enjoy them when others use their talents. Writing is something I can bring to the table and share with everyone else. If we all bring out our talents and lay them on the table for everyone to share and partake in, we all walk away full.

As a young woman, some of my first real connections to the gospel were through books other authors wrote about LDS characters. Through those novels, I was able to find my own place. I am grateful to those authors for helping me on my journey to gaining a testimony. I hope, if even in some small part, that I can provide that same experience for someone else.

Other than writing "until they pry the pen from my cold, dead fingers," do you have any other goals or dreams as a writer that you would like to see fulfilled before you die?

It used to be the goal to be published. Once I got there, I found I'd made lots of friends in the writing world whom I wanted to be with — doing whatever they were doing. Some of my very best friends are authors, and I can no longer imagine a life without them. I write to have the excuse to be where they are, to not be left behind as they move forward in their careers.

Oh yeah, and I still want to win the Whitney and the Newbery . . . *and* I want to be on the New York Times Bestseller List.

So, dreams are definitely still out there. I think everyone needs to continue growing in dreams, otherwise where is the adventure of progression? ▪

Eyes Like Mine

AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL BY **JULIE WRIGHT**

1852

Constance bolted upright. "What was that?"

Another crack of thunder pealed through the night as lightning flickered brief illumination to the darkness of the wagon.

"Just a storm, love." In the snatch of light, she saw William pull a suspender strap over his shoulder.

"Where are you going?"

"I heard the horses. They must've broken their tethers."

Constance leaned back on her elbows. "Do you need help finding them?"

"No. You sleep. I'll be back soon." His kiss missed its mark on her forehead and caught part of her eyebrow. She smiled out at the darkness and laid her head back down, grateful for more sleep.

The wagon shuddered as more thunder cracked through the sky, and the baby whimpered. William stretched his hand into the basket beside their bedding and whispered soothingly to the infant. He hummed a lullaby until she stopped fussing. Constance liked to hear him sing and was disappointed he only hummed the tune. His English brogue charmed her, far more than the clipped, perfect English she'd been raised to speak. Her father would have called William's speech, "the peasant's language." If he hadn't already exiled her for her choice in religion, her father would have exiled her for her choice of husband.

Constance caught his strong shape silhouetted against the flash of lightning as he opened the flap of the wagon. "Keep my place warm for me, love."

She smiled again, thinking the words, *I will,* before drifting back to sleep.

* * *

Constance awoke with a start in the dim early morning light; her heart raced. While she struggled to understand why she woke with such fear, Eliza cried from her basket. Constance picked up the wailing child and settled in to nurse the infant.

And then she realized how cold it felt beside her. Her hand probed the blankets. The quilts were empty. "Where's your father?" she said to Eliza.

Memories rushed her mind. She had been

exhausted. There had been lightening, thundering . . . horses . . .

The horses. William had not returned from searching after the horses!

She rubbed at her temple. He could have been struck by lightening, or thrown off one of the horses. Or perhaps Indians attacked him.

She was on her knees and settling Eliza back into her basket so she could go searching. She slipped her feet into her shoes, and crawled out of the wagon. Her eyes picked through the morning shadows of wagons and others in the wagon company as they busied themselves with morning chores.

He wasn't there.

One of their horses, a paint mare, grazed in the field just beyond her own wagon. She walked quickly to the horse, and picked up the frayed leather reins. The horse switched her tail, continuing to graze, unconcerned with Constance's presence.

Constance gripped the thin leather straps. "William!" she shrieked to the morning as it closed in around her.

* * *

Constance drew a deep chilling breath. Two days. He'd been missing for two days.

The night smelled clean with the fresh rain. "William!" The cold air burned her throat — now raw from yelling — and made her teeth ache. "William!" she called again. The wind whispering over the field grass was the only answer. Her chest constricted against the sob she'd been holding.

Searching alongside others from their company, they'd removed themselves far from the camp. But the hills and river beds revealed no clues as to where her husband could be.

The captain of the wagon company, Brother Smoot, appeared more nervous with every passing hour. He kept frowning and looking upward as though he expected the sky to fall on them for continuing the delay.

Constance knew what he wanted to say when he came near enough to speak — though they felt her pain, though they loved her husband like a brother, they had to give up the search for him and continue their trek across the plains to meet the Saints in Zion.

But each time he made his approach, he faltered. His shoulders would slump as if he had battled against the fear in her eyes and lost. Instead, he would offer words of encouragement and hope. And the search continued. The rest of the company had been sympathetic and given her their full support in looking for William. Some of the older girls in the Hatch family and the Nielson family had taken turns watching Eliza, while Constance joined the men to scour the hills and riverbeds for any sign of William.

Constance drew a cold, ragged breath. Where could he have gone? What ill fate could have befallen him? She thought again of the lightening. If he'd been struck . . .

"No. I will not think on it." She bit into her lips and closed her eyes against the images in her mind.

Brother Smoot interrupted her mutterings with a soft clearing of his throat. "We cannot wait any longer," he said, not meeting her gaze. She tried to stand in front of him, tried to make him look into her eyes, hoping that if he could see her pain one more time, he would change his mind.

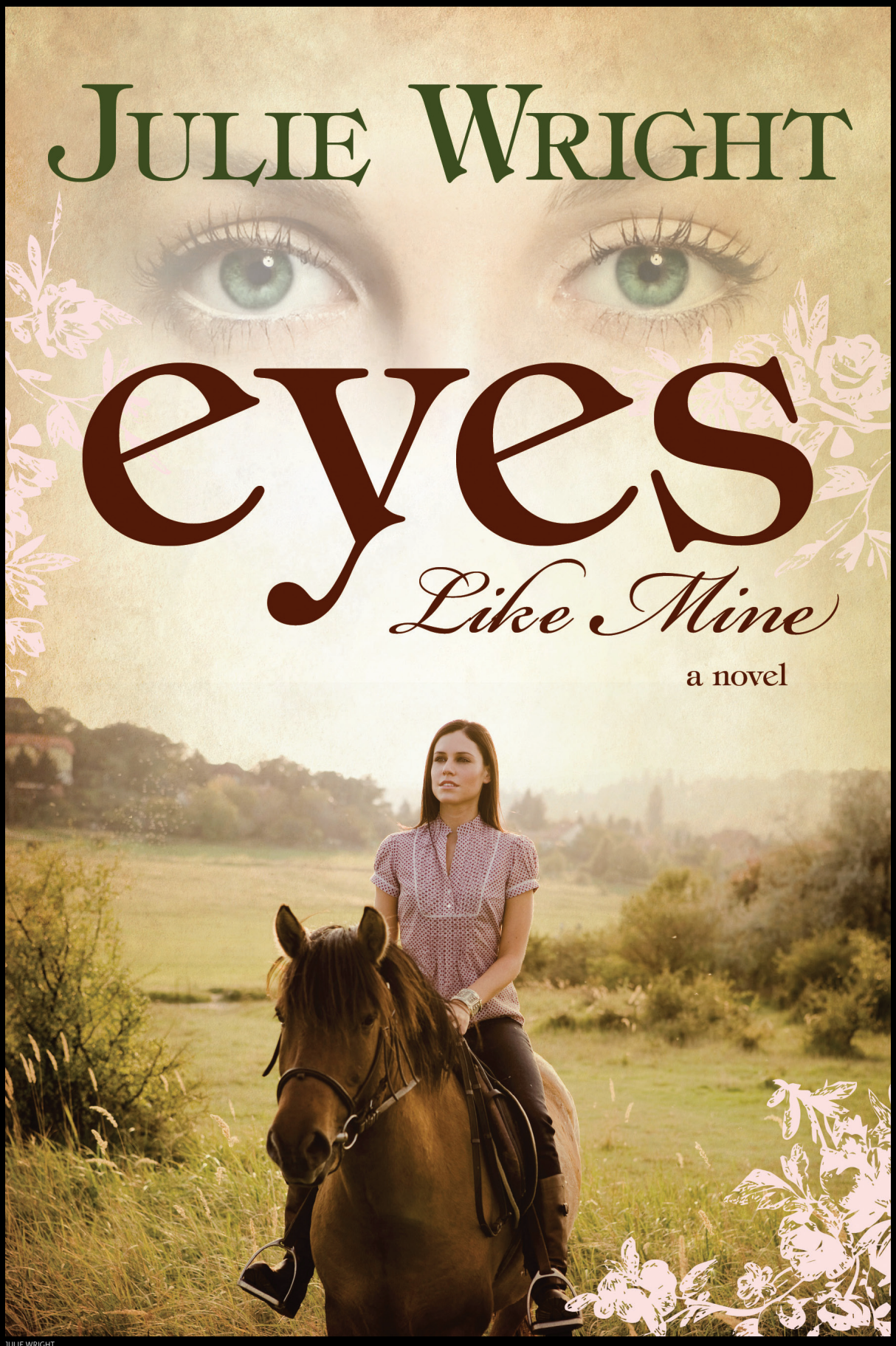
His chapped lips pressed into a thin firm line before he went on. "We've delayed so much already. Food rations are low; I fear there won't be enough to last us to the end of our journey. I am so sorry . . . so sorry." His voice cracked at the last. "I wish I could do more for you, Sister." He briefly put his hand on her shoulder, still not looking her in the eyes. He turned and walked away.

Constance felt empty as she followed them back to the wagons and made her way to her own empty wagon. She knelt on her blankets and poured out her heart in prayer. "Lord? What would you have me do?" Her mind felt numb. She had never felt so alone in her life. Even when she had been cast off from her family in England and all of her letters were returned unopened from her mother, she had not felt this alone. Had God abandoned her?

"What direction should I go? What, Lord, do you want of me? I have done everything you've asked. Everything. I've left everything I loved, yet found new love, then *he* is torn from me as well. Still you want more of me!" She shouted the last, and knew the other families in their wagons would hear, but she didn't care. Many nights, others in the company cried over the loss of a child or an elderly parent due to sickness or other misfortune. Would they judge her for giving in to the weakness of her own despair?

Thoughts of her infant daughter filled Constance with grief. Eliza would never know her grandmother or aunt . . . and now, was she to grow not knowing her own father?

"It isn't worth it, Lord." She allowed her thoughts to drift to her own mother and to all the trials she'd overcome to get to this very point. "I don't care what Zion is anymore. It could be more beautiful than Eden and it would not be worth it. I cannot leave him. To go on without him would be wretched enough to blind me to any beauty Zion might hold. I'll not go another step!" The blasphemy tasted bitter on her tongue.



JULIE WRIGHT

Constance buried her face in her pillow to muffle the sounds of her crying. And though she never finished her prayer vocally, in her heart she continued pleading for a miracle. With no way of knowing what time it was, she slipped out of her wagon, bundled a blanket around her, and walked. She was not leaving with the company . . . not without her husband.

* * *

2010

"Liz! Sister Peterson's on the phone!"

Liz rounded the corner and glared at her mom through the banister poles at the top of the stairs. She shook her head violently, trying to get it through her mom's head that there was *no way* she was talking to Sister Peterson or anyone else from the Young Women's presidency.

Her mother held the phone to her chest to muffle her words. "*Now*, Liz."

Liz shook her head again and mouthed the word, "No."

With a deep breath, Clair King put the phone back to her ear. "I'm sorry, Sister Peterson, Liz refuses to come to the phone right now. You know how teenagers are . . ."

"Mom!" Liz hissed in disbelief.

When her mom hung up, she folded her arms across her chest. "What?"

"Why would you tell her that?"

"What did you think I was going to do? Lie to her for you?"

Liz's green eyes flashed. "It would have been more tactful."

"Tactful would be coming to the phone when you get a call."

"She was going to ask me to sing. I'm not singing in the sacrament program."

"Why?" Her mother met her glare, but Liz saw that the green eyes were tired and her heart wasn't in the fight Liz insisted on battling.

"They're singing the song *Families Can Be Together Forever*."

"So?"

"So, it's not true. *You* said I should never lie."

Clair rolled her eyes, and jerked a hand through her short hair. "You're just being difficult. It is too true."

"It isn't for *me*. Not anymore. So forget it. I'm not singing."

Her mother pressed her palm to her forehead. With her other hand she clutched the emerald necklace hanging at her throat, as though it could offer some magic to quell Liz's growing resentment. Liz snorted at that. No necklace could fix their family no matter where it came from. The emerald stone was part of the family inheritance that would be passed to Liz when her mom died. Her mom said it was fitting since Liz had already inherited her mom's green eyes and dark hair. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"Talk about what?"

"Your father."

"No. He's a lousy, stupid, cheating son of a — "

"Eliza Josephine King!"

"Gun, Mom. Son of a gun. I'm still not singing."

"Then you can explain that to Sister Peterson when you get to church today."

* * *

Liz showered and dressed for church slowly. After the phone call, she wanted to stay home and pretend to be sick. She wouldn't really have to fake much either. The idea of facing Sister Peterson after her mom said Liz wouldn't come to the phone made her want to throw up.

When she went downstairs to fix some toast, her mom interrupted any idea of breakfast. "Come here. I want to show you something." Clair turned and went down the hall, leaving Liz with no choice but to follow. Liz sighed. She was likely going to get chewed out for not respecting her Young Women's leaders or something like that.

They finally stopped at her dad's study . . . well, what *used* to be her dad's study anyway. On the wall behind the door was a huge chart of their family tree on her mother's side. Clair pointed to the chart.

"I want you to sing in the program. It's two weeks away, and I don't expect you to decide whether or not you want to right now. But I wanted to show you why the song is true."

"Mom — really, don't. It's not important."

"Yes, it is. It's very important." Her mom's hand went to the emerald pendant at her throat. Liz stared at it, and the way her mom touched the gemstone like a lucky rabbit's foot, and sighed in frustration. One more lecture on how her ancestors rocked the foundation of the world was enough to make her scream.

"It's important because you have an eternal family. Generations and generations of ancestors are watching and waiting to see what you do with the genetics and history they handed to you." Her mom waved a hand over the chart. "You have Grandpa Brown who built the Alpine Stake Tabernacle. You have — "

"I know." Liz interrupted. "And great-way-back-there somewhere, some grandma died on the plains and another one crossed the whole way on foot and we should be strong like them."

"This isn't a lecture, Liz."

"It sounds like one." Liz looked at her mom's crestfallen face and took a deep breath. "I'm sorry, Mom. I know what you're trying to say and I get it . . . I do. I just don't see what any of this has to do with *my* life." She walked away, hearing her mother sigh behind her.

* * *

Sister Peterson moved aside, revealing the words, *Your Personal Plan,* on the dry erase board.

"When was the last time any of you *really* prayed?" she asked. "When was the last time you knelt and asked Heavenly Father what direction He wanted you to go? When was the last time you took a few minutes to listen after you put a question to Him? When did you last ask him what He wanted from you, rather than tell Him what you wanted?"

Liz shifted uncomfortably in her seat. She couldn't remember *ever* praying like that. She looked over to the other girls who were nodding. She rolled her eyes. *So different* . . . Liz was glad for the empty chair next to her. She'd sat on the end away from the others on purpose. Since gossip of her father's scandalous affair, excommunication, and the following divorce raged through the ward, she'd felt like an outsider. It wasn't so much that anyone treated her different as it was she *felt* different. They had their perfect families. Her family was the object of criticism and hushed discussions on sin. What good was a temple marriage for all eternity when eternity couldn't make it past two decades?

Before class was over, Sister Peterson challenged them to all kneel down and really pray sometime over the next week. "You owe God a real prayer. Go out and find your own personal Sacred Grove. See if, in the next week, you can discover His plan for you."

Sister Peterson was right. Liz needed to pray. She needed to find somewhere safe and alone for that. Somewhere without disruptions. She chose the stables where her horse could keep her company without interrupting. She waited until after dinner — after prayers were said and teeth were brushed. Her mom had announced at dinner that she'd be getting a new job. A new job meant that Liz was now entirely in charge of the household. It was too much. She'd lost her father and was now losing her mother too. She sneaked out of the house after everyone had settled into their rooms. She eased the scooter out of the driveway and into the road before she got on and started it up.

When the scooter came to a stop she took a deep breath, inhaling the familiar scents of the stables where her horse, Sassy, was housed.

She clipped the helmet to the front handlebar and made her way to Sassy's stall. She unlocked the gate and went in, rubbing her hand along the horse's nose. Sassy whickered and swished her black tail, blinking her big dark eyes. Sassy's big eyes were the reason Liz fell in love with the Arabian horse three years earlier. Her dad was good friends with the breeder; one thing led to another and then Sassy belonged to Liz.

Liz ran her hand along Sassy's neck for a long time, finally brushing the horse down before settling herself on the hay at the back of the stall. Sassy turned her head to stare at Liz.

"I don't know what I'm doing here," Liz said, as though the horse had asked a question. "I don't know what I'm doing anywhere." She muttered the last, flicking a handful of straw at the wood slatted walls in frustration.

She thought about Sister Peterson asking her to pray and find out what Heavenly Father wanted her to be and where He wanted her to go. *Find your own personal sacred grove.*

Making the decision to actually pray took some time. She didn't feel like praying now that she was here, yet felt like she needed to. She was on her knees before making the conscious decision to talk to Heavenly Father. She had her arms folded while still chiding herself for thinking Heavenly Father would really tell her what direction to take. Then she was praying.

Liz poured her heart out to the Lord like never before. She cried and whined, thanking Him for blessings she felt truly thankful for, while yelling at Him for not helping her when she needed it most. Then she asked the question, "What do you want me to do with my life? What is it you really want me to become?" Her heart pounded and her stomach felt all those tingling feelings everyone said happened when people got real answers to prayer. She listened for those real answers she knew without a doubt would come.

She felt exhausted, unaware of the time that passed, only knowing that a lot of time *had* passed since her knees ached and her legs were asleep. Her back popped as she stretched and laid herself back into the straw. She had listened so long waiting for an answer, but the heavens remained silent.

Liz felt betrayed by the silence. Especially when she'd known that He *would* answer. So why didn't He? She hadn't just believed He would, she *knew* He would. Did she not kneel long enough? Did she not wait long enough?

She was so disappointed and yet so tired that she was asleep as the first tears slid out from her closed eyes.

* * *

1852

Constance had no way of knowing how far or how long she'd walked. When the light from the stars and moon disappeared behind the dark cover of clouds, she knew another storm was coming. The wind whipped at the stray strands of hair across her face as she continued moving. "William!" She'd waited a good distance from the wagons before she started calling. She had to find him — to bring him back so they could continue to Zion together. So they could live their lives as they planned.

"William!" The first drops of rain pelted her face; lightning flashed in the distance and the thunder followed shortly after. The wind picked up and the thunder rolled along the hillside indicating that this storm would be big. She looked back in the direction she'd come. She'd never beat the brunt of the storm to the shelter of the wagons. In the next flash of lightening she saw a small slope with a rock overhang. She ran to the shelter it would provide.

Constance watched the storm from her new vantage point. The wind whipped through the soaked layers of her dress as she huddled into herself for warmth.

"Lord. Please help me!" she cried out over the thunder.

But the storm only worsened at her plea.

"I will not leave him! This whole journey was a fool's errand, and it was not worth it!"

The thunder shook the ground under her as though trying to bait her into a fight.

"Do you hear me?" she screamed. "I'll not go any farther! It's not worth it! You cannot let Eliza and me be abandoned like this!"

She battled back and forth with the thunder until her voice was entirely spent. She shook her head and whispered, "We'll never survive without him. There's no point to any of this. My daughter needs her father. And I need my husband."

Exhaustion consumed her as a fine white mist swirled around her knees where she knelt. The mist rose to her waist, and then her shoulders until she felt as though she'd been bundled into an embrace. As the warm mist touched her cold cheeks, Constance felt herself falling through the mist as though she'd been flung from a tall mountain. Yet she felt no fear. The embrace held her tight — kept her warm — kept her safe. She furrowed her brow. "A strange dream . . ." she murmured, as she succumbed to the warmth of the mist and the exhaustion in the very marrow of her bones. She slept.

* * *

Constance awoke with a moan. Her muscles, stiff and sore from sleeping on the ground, burned as she tried to stretch. She blinked her eyes against the morning light shining down on her through thick wood slats —

She sat upright. Wood slats? There should be no wood slats. There should be rock — stone. She'd gone to sleep under the rocky overhang. Her body trembled as she took in her surroundings. The endless fields and rolling hills were gone. The rocky protection from the night previous had vanished.

In their place stood buildings. Many buildings. She scrambled to her feet and stood under a small lean-to at the edge of a green field. Structures crowded in on all sides of the field. Constance squeezed her eyes shut and snapped them open again, but everything remained the same — unfamiliar . . . terrifying.

Constance wrung her hands, unable to stamp down the panic rising up inside her, not caring that William would mock her hysteria. "This is wrong. This is all terribly wrong!" Her chest constricted in fear as she turned in a quick circle, trying to get her bearing — to latch onto anything that would be familiar to her.

"Oh!" she gasped and covered her mouth with her hand. "I've been abducted. Carried away in the night." She uttered an oath that would have made her mother blush and instantly regretted being so loose with her tongue. She'd likely been carried off by savages. Obscenities would not help such a situation. She had to get away — to get back to the wagons. To get back to her daughter.

The thought of her daughter moved her to action. Her shaking legs carried her forward, though she did not know what direction she should go. She broke into a run.

* * *

2010

Liz awoke with a start. The pale morning light shone through the cracks of the wooden slats in the gate of Sassy's stall. "Oh no!" She groaned, running a hand through her dark hair to clear out the straw. "Mom is going to kill me!" She jumped up and locked the stable, then dashed for the scooter.

As she turned the corner of the Little Barn, she ran smack into someone. A jolt of pain traveled through her spine as they both landed on the ground from the force of Liz's momentum. She rolled a bit to her side with a whimper. "I am so sorry! I — " Liz looked at the girl and blinked.

The girl looked to be her same age, and could have

been Liz's sister. They had the same dark brown hair and a similar sprinkle of freckles lightly over their noses. But it was the eyes — green like emeralds — that surprised Liz the most. The only other person she knew with eyes like hers was her mom. Those eyes were so startling that it took Liz a few moments to realize the girl wore a dirty pioneer dress and looked positively terrified.

Liz stood and reached a hand out to help her up. "I'm sorry," she began again. "I didn't know you were there. Are you okay?" Maybe they were filming a movie. Liz couldn't think of any other reason the girl would be dressed like she was.

The deep English accent trembled. "Something has gone wrong!" She brushed at her skirts in agitation and smoothed her dark unkempt hair back away from her face. "Where am I? There were no structures where I slept. It was a cove in the rock . . ." She stared at Liz, her eyes wide with fear. "Am I your prisoner? Did you bring me to this place while I slept?"

Liz backed up a few steps, holding her hands up in protest. "Whoa there. I didn't bring anyone anywhere. And though this little conversation is . . . well, weird. I gotta go. My mom's gonna kill me for taking off last night. And so, you know, good luck with your movie." Liz hurried past the girl.

"Wait!" She called. "You cannot leave me here alone! What if whoever did take me returns? Please!"

Liz couldn't say why she stopped and turned around. It seemed insane. Did this girl really think she was kidnapped? And yet, who knew? Maybe some predator was lurking in one of the stables. The thought quickened Liz's pulse.

"You were kidnapped?"

"I've no idea what happened, I assure you. The storm commenced not too long after I left the camp. I sheltered under a rock overhang. But when I awoke, I was in that bit of field . . ." The girl frantically cast her eyes around, as though trying to get a grip on her location. "Over there?" She seemed uncertain. Her voice cracked and her eyes shone with tears. "And these buildings and structures were here and nothing at all looks familiar to me. Please, help me."

After a moment's consideration, Liz decided she should at least call the police. Liz's mom had likely already done that very thing to search for *her*. If there was a kidnapper running around . . .

"Who are you?" The girl demanded. Her eyes were wide with fear.

"Liz King, no relation to Stephen, though you're creeping me out enough, I feel like I'm in one of his books. Who are *you*?" Liz had worked over her fear enough to decide it was time to bolt. Girl or no girl, kidnapper or no, she was leaving.

"Constance Miles Brown."

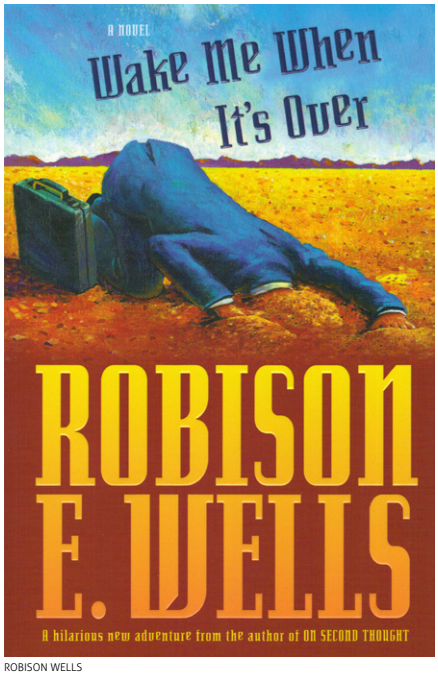
She said it without preamble or any trumpets, but Liz felt the hairs on the back of her neck rise. "No way." She breathed. ▪

Robison Wells

INTERVIEW BY **DAVEY MORRISON DILLARD & AMELIA CHESLEY** | PHOTOS BY **TIFFANY TERTIPES**

WEB: **ROBISONWELLS.COM** | TWITTER: **@ROBISONWELLS**

That was the ultimate genesis of the Whitney Awards — I was looking for a way for LDS fiction to gain more respect.



ROBISON WELLS

Robison Wells is the author of On Second Thought, Wake Me When It's Over, *and* The Counterfeit. *He has served on the board of directors of LDStorymakers and founded the Whitney Awards.*

It seems like you're involved in so much more than just writing. How would you describe yourself and everything you do?

I think that I would probably describe myself as a reluctant Renaissance man. I didn't set out to have such a wide variety of career experiences; I just did what seemed interesting at the time and ended up with a schizophrenic résumé.

I've always loved the visual arts and design, and as a teenager that was my creative outlet: I painted, I designed sets for the local theater, I drew houses for real estate ads. That last one was the most influential; when I came back from my mission, I started college as an architecture major. That didn't last long, though, and I bounced through a couple other majors — history and anthropology — before ending up in political science. I started the program the January after 9/11 and consequently emphasized in the Middle East and did my senior thesis on the political efficacy of modern terrorism.

Consequently, when I graduated, I couldn't get a job. So, I fell back on architecture and went to work for a wood products company, designing floor and roof systems. I sold wood. It was awesome.

During college, I got my first idea for a book. However, I'd never wanted to be a writer and had no interest in being an author. But my brother, Dan, was the opposite: he'd always wanted to be a writer, and at the time he was at BYU working on an English degree (he is now a full-time horror writer.) I called him up, told him my book idea, and told him he ought to use it for one of his books. He instead invited me to write a couple chapters and come down to his writing group. I ended up being the first in the group to get published.

I've been involved in the LDS writing world for several years, as a board member of the LDStorymakers, a writer's guild, and in 2007 I founded the Whitney Awards, an award for novels by LDS authors.

And, because I have to pay the bills somehow, I returned to school and got my MBA in marketing.

Tell us about the Whitney Awards.

My reasoning for starting the Whitney Awards was essentially a move from pessimism to optimism. When I first got published in the LDS market — even before the book was released — I immediately ran into a lot of the standard criticisms about LDS fiction. I'd tell someone that I'd written a book, and they'd be excited and ask about it, and the instant they realized it was an LDS book you could see the interest fade out of their eyes. After a while I became almost embarrassed that my book was LDS fiction.

So, I decided I was going to do something about it. On my website I started something called the LDS Fiction Review Database, and my goal was to link to every single review of every LDS fiction book. At its peak, I had several thousand links posted. My reasoning was this: in order to gain respect, LDS fiction needs to improve, and the best method to improve is more critical evaluation.

I maintained that database for about a year, but as I got more involved in the LDS market I came to realize that, while, yes, there was a lot of lousy LDS fiction, there was an awful lot of great stuff too. My complaint all of this time had been with the authors: they needed to write better books. And, I thought, having public, critical reviews would "encourage" them to do that. My big epiphany was that I shouldn't be targeting authors — I should be targeting readers. There are lots of great books available, but it's hard to sift through the mediocre and find the amazing.

That was the ultimate genesis of the Whitney Awards — I was looking for a way for LDS fiction to gain more respect. Now, when people claim that LDS books are lousy, we can point to the Whitney Award winners — to Coke Newell's *On the Road To Heaven* or Sandra Grey's *Traitor*, or many others — and hold these up as examples of LDS fiction that's every bit as good as anything published nationally.

How did your blog *Six LDS Writers and a Frog* come to be? How has it helped your career? And why a frog?

That blog is the brainchild of Sariah Wilson. She approached me and Jeff Savage about it back in January of 2006. It's been a lot of fun. I may be wrong, but I think it was the first collaborative blog with LDS novelists. There are several now, but we were the first, and I think that's contributed to the success of the blog.

The name is half mine and half Sariah's. For some reason, I said that I didn't want a creative name — I wanted something that was extremely descriptive. I think I wanted it to be easily found by search engines, or something like that. So, I suggested "Six LDS Writers." When Sariah set up the blog, she thought it needed something else, so she asked her son (who was a toddler) and he suggested a frog.

Over the years we've tried to do something with the frog. Kerry Blair, in particular, likes to have frog-related contests and that kind of thing, but generally the frog is ignored.

From your experience with writing and critique groups, can you tell us some pros and cons of being a part of a critique group?

Writing groups are awesome, and I attribute a huge amount of any success I've had to my writing groups.

My first experience with a writing group was a group of guys down at BYU. I had never tried writing a book before, and they were all extremely serious about publishing. They taught me the basics of writing and storytelling. They were also merciless. This wasn't a support group for authors — this was a group of professionals who were determined to become masters of their craft. And the results speak for themselves: I was published, soon to be followed by Brandon Sanderson, and later Dan Wells, my brother. The group was really a powerhouse.

I bounced around through a couple other groups over the years but spent at least four years without a group before landing in my new one, another powerhouse: Jeff Savage, Annette Lyon, Heather Moore, Michele Holmes, and Lu-Ann Staheli.

All that said, writing groups are tricky. While they can be a huge help, they can also make the writing process harder. One of the toughest parts of getting feedback is sifting through the bad stuff and taking the good stuff. Even in a great group with awesome writers, you still get some advice that isn't right for your book. You just have to know what to keep and what to throw out.

The bigger problem, for me at least, is the need to compartmentalize the critique from the rest of my writing. Going to writing group and getting negative feedback on a chapter can be very deflating. If I'm not able to put that aside and keep moving then I'll end up obsessing about the comments and revise and revise instead of writing new stuff.

Is there anything you wish had turned out differently in your writing career so far?

Most of my regrets are with how I treated my writing. Early on, I had a very laid-back approach to the books that I think hurt me a little bit. I should have polished them more and spent more time honing my craft. With my first and second books I really loathed rewriting and would avoid it whenever possible. I wish I could go back and give them both a thorough cleanup.

I'm also unhappy with the treatment of my second book, *Wake Me When It's Over*. Of my three novels, it's the one that most people tell me they liked best, but I cringe every time I think about it. It had lots of problems, the first of which is that it was a weird genre: it's a political thriller, dealing with kidnapping and counterfeiting and espionage, but it's also very funny. I don't think the publisher quite knew what to make of it, especially since it was a follow-up to *On Second Thought*, which was a lighthearted romantic comedy. So, they essentially marketed it as the same type of book. First, they gave it that goofy title (which I've hated since day one), and the cover has the statement "Another hilarious adventure from the author of *On Second Thought*."

And then the cover is remarkably similar to *On Second Thought*'s cover (although *Wake Me*'s is a terrible version, with terrible art, terrible colors, and a terrible font).

And — surprise! — it sold very, very poorly.

When it came time to publish *The Counterfeit*, which is the sequel to *Wake Me*, the publisher tried very hard, both in design and marketing, to distance *Counterfeit* from *Wake Me*. And I took great pains to not make *Wake Me* required reading. They did an awesome job with the cover on that one, and sales were three or four times what they were on *Wake Me*. So, a happy ending.

What important advice would you give to an aspiring writer?

Back when I had that first idea for a book, my brother gave me some advice that changed my life. He said "Everyone says they have an idea for a book. Everyone says that one day they're going to sit down and write the great American novel. The difference between authors and everyone else is that authors actually do it." That would be my advice for aspiring writers: write. Even now, having written seven novels and published three, I am amazed how beneficial it is when I force myself to write when I don't want to. Every one of my books contains passages that were free writes — forcing myself to push through writers block without knowing where I was going — and it turned out so well that it stayed in the book.

Orson Scott Card once said that your first million words are crap. While I don't know if I entirely agree — I've probably only crossed the million word mark in the last few years — it's definitely true that the more you write the better you get. The key is to keep at it, to fight through a couple lousy, unpublishable books and not let that discourage you.

It reminds me of my friend Brandon Sanderson: his sixth book was the first to be published, but by the time that it sold he was already writing his thirteenth. There's a reason that Brandon is so successful: he writes constantly.

What are you working on next? Where will your writing take you in the future?

I've made a pretty big departure from my previous books. I recently finished a young adult science fiction novel that is currently agented and is getting some interest nationally. I've got my fingers crossed.

About a year ago I decided that I wanted to set my sights on the national market. This decision was not because I didn't like the LDS market — I love the LDS market. But I want to be able to write full-time, and that's next to impossible with LDS books.

I'm not sure where I'll end up. For one reason or another, I'm not really interested in translating my previous writing style and genre into the national market. YA seems like a good fit right now, but that might change later. I'm not one to plan too far ahead.

So far you've published three novels: *On Second Thought, Wake Me When It's Over,* and *The Counterfeit.* Where did the ideas for each of these books come from?

On Second Thought was written as a reaction to my previous novel-writing attempt, which was a train wreck of a fantasy. I'd tried to write something very epic and grand but didn't really know where I was going with it or even how to structure a book. At the time I wasn't even an avid reader of fantasy. So, as that manuscript was winding to an end, I decided to take the classic advice of "write what you know." So, I wrote *On Second Thought*. It was based on a little town I'd lived in while on my mission, and it's filled with a lot of autobiographical experiences.

Wake Me When It's Over was written as my undergrad experience was winding down. I was finishing my political science degree, doing a lot of research on terrorism, and I felt like I was becoming a much better writer. In between *Wake Me* and *On Second Thought,* I'd written a murder mystery that I never submitted to my published — I decided it was too dark and grisly to be a good follow-up to a romcom. So, of course, I instead wrote a book about kidnapping and terrorism, only funny.

The original idea for the book came from watching something on the news about the Secret Service and about the reason they spend so much money fighting counterfeiting: their primary concern isn't a single criminal making fake bills to buy a TV. Instead, they worry that widespread counterfeiting will weaken the value of the dollar. So, I thought it would be interesting if a terrorist organization decided to attack the United States economy via widespread counterfeiting.

My third book, *The Counterfeit*, is a sequel and follows the same characters. However, after I wrote the book, my publisher came back to me and said: "We like it, but can you make it more like *The Da Vinci Code*?" Well, I obviously wasn't too happy with the idea, but after my initial hyperventilation, I was able to take my initial story (that was already steeped in conspiracies) and add a few elements: foreign locations, more historical tie-ins, etc. It was more of an atmospheric change than a plot change. And, I'm happy to say that the finished product turned out much better than the original.

What is it you think makes you want to write?

I write for myself. When I compare myself to my other author friends, I think I have a very different perspective, and I think a lot of that comes from the fact that my love for writing and books came

relatively late in life. I didn't like English in high school and I never read any of the books. To this day, I hate the public library. (These kinds of statements don't receive a lot of agreeing nods in writing circles.)

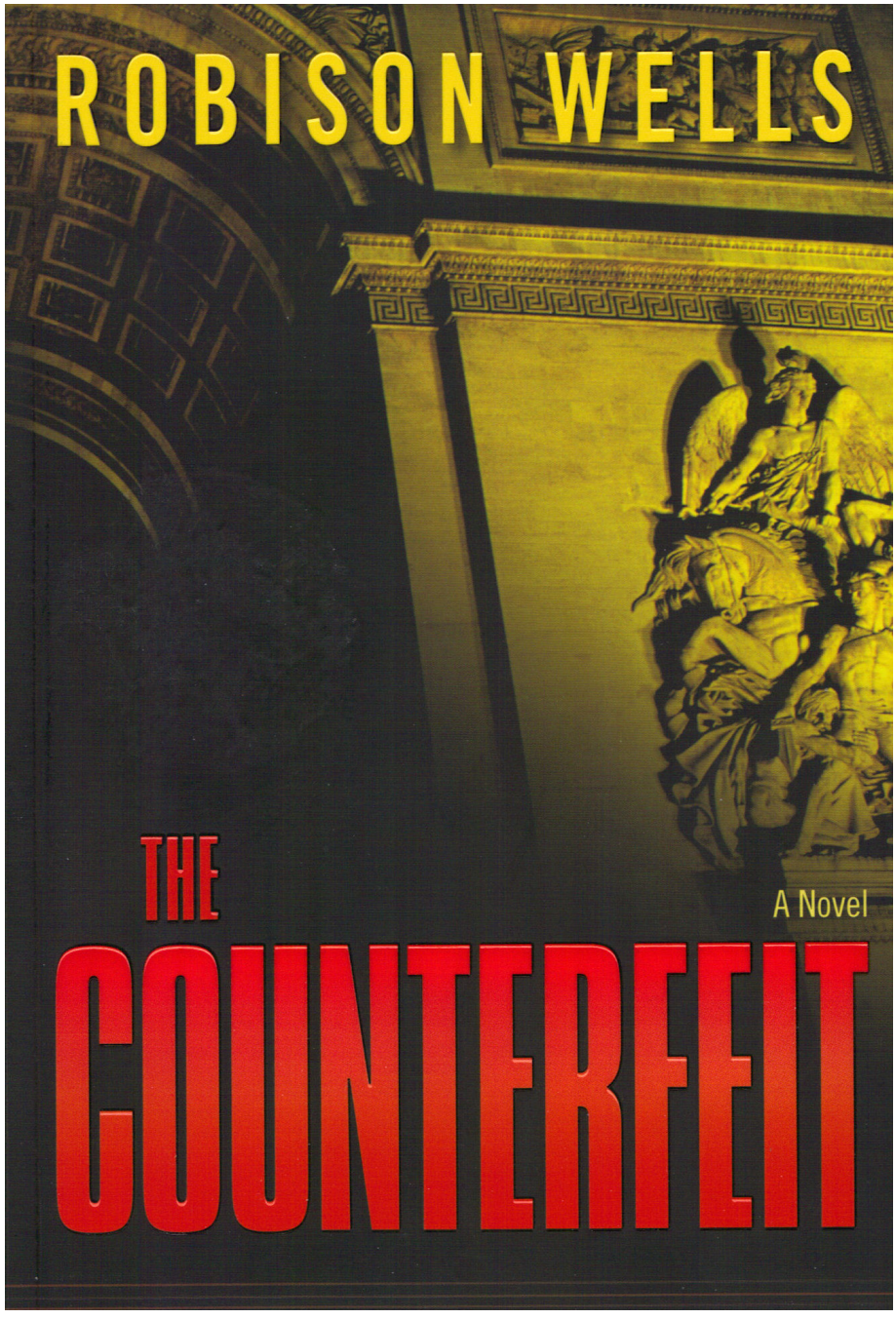
Because I came to writing late, and was never an avid reader before I became a writer, I think I never came to define myself as a reader. I never had that oft-talked-about experience of walking to the library as a kid and discovering new worlds. Consequently, I don't really think about that when I write.

I write because I love it. That's not to say that I don't enjoy hearing feedback from readers, because I definitely do. But I write because it's fun.

Your books exist within Mormon culture, but they mostly resist any sort of didactic impulse. What draws you to writing about Mormons and Mormonism? How do you think Mormonism affects your writing? What do you think your writing has to say about or offer to Mormonism?

There's a theme that runs through all of my books, even the manuscripts I've written for the national market, and it's something that I think is a huge struggle among Mormons. It's the issue of being okay versus being good. I know that sounds a little weird, so let me give a little background that might explain it.

When I was growing up, I never really questioned my LDS beliefs at all. My parents were very active in the Church, and so I was very active in the Church, and I never really considered anything else. I graduated from seminary, got my Eagle, and prepared to go on a mission. And it was there that I suddenly ran into problems. I faced spiritual challenges and crises of faith that I'd never expected;



ROBISON WELLS

it had never crossed my mind that my mission would be spiritually challenging. I'd always heard stories about the physical challenge, but never much of a spiritual one. And I had never expected that the problems — the temptations, if you want to call them that — would come from the other missionaries.

If someone had handed me anti-Mormon literature, or offered me a beer, or told me to steal something, it would have been easy for me to push it away and Choose the Right and Hold to the Rod. But what I was faced with instead was an almost complete, widespread disregard for mission rules. It wasn't just little rules, like sleeping in or not having companionship study, and it wasn't just a few elders. It was big stuff, and it was everybody.

I remember that on my very first day, as my trainer was driving me to my first area, he said, "I'd

guess about seventy to eighty percent of the mission is apostate."

This really caught me off-guard, and it caused me all sorts of problems. But the biggest issue for me is that nothing we were doing — yes, I got plenty involved for a while — was technically breaking any major commandments. There were no biblical commandments against staying in your apartment all day, and there were no commandments against driving four hours from your apartment to visit friends. These things were perfectly fine for everyone in the world to do — just not missionaries. Yes, I knew that what I was doing was against the rules, but was it really "wrong"?

My mission shook me up for a long time, and in some ways I'm still dealing with it. And, even though I never intentionally do it, my writing addresses these issues. In *Wake Me* and *The Counterfeit*, the two main characters are essentially the two sides of me: one is active and a nice guy, who goes about his life fairly casually; the other is driven by faith, strictly obedient, and sees things in black and white. Throughout the books there is a constant pull between them, and I think that it's just my internal dialogue: what does it mean to truly have faith, and how is that reflected in your behavior?

This is making my books sound much more religious than they are. Like you said in the question, I don't want my books to be didactic or preachy, and I never set out to make any kind of spiritual statement. I generally just create my characters and let them act however they would act. But I do find it interesting that this is the direction where my subconscious tends to go. Even in my most recent book — the completely non-LDS young adult science fiction — there is a character that is conflicted by what it means to be "good."

Your books are very straightforward about the gospel. What do you feel that has added to your books?

My first published book, *On Second Thought*, was chock-full of LDS cultural references — but with very little spirituality. It was a comedy, and I didn't really feel the need to give the book a moral. Part of this was that I was still very new to writing, and I'd never really thought about a character arc at all. I just had a lot of funny stuff crammed in there, and I figured it was good. My publisher, however, wanted the book to have more of a point. Depending on your artistic philosophy, this could be a good thing or a bad thing. I didn't fight them on it, and ended up tacking a moral on. It's unobtrusive and most people miss it entirely. That's fine with me, since I just wanted to tell a funny story.

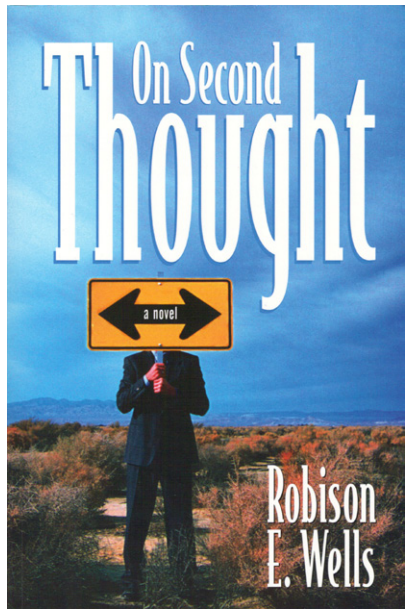
That's really been the key throughout my books: I don't set out to make a statement about the gospel. I don't want to tell a story about conversion or faith. Instead, I'm telling a story about terrorism or nuclear proliferation or whatever, and I let my characters react. In my second and third books, the main characters are active LDS, so they react in a certain way: they pray, they talk about their faith, one gives the other a blessing. But none of this was done to present a moral. It was just done because that's how the characters would have reacted.

When I first got published in the LDS market, I jokingly made a rule for myself: no one in my books would ever get baptized. I think that was a reaction to a lot of the LDS books I'd read as a teenager, where it seemed that half of them were conversion stories. I wasn't interested in that. I didn't write LDS books because I wanted to write gospel stories; I wrote LDS books because I wanted to tell interesting stories about LDS people. ▪

I didn't write LDS books because I wanted to write gospel stories; I wrote LDS books because I wanted to tell interesting stories about LDS people.

On Second Thought

AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL BY **ROBISON WELLS**



ROBISON WELLS

I am not the type of guy that is often stranded in the desert. I'm not sure if there is a type of guy who is often stranded in the desert but, if there is, I pity him.

I'm not from the desert. Well, I guess that's not entirely true. I'm from Salt Lake City, which I constantly hear is a desert, although all the trees and water would have fooled me. I ended up in this desert, however, due to my extremely specialized field of expertise.

The direction of my education was primarily a product of my mission. I went to Washington D.C. and, though I never baptized a Senator, I caught the political bug. On returning home, I quickly enrolled at the University of Utah in Political Science, with an emphasis in Public Administration. I wanted to be part of the action. I wanted to be the guy in the movies that sits in the oval office and tells the president "The people won't like it" and "This is political suicide." I thought I might even be the guy that stands on the steps of some landmark and tells some corrupt politician that he's going to have to find someone else to do his dirty work. The flag would be waving in the breeze behind me.

My mom cried. She had dreams of me becoming a doctor. She also had very open dreams of me going to BYU, getting married to the first girl I saw and immediately producing grandbabies.

My dad said nothing about it. He figured that, like most things I had gotten myself into, the thrill would wear off. Of course, he was right. Somewhere between my class on the economics of the Pacific Rim and my seminar on Middle Eastern political thought, I realized it wasn't for me. Unfortunately, I was too sick and tired of school to change my major.

So I finished school and got a job in Public Administration. Actually, I got a job with the Transportation Division filling out forms whenever an intersection needed a new stop sign. It wasn't a bad job, assuming you have dreamed all your life about doing paperwork and have a passion for traffic signals. Unfortunately, I had neither.

I also learned that, much to my surprise, the average public administrator never goes to the oval office to advise the president about anything, and no corrupt politicians ask the stop sign guy to do their dirty work.

In addition to my employment rut, I had a far worse problem. I was nearing the ripe old age of 25 and was still unmarried — an offense that can bring about disciplinary action in some student wards. The U had offered few possibilities, since most of the girls in my classes were the type of people I mentioned before — those with a passion for traffic signals. I dated one girl for about a semester, until I could no longer stand our weekly outing to the state legislature.

At the Transportation Division, my choices were slim. There was a thirty-eight year old secretary who still lived at home with her parents, and the seventeen-year-old courier who took away my completed stop sign forms and dropped a fresh batch on my desk.

So I decided to go back to school. Of course, since my ultimate goal was to seek after anything virtuous, lovely and of good report, I had no choice but to attend BYU. My mom threw a party. My dad once again said nothing but, I imagine, thought about how his fool son wasn't going to amount to anything.

The bishop of my singles ward didn't take the news well. I tried to soften the blow by reminding him over and over that it was my intent to be married for time and all eternity. It didn't work of course. He pulled out

his copy of the ward directory, bound in leather and embossed with gold, containing photographs of every member of the ward. He made me go down the list and explain why each and every girl was unsuitable wife material. Eventually he made some comment about Steve Young, grudgingly wished me well and showed me to the door.

At BYU, I decided that I would avoid any classes that sounded interesting and, instead, go after a profitable career. All my friends told me it was a bad idea, but all of them were making barely more than minimum wage filling out forms.

As long as I was going back to school, I might as well go the whole way. I went pre-med. I had fairly good study habits and worked my way quickly through a biology degree. Along the way my academic advisor pointed out that getting a minor always looks good when applying to graduate school, so I leafed through the class schedules until I decided on horticulture. Not only was it biology related, but also sounded like it would have a lot of girls in it.

I began dating a horticulture major named Mandy. It only took two months of studying together and a late night walk to the Provo temple to get engaged. She liked plants, I liked her and my mom loved the whole concept. We decided that we would get married after I graduated and before I started medical school.

Everything was great. I was getting married to a great girl, I was going to be making large sums of money and, who knows, maybe I'd be the Surgeon General one day and get to advise the President about something.

The time finally came and I graduated. My mom looked so proud, much prouder than when I had graduated from the U, and my dad seemed pleasantly surprised that I had made it through school a second time. My younger brother and sister grumbled about having to go watch me graduate again, knowing that they'd have to do it again four years later.

It was only a week later, one deceptively sunny day in early May, when my life, which appeared momentarily to be on track, came crashing down.

I was lying around my apartment watching TV, happy in the knowledge that I wasn't in class, when the doorbell rang. It was Mandy. I asked her why she rang the doorbell and she opened her mouth to say something, but sat down instead. I returned to my seat, engrossed in a rerun of *Chips.*

"I'm going to become a child psychologist," she blurted out.

"But you're a junior," I answered absent-mindedly as Eric Estrada jumped his motorcycle off a convenient mound of dirt. "I thought only freshmen wanted to be child psychologists."

Of course that was the wrong thing to say.

"I don't think you understand," she sneered. "I want to finish my degree here."

We had, of course, discussed this all before. My applications to medical school were in and things were looking good.

"What about med school?"

She sighed and leaned back into my beat up couch, which almost sucked her in. "I don't know." There was a lot more anxiety in her voice than I would have expected for a discussion about majors.

"I could end up going to the U, then we could—" She cut me off with a look of more anger and frustration than I had ever seen in her. And that was saying a lot.

"You don't understand." She was looking directly at me and a chill went down my spine. To this point in the conversation I had had no idea what she was talking about. We had talked often about med school and she agreed that she would finish up her bachelor's degree wherever I ended up going. It didn't seem to me like it should be a problem at all. If you could imagine a person with less direction than I had, it would be Mandy. In her two and a half years at BYU she had gone through exactly eleven majors—everything from accounting to youth management.

"I've been talking to Ben," she continued slowly. Ben was my roommate.

"He told you about my snoring problem, didn't he." I was trying to lighten what was quickly becoming a dark mood, but her face had turned from rosy to crimson.

"No, Walt. We've been talking—Ben and I. He says that he's been praying a lot and thinks that, well, you know."

"What are you talking about?"

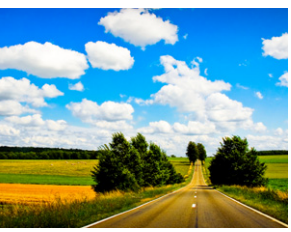
"He's received inspiration that we should get married."

I wasn't expecting that at all. Ben, of all people. He'd always been kind of quiet and never did much dating, and all of a sudden he's telling my fiancé that it has been revealed to him from on high that they are meant for each other. Maybe the two of them were just much more in tune than I was, but I never received that particular burning of the bosom.

She waited for me to respond. From the back of the apartment, I heard Ben opening the window and escaping into the parking lot.

I had nothing to say. Well, I had quite a bit to say, but none of it was ever said. I stared at her in utter confusion until she could no longer stand it and left. I thought for a moment I would run after her, but the phone rang. ▪

Scott Jarvie



INTERVIEW BY **ALLISON ASTON** | PHOTOS BY **SCOTT JARVIE**

WEB: **JARVIEDIGITAL.COM** | TWITTER: **@JARVIE**

Scott Jarvie is a freelance photographer based in Utah. He has founded many projects within the photography community, including the professional photographers database All The Photographers, and Envision the World — a community driven collection of images and experiences from around the globe. He recently began Jarvie Digital University — an internship program he created to pay forward his knowledge and skill in photography.

How did you get into photography?

Well, once upon a time I was going to BYU and I was taking random language classes. While I was taking French, I went to Belgium and worked at a supermarket to learn more French. While I was over there, we had open days when we weren't working at the supermarket. Some of us would go on little trips and I would take my little point-and-click and I would click away. The other people in the group would say things like, "We don't need to take our cameras because Scott will just take a lot of pictures. His are good." This provided me with a little ego boost. I thought, "Mine *are* good. I enjoy this."

After coming back home, my point-and-click camera broke. There was a snowstorm one day and I thought, "This is amazing. Why don't I have a camera? This is killing me." I happened to be at the mall near a camera store, so I decided to look at some little point-and-clicks.

While I was there, I thought, "Let's look at those big ones. I don't have the money for them. I don't even have the money for these small ones. But let's just look." I ended up walking out of the store with a large camera. I'm a spur-of-the-moment kind of shopper. It can get me into trouble, but this time it changed my life.

Later, I was home with the camera. One of my good friends looked at the Europe pictures I had taken and hung on my wall, looked at the big camera in my hand, and said, "You should do our engagement pictures." I said, "Why not?" I knew that if I didn't do a good job, they could hire a real photographer later. What was there to lose? I'm

the type of person who is crazy enough to agree to take on a wedding, never having done one.

And it worked. I started doing more, to the point where I realized that, as a student who didn't have many bills, I didn't need a job as long as I worked one or two weddings a month.

What specific steps did you take to become a professional photographer?

I think that I probably spent more hours at it than most. I dedicated all my time to it. I wouldn't see the outdoors for one or two days if I was editing. There were days last year when I literally woke up, walked to my desk, and stayed at it until I went to bed. The only times I'd leave would be to grab a meal or two and use the restroom. The whole day was spent in front of the computer. Then, I would continuously find reasons to go out and shoot something.

I look back at it now and realize that I was in the perfect position at the time. I didn't need a lot of money. I wasn't supporting a family. There was nothing going on. I didn't have to make a certain amount of money. I didn't have huge expectations. I was just doing it. I was taking pictures.

How have social media sites like Facebook been helpful in getting your name out?

Facebook became popular around the same time that I started, so I've been using it since then.

The ability for people to put the pictures that I took of them in their online photography gallery has been a significant benefit to my business. Everyone sees what I've been doing. Their friends see what I'm doing, and that has made a big impact.

As a wedding photographer, what tricks do you use to make the wedding photos unique for each couple?

I think people underestimate the importance of the interaction between the photographer and the personality of the client. I'm known for the editing aspect, and the pictures are good, but bringing out the personality of the couple is what I aim for. I'll sit around with each couple for five or ten minutes before a shoot and just joke around. I ease into the photo shoot and really try to get a feeling for what kind of pictures are going to be best for them.

Especially with wedding photography, it's important that the couple's personality be in their photos. One of my favorite compliments is when someone looking at a couple's gallery says, "Oh, Barbara Sue, that's *so* you. That is totally you." I love hearing that because that's what I hope to do.

My other favorite compliment comes when a member of the wedding party comes up to me at the end of the night and says, "You did such a great job," even though they have not seen a single picture. I even asked someone about that once, and they replied, "It's your personality — it's perfect for you, and you just handled everyone so well. It looks like you're having so much fun." People love seeing the photographer happy and I guess that makes them happier, too.

What other photographers have influenced your work?

I never studied anyone in particular. When I started off, I loved technical stuff. The more buttons the camera has, the happier I was. For me, I wanted to figure it all out for myself, use trial and error to figure out the camera. That's why I spent so much time learning, and that's why, now, I can teach someone the same lessons I learned, but in a fraction of the time.

It was the same kind of thing for the aesthetics. I tried to figure it all out myself. And perhaps it was a great benefit for me that I never studied anyone in particular. As for now, though,

a year and a half ago I started hanging out with a lot of different photographers on Twitter and on Facebook. Just being around them has really pushed my photography beyond what it was before.

What about that has pushed your photography further?

I now have a community of friends that I can share my pictures with beyond all the friends I had before, the ones that always said "ooh, ah" to everything I did. These new friends are photographers and they "ooh" and "ah" a little bit less readily. Now I push myself to share even better stuff with these other photographers.

Tell us about your study of languages and how that has influenced your photography.

What I really wanted was just know a lot of languages. It got me to Europe, where I discovered that I liked photography. It took me to other fun places. Then that love of travel and culture got me to the point where I discovered that, one of these days, I want to go around taking pictures in different places around the world. The combination of those two ideas was a motivating factor. It motivated me to get better so I could take pictures around the world.

How many countries have you visited in order to take photographs?

I've been to about 22 countries. But I'd say five or six of them are from before I was a photographer. I don't do a lot of photo shoots out of the country. I did the Europe trip and I've been to Mexico, Peru, and some other places since then and done pictures, but I do a lot of photo shoots around the United States. Last year I did 46 weddings and 14 or 17 of them were out of Utah.

I feel that I'm building these up: art, education, and culture. I'm helping people to learn.

Speaking of taking photos around the world, tell us more about your Envision the World project.

Envision the World is an educational and historical project. The point is to help other people learn about other countries and other cultures — to see them, to know them, to learn how they live, who they are, what they do, their surroundings, the trees, the mountains, the animals, the streets that surround them, everything, so that someone can really educate themselves. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, if you could see every aspect of a society, of any town, any place, and to see all, it would be like a big group project where everyone shares their vision of the world and all these different pieces. The project isn't about money. I feel like it needs to be done.

It would be more than just my own photography. I started it when I visited Europe in 2006 and I took around sixty thousand pictures. I'm very documentative in nature, so I'm not just out for the one picture. I'll take pictures of everything. I've got a lot of pictures whether or not anyone else contributes. But they will — they're going to contribute mass amounts of pictures. There'll be millions on there in no time.

Will the photos you took during your travels also be part of the Envision the World project?

Yes. When I went to Hawaii I spent two extra weeks beyond the wedding and I just stayed there and took pictures. I've also gone to Mexico a couple times to help charity, and I took pictures there. If you look at a picture and see that it can help someone envision that portion of the world, then that picture can qualify for the project (as long as it's in focus and it's decent).

You recently launched Jarvie Digital University, an internship study program for people who want to become better photographers. What gave you the idea to start this?

The thing about having interns is that you get so caught up having

them do different types of things, and it is all stuff that you *could* do yourself. I've worked on approximately 500,000 pictures in my life — so many that I'm very fast and very efficient. But, if I spend a lot of time training these interns, I don't want to have to spend quite as much time teaching each individual. I figured that I could create a system where as students are trained, they share what they've learned with the next batch of students. As they improve their abilities, they'll take on more and more roles of paying it forward to newer students, solidifying their new skills as they share them.

When I've taught before, the students sometimes felt they were good to go, they were off on their way, and I was glad I could be of service. It's really fun for me to see where they're at now and how much they've progressed. I enjoy it. I like being around other people and I like the teaching aspect of photography as well as photography itself.

I think I've struck something that could really work, and people seem to be really excited about it. With good reason, I think — no one else is crazy enough to do something like this. And it's going be a lot of fun.

You said you were trying to recruit a lot of different authors. How do people become involved in this project?

Pretty easy. They just meet up with me, and every once in a while I'll have a little training session to show them how to put together the blogs. It's really easy but there are some questions that should be resolved and answered. That way they can see how I do it on a first-hand basis, so that they can do it fast.

If photographers want to be featured on the blog, there's a link to be highlighted. They just need to click on the link to send us an email, fill out a little survey and give us explicit permission to use their pictures on the blog. Everyone's usually good with that but we just want to make sure all the bases are covered. I've never had anyone say no. They're all really excited about it. It's been fun.

You are a busy guy.

I've got lots going on, don't I? I'm cutting my goals of weddings though; this year my goal is 25, down from 46 last year. I'm focusing on doing more on the weddings — spending more time, delivering higher quality, higher caliber, learning tons so that the wedding photographs turn out much better. And you know, honestly, they're more expensive, so I won't be as popular in Utah.

How has the gospel influenced your work as a photographer and also as a teacher of photography?

I like to try to do everything in a principled-based approach. I don't believe in just saying: "It's good business." I think that's a cop-out and it can be very destructive when someone excuses themselves with "I think it's good business." Almost

all these principles I learned at church, through the interpretation of the scriptures, or from church leaders. Where we learn that the purpose of life is not to get more money but that we're supposed to help others, we learn the value of real education. It's not about a piece of paper that says you're educated. It's about really gaining light and knowledge, and at the same time, expanding our talents. It teaches us that we shouldn't hide our talents but we should share them, and that they should be beneficial to other people. We don't always need to prostitute our skills; we can just share them and give them to other people.

How do you see your work building the kingdom?

A lot goes back the Envision the World project. I feel that the educational benefits of this project will inspire people. We understand in the Church that art and culture are very important. We look kindly toward them. I feel that I'm building these up: art, education, and culture. I'm helping people to learn. It's not as direct as some other methods, but I feel like my own work is very important.

I have a special connection to the Envision the World project. It's not a business deal to me — I feel a stewardship over it. I have no idea where the idea came from. It came, and I wondered, "Why me?" It amazed me. I felt a spiritual connection to it, that it was important that I get this done, and that if I didn't get it done I was letting someone down. My opinion is that someone up there thinks that it's important.

What kind of advice do you have for other LDS photographers?

The other photographers I have known and seen become successful have a couple of qualities in common. They have a passion, and not just a verbal passion but a passion that extends and makes them active in it. They spend a lot of time, and they just do it. They're not setting goals like "This month I want to spend 40 hours," they're just so passionate that they spend 40 hours on their own. They don't have to have some goal.

Everyone talks about making goals. You've got to have the right mentality for that. Sometimes that's the worst thing you can do because as soon as you don't hit your goal you wonder what's wrong with you and that you are never going to accomplish your goal or amount to anything. I think personally most everyone can get to the point where they're good photographers. It's these passionate individuals who always seem to find a way to make it happen in their own unique way. I didn't have

formal training, and I didn't have people there to help me out.

There are so many ways nowadays for people to learn it faster, like online training with Jarvie Digital University, but I think that passion and love for photography is going to get them going. You know what, it takes a lot of time, and that is sometimes inhibitive for certain people who have other jobs, and other lifestyles, so they're going to have to be creative and unique. And secondly, knowing what a good picture looks like will help a person be a good photographer. You can learn how to create good pictures. The types of people who like art are good photographers. Creativity isn't just photography. It's found everywhere.

I guess I should also tell how I kind of cheated. When I got back from Europe and I realized that I was pretty decent at photography, I also realized that it probably had something to do with the fact that nearly every person in my family is an artist. My dad is a full-time artist. My sister is a photographer, and my brother is one of the most artistic, creative people I know. He can do anything and everything. I have another brother who does art type stuff — pottery, so it just seems like it kind of runs in the family. So perhaps I cheated. I didn't think about it because, growing up, I couldn't even draw a stick figure. I figured that photography was my art, that I couldn't do the regular types of art. But I realized that it wasn't so much that I could create art, but that I recognized art. So when I'm wandering around taking pictures, clicking away, I notice that the second click is really good looking. I can recognize and understand art, and then the technical side of me — the button pusher — recognizes how to recreate it. It just becomes part of me. Like a baseball player swings the bat, it just gets to the point where it's ingrained inside of me and I can recreate what worked. That's why my style of learning works for me.

Through heredity, I gained the ability to really understand and know how to make what looks good, and the ability to recreate it. I don't do commercial work — the kind that requires a lot of thinking, coming up with the really creative concept, and then going and recreating what you thought of. I can't picture those things. I just go around with my camera and I look for good pictures.

What are your plans for the future?

I see myself doing a lot of education. And I see myself almost completely doing Envision the World project work. And having a family, and you know, enduring to the end, and living happily ever after. ▪

Jonathan Hoffman

INTERVIEW BY **DAVEY MORRISON DILLARD**
PHOTOS BY **JONATHAN HOFFMAN**

WEB: **JONMAQUE.BLOGSPOT.COM**

Jonathan Hoffman is a maquette sculptor and digital artist currently residing in California. A graduate of the BYU animation program, he is currently employed by Pixar and worked as a texturing and shading artist on the movie Up.

How did you get started as a maquette sculptor?

I've been working with oil-based clay since I was around seven or eight years old. At the time, my sister was into claymation, and she created some wonderful short stop-motion films using an old camera that allowed her to snap one frame at a time. She let me play with some of her clay until I eventually got my own.

At the time it was a major source of entertainment — I'd make armies of intricately detailed starships and I'd enact epic battles that left much of my fleet as clay wreckage, while the surviving ships would have scars carved across their hulls. I made and kept up these sculptures for years, as well as a variety of other creations I used as a physical representations of a story that I would play out in my mind. Eventually I started making larger, human figures in the clay, first as reference for lighting for my drawings, but eventually simply for their own sake.

When I was about thirteen, I was introduced to polymer clay, a clay that behaved much like my modeling clay but that could be hardened in a regular oven. It was a very natural progression from sculptures in oil-based modeling clay to working in polymer clay; however, learning the ins and outs of the craft was a major trial by fire. Most of my early attempts at figures were disastrous, falling over or falling apart during the curing process. It wasn't until I was out of high school that I had figured out how to incorporate an armature into the base of the sculpture to ensure the clay would hold up when it was cured. Almost all of my methods and procedures have been self-taught, by simple trial and error.

Since that time, I have expanded that simple formula and gotten more sophisticated in my techniques and understanding of the human figure. Studying illustration and then animation at BYU helped me also to understand character design and composition. Sculpting my figures has not ever been for any particular academic or financial purpose, though I did create a few commissioned pieces while I was attending BYU, and much of

my work was displayed for a time in the BYU bookstore. Most of my work originates simply with the fact that I enjoy creating characters and fully rendering them in three dimensions. That remains true today — I sell a few and a few are commissioned, but mostly I sculpt for my own interests.

Walk us through the process of translating a two-dimensional painting to a 3D maquette, like you did with Zak the Fly Hunter.

Most of my ideas start in two dimensions, as a simple doodle done during sacrament meeting or an idea that pops into my head at work. Zak the Fly Hunter was actually first visualized during Sunday School, I believe, as a doodle on a sheet of printer paper folded in half.

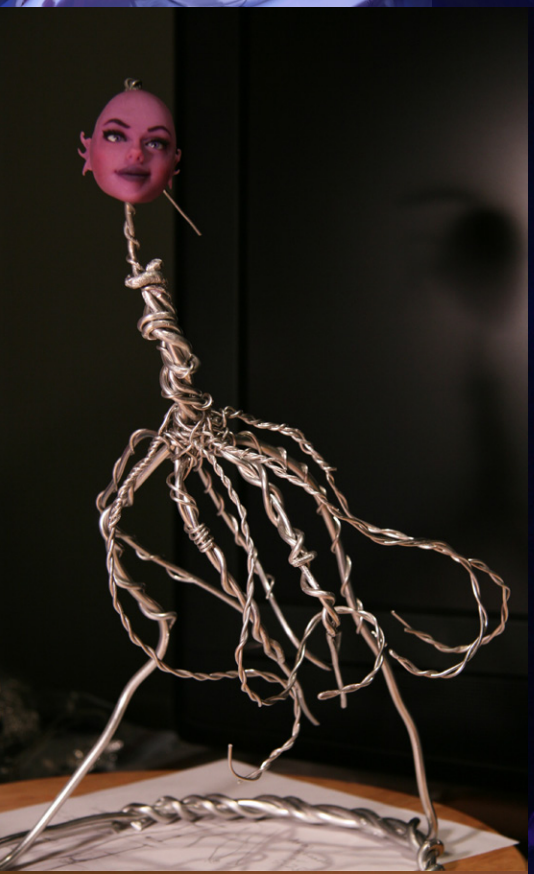
Whether the design has been fully realized as a painting or not, I'll measure its proportions before I create a wire armature using the appropriate ratios of length of head to legs to body. In the case of Zak and any of the other sculptures that involve electronics, any wired components must go in and become part of the armature. Typically my brother, James Hoffman, also a BYU alumnus who studied both computer programming and electrical engineering, creates the electronic components of my sculptures. In this case however, I did my own soldering and wiring for the lights, building them into the wire skeleton armature.

After the electronics are in place, I build the clay in layers on top of the wire, adding specialized parts like the eyes, which are made with a combination of clear epoxy resin and polymer clay. The process of using colored clay is rather unforgiving, as whole sections of the sculpture have to be removed if I decide that I must change a particular part or correct an error that has occurred. I'll cure the sculpture several times in the process of creation, layering on detail as I go.

What similar processes do you follow when you paint?

Once I have the sketch idea, I'll refine the drawing and the composition for a time before moving on to color. I'll scan the image and then paint it digitally (as this is much cleaner and quicker than working with real media) to work out color texture and material quality for the piece. There's a lot of mucking about as I paint directly on top of the scanned sketch, fiddling with lighting color and image detail, though I've tried to become looser in my style in recent years.

Fantasy, to me, is a genre that has the most potential for creative expression.



Elrae

How does your work in those two mediums interact? Which medium do you prefer? Why?

Most of the time my paintings are simply one step in the process of creating a character sculpture. I'm not terribly good at telling a story with my pictures, and very few of my paintings ever have more than one character on the canvas. More often they are simply a study in character, costume, and design, which informs my sculpting.

Painting for me is enjoyable on its own merits, but I find that I enjoy sculpture more. Many of my sculptures are created without having made a painting, remaining a pencil sketch — typically when I have a clearer image in my mind already and when colors are not as important.

What are some of your favorite projects you've worked on?

I'd say my favorite project to work on was the Zik'istri sculpture (the big cockroach-looking fellow), as the creation process went rather smoothly and I created that sculpture entirely at my brother's apartment. Working there was enjoyable because I was right next door to his office where we could interact and share ideas of how we would integrate his electronic components into the sculpture and how he would animate the lights to create a particular effect. The sculpture turned out well and had very few problems, and it was really a process of discovery as we were both new at using LEDs in my sculptures.

I've enjoyed collaborating on quite a few sculptures since, but others have had some frustrating times where technical problems slowed the process or catastrophe has set us back for months.

Tell us about working for Pixar.

I've always wanted to work for Pixar, and I was fortunate enough to get into the animation program at BYU.

The BYU program is excellent, and it allowed me to work on many group projects and to build a portfolio that interested Pixar recruiters. I applied for an internship at Pixar, and on my second attempt was accepted.

I do shading and texturing for Pixar, which uses both my technical knowledge as well as my artistic abilities. I'm essentially a detail fanatic, so shading is a perfect place for me.

What do you consider your greatest achievements in your career so far?

Getting hired at Pixar is by itself a great honor for me. I never considered it possible and still feel very lucky and privileged to have been given the chance.

Working on *Up* was similarly a fantastic opportunity, and having the chance to take notes from Pete Docter and work with the amazing and talented people on that film is something I'll always remember — my first time being in the credits of a Pixar film.

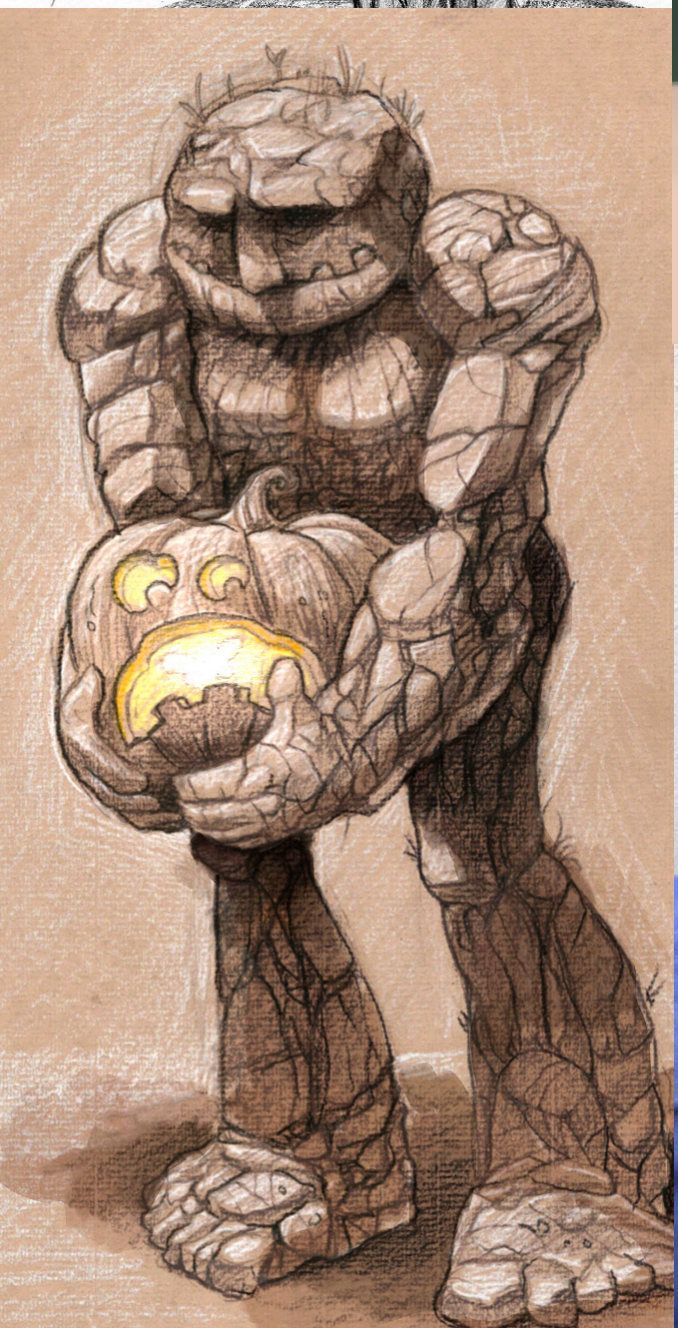
You work a lot in fantasy. What draws you to that genre?

Fantasy, to me, is a genre that has the most potential for creative expression. I love to create entirely new cultures and worlds and environments in my fiction, and the stories that I create are typically the basis for my sculptures and paintings, though on occasion the reverse has been true: a sculpture idea or a painted image has spawned the stories that give it context.

Fantasy lets you do whatever you want, whether it be futuristic or primitive or any interesting juxtaposition of the two — so visually, it allows me to have the most flexibility in design.

Technically, I consider most of my work science fiction, simply because the term "fantasy" conjures up images of elves, dwarves, dragons, and battle-axes, which are quite definitely not included in my stories. My story has elements that are similar to fantasy, but it takes a more technical, logical approach to its system of supernatural events (its so-called "magic" is more like

ALEXANDRA TKATCHEVA



Hugo, from Fablehaven

science) — and there are space ships. Space ships generally mean science fiction. I like cross-pollinating the genres as much as I can, stealing interesting ideas from both.

You mention working on a novel in many of your blog posts, and many of your paintings and sculptures also seem to be of characters from that story. Tell us more about the novel.

It's a dangerous thing to ask me about my novel because if you do you'll likely get a longer explanation than you'd prefer.

The working title of the book is *Prometheus' Fire*, referring to the Greek myth in which Prometheus gives the divine power of fire to man, resulting in man's great ability to both create and destroy. This idea is a central theme throughout the book, played out as a powerful race of ancient creatures unlocks in mankind their latent abilities, a single event that dramatically shapes the course of human history.

The story primarily follows a pair of siblings who are drawn into a desperate hunt across their known galaxy, both of them being pulled by opposite sides of a conflict that originated thousands of years before they were born. And that's the tag line I'd put on the jacket cover if it ever gets published.

The actual manuscript itself took four years, but many elements had been kicking around in my head since high-school. It is primarily science fiction, though it probably fits most neatly into the sub-genre of "space opera," which essentially means that it doesn't focus so much on technology or some cerebral concept about the future — merely that it's set in an environment in which technology has advanced beyond what we have now.

The story was a pretty monumental effort for a full-time student and then full-time employee of Pixar. It's over 300,000 words long (which is a typical length for this genre), though the book was intended as the first in a series of three or four books. The story holds up decently well, though I've been considering revisiting it and hacking away some of the fluff now that it's been on the shelf for about a year, as well as leveraging a couple of ideas that I'd really only touched on lightly in the original manuscript.

I have started two other story ideas since I set down *Prometheus' Fire*, both single-book stories that have no associations with my first book. Anyone interested in reading them need only contact me and I'll send over a copy.

How do you think your Mormonism affects your art?

You know, beyond not making my characters extraordinarily immodest, I'd say my convictions to my faith and my art are pretty separate. I have occasionally made religious pieces, such as when I made some Book of Mormon sculptures for the BYU bookstore, but beyond that, the influence of my faith is more subtle.

I personally don't find very allegorical works appealing (e.g., *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*); I prefer a more round-about allegory like *The Lord of the Rings*, in which Christian themes are explored without a direct one-to-one relationship with a scriptural account. I believe a story worth telling talks about human experience in a way that is edifying, where you learn something about life and the consequences of our actions and

the potential man has for great good or great evil. Obviously big themes like this aren't going to appear in my character sculptures, but they exist in the stories behind the pieces. I believe fantasy has great potential for telling stories in a way that is removed from our current situation, and hence more objective in its approach to problems and situations in which we find ourselves in the real world.

Tell us more about the Book of Mormon sculptures you did for the bookstore.

During my junior year at BYU, I brought one of my sculptures to the BYU bookstore and showed my work to Val Ugolini. The sculpture was of Captain Moroni with the title of liberty, which I found to be a very dramatic piece and probably the most successful religious sculpture I have done. I asked Val if he would be interested in displaying my work in the lower gallery of the bookstore, He was pleased with my work, and I produced a series of Book of Mormon sculptures to go along with the Moroni sculpt.

I then produced sculptures of Enos, Abinadi, Nephi, and Mormon — all of which were displayed for about half a year in the store. During Education Week I sold the Moroni sculpt and was commissioned to do another series of sculptures for a family. The Nephi sculpt sold a couple years later at a festival, and the remaining three pieces were given away to friends and family members. So, I actually have none left in my possession.

Sculpting work from the Book of Mormon was actually a little frustrating, in that if my work didn't look very similar to Arnold Friberg's interpretation of the scriptural figures, people had a hard time accepting them.

One woman, upon seeing my sculpture of Nephi told me, "That's very nice. But that's not what Nephi looks like." I refrained from asking her how she could be so sure without having seen his photograph.

Nevertheless, it was enjoyable making the sculptures, blending my own impressions of these great men with some of the elements of iconoclastic Mormon images so that they would at least be recognizable as the figures they represent.

What are you working on now?

At present I am working on the designs of several sculpt ideas, and I'm not sure which one will be produced first. I have one idea painted on my blog (the "Kaisa" design) which I'll get to eventually, but I'm going to wait because her sculpture will require some intense electronics.

My last several pieces have been intense on the electronics side (Terec, Zak, and Elrae), so I'm going to take a break and do some LED-free sculptures. ▪

Crawford Gates

INTERVIEW BY **ANNIE MANGELSON** | PHOTOS BY **GREG DEAKINS**

Composer and conductor Crawford Gates has written nearly 900 titles. His prolific musical career has been rewarding in many aspects, but he most values the opportunity to touch lives through art, love, and the Spirit.

What is an important element of teaching or learning music?

I started to write when I was eight. I had a year of piano music study with a wonderful teacher who was sixty-five years old, and she loved me. When I was nine, I took violin in Palo Alto where I grew up, next door to Stanford. Many of the teachers there were brilliant. My fifty-five-year-old violin teacher was part of the school system there, and I loved her. She liked my talent the same as my piano teacher.

So I had these two women, one who was sixty-five and one who was fifty-five, who influenced my musical life. They did more than just teach me how to play the piano. They taught me chords and music theory and key signatures and inversions and just all kinds of things, before I was nine years old. The violin teacher changed me to the viola at age ten because I had a longer arm than the other students, and as a violist I started playing in a string quartet. I would meet at my teacher's home on Saturday afternoons for about an hour or hour and a half, for an extra lesson. I only lived two blocks from her and I thought that it was wonderful that she would do that for me. I could hardly wait to get home to practice the new techniques that she had given me. My expertise went up very quickly.

She and her husband were seriously injured in an automobile accident and they died about eight months after the accident. The death of this wonderful, brilliant teacher who loved her students was a great loss to the Palo Alto school system. I spoke to the Music Educators of Utah last summer at their annual conference, and I told these stories to them, saying we don't ever hear about love in our schools or classes or lectures, but in my experience it was one of the most fundamental things that I had at ages eight, nine, and ten. I had fabulous teachers who loved me, and they showed me by the way they taught me.

I've seen it many years as a professional music educator — one of the most important things in music education is love. That became part of my philosophy of teaching.

When I first got the job as an orchestra conductor for Wisconsin's Beloit Janesville Symphony Orchestra, I decided that I would make the orchestra a loving family. I knew that orchestras frequently had cliques in them and that there was often animosity against the conductor. Therefore, my attitude was never autocratic. I was with that orchestra all thirty-four of my years back there, so I went through two generations of players. We were a loving family.

Before I left, I had in my last few years one of the most brilliant violinists, Norman Paulu, in the whole of Southern Wisconsin as my concertmaster. Everyone loved him. He was so brilliant and yet so sweet a man. My string section just came together under him! He would make periodic comments and demonstrations to the whole string section about a passage, and they would follow it. He gave a speech once

and said, "I'm going to retire next month. I've played in a lot of groups and in a lot of places. I've been your concertmaster for three years, and I've played with other orchestras over the years that were really more technically expert than this orchestra, but none of them have had the spirit of this orchestra."

And I thought, that's the triumph of my objective of the last thirty-four years: that he said this orchestra had the greatest spirit. We loved each other, and I thought, "That's the most important of any human experience."

What was the importance of your mission, with regards to your musical career?

Several things about this part of my life were important: it was my mission, and I had a musical service to perform. In addition, at age nineteen I became an established arranger for choral music and a conductor on the radio. During this time we were able to perform a wonderful missionary service via broadcasting.

My mission was in the eastern states: New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. While I was on my mission, the missionaries would all meet at the Hill Cumorah for two weeks while we produced the pageant as cast and crew. That's when the auditions took place that made my chorus possible. The mission president permitted all the missionaries, male and female, to be auditioned vocally and he created two choruses in the mission field — both made up of good singers.

I was the conductor of an eight-voice male chorus. Roy Darley, who was later the tabernacle organist, was both my accompanist and my companion. My baritone was the district president and he functioned as the priesthood authority; I was the musical authority. I had two tenors that could sing a high C and I had two basses that could get to low C. I did forty-three arrangements for that choir, for broadcast.

Being in a chorus wasn't considered the "real essence" of missionary work, but it turned out to be so, because of the number of little radio stations that were then all over that area of the United States. Each village had a radio station that would broadcast to about 5,000 in their area. The district presidents would book us two to three weeks ahead, and we would go to perform for these radio stations on Fridays and Saturdays.

Over a period of about ten months we covered one hundred radio broadcasts within about 150 to 200 miles around Philadelphia, into New Jersey and Delaware. We would go out Friday at noon, having tracted our heads off the first four-and-a-half days in the week — enough to equal all the other missionaries in the mission field so we wouldn't be looked upon as "gold bricks." On Friday we would do about three broadcasts in the afternoon and one in the evening, and then between four and six on Saturday. In total, we would have about eight broadcasts: fifteen minutes each, with twelve minutes of music and a three-minute gospel message written by Marsden Durham. Our messages were very direct and addressed the apostasy, the restoration and the Book of Mormon. These messages were the real point, not the singing; the singing got us accepted.

The broadcasts were very successful. We became known throughout that area. Eventually

the word got up to the big station. The biggest station in Philadelphia had an audience of five million as opposed to five thousand. They heard about this small, cracker-jack Mormon chorus that was wonderfully blended, wonderfully produced, and that memorized everything. They asked us to come up to their station, and they liked us so much that they put us on prime time for four months — the last four months of my mission. We had sixteen broadcasts in four months on this big station with its huge audience.

Tell us about *Promised Valley*, the Hill Cumorah Pageant, and *Joseph! Joseph!*

They were wonderful. You've hit on the top three of my career. I have a total of 874 works, and I keep track of them. My wife calls me an arithmomaniac; I give numbers to each of them. I'm working on #875 right now. But of the three you mentioned, *Promised Valley* was my first big monolih. The Hill Cumorah Pageant has been going for seventy-two years now, and not many pieces get played every year, particularly in the Church. But the newest one is *Joseph! Joseph!*

All 874 of my pieces have been successes in the sense that they got published, recorded or performed — those are the things that can happen to pieces. And those three have had tremendous performance records. That's what makes them important. The one that sits on a shelf at BYU, that gets premiered and then not looked at for months, isn't, because it hasn't affected anybody; or at least not

These messages were the real point, not the singing.

many. These three are my most valuable works because they have value to someone else and they are valued by the Church.

Why do you think music is a valuable way to tell Church history?

Because it's so popular to the people. It's a vehicle.

Opera was invented by two or three men in Italy around 1600, and it immediately caught on. It's still very popular today. Musical plays are like operas, but with dialogue.

The American musical play is one of the most valuable contributions to music history that's ever existed.

Promised Valley was patterned after the style of *Oklahoma!*, an American musical play. The Hill Cumorah Pageant was a pageant, which is a different kind of vehicle. A pageant is a drama with vocal text that is sung, and with an orchestral underpinning like a movie.

What was it like composing *Promised Valley*?

Promised Valley had immediate importance because it was the vehicle to celebrate the centennial of the state of Utah. *Oklahoma!* came out in 1943, so in 1946 the state of Utah was planning for 1947, and they said, "We want something for Utah that would do the same for Utah as *Oklahoma!* did for Oklahoma." And that was their image: a Broadway kind of show.

We had interesting experiences happen in the middle of that creative period. I got the contract for it in January of '47, and the contract called for it to be completed by opening night, the 22nd of July. (July 24th was the third performance.) *Promised Valley* was produced in the University of Utah stadium, which at the time had two sides to it, but no north bowl. The *Promised Valley* money put a cement bowl on the north side of the stadium. You can imagine what that would cost. That bowl held 12,500 every night.

Well, in the contract, the question came up, "What about the orchestration of this?" Broadway theater pits couldn't hold more than a twenty-four piece orchestra, and they didn't think that a twenty-four piece orchestra in the stadium would sound like anything — not outdoors and in a stadium. So, they wanted to hire the Utah Symphony for six weeks: three weeks of rehearsals and three weeks of performances. The Symphony was about sixty-five pieces at the time; a big orchestra.

Now on Broadway, almost no composer would ever orchestrate his own score; the producers would bring in four or five top Broadway orchestrators. And that was only for a twenty-four piece orchestra.

This issue came up early on as we discussed the contract. "We want the Utah Symphony and you'll become the conductor of the Utah Symphony for this event."

That was the issue: this score would have to be for a symphony. "We want a Broadway-style presentation like *Oklahoma!*, but we want it to be arranged for a symphony. And you are going to conduct it." That was to be in my contract.

What I didn't know was that it would become a two-hour show, and that I would be writing a two-hour score, so certainly pretty big. I was only twenty-four when I signed the contract, twenty-five when I wrote the score, and I thought, "Well, I'm a big boy; I can write the full orchestration myself."

I started to work on the fifth of January and they wanted it by the twenty-second of July. I begged their permission to go home to California to spend Christmas with my family, and have two wisdom teeth taken out. When I got back, they had an office for me, right across from the Salt Lake Temple, on the third floor of what was an old high school building. I had a classroom, I had a piano that they tuned up for me, I had a desk and a pencil sharpener, and I had 1,000 pages of score of my own design to do the shorthand orchestration with colored pencils.

The first act of the script for *Promised Valley* was there, although it didn't have a name at that point. They also had the contract for me to sign, and the first third of the payment. That was an important day.

I had a contract! And a check for a third of it! This was the first real full-time job I had as a composer; a composer of something important to the state of Utah, and to the Church, and to me. There aren't very many American composers who get full-time composing jobs for important things. So I started working daily, getting down there about eight o'clock. I'd work until noon, have lunch, get back to work about a quarter to one, and work until about six. Then I would take off about forty-five minutes for dinner, and work again until about 10:30, six days a week. I was doing the orchestration work of five on Broadway.

As time progressed, it became apparent that I couldn't be the music director, because I wasn't finished with the score. Because I was composing, I had no chance to go to the rehearsals for the choreography, the choral work, or the soloists, and the music director has to do that. No one blamed me; they knew I was working like mad. I got through the score two days before *Promised Valley* opened.

The last bit was the overture, a six-minute piece, which I composed in about eighteen hours. I don't know how long it took me to orchestrate it, but the Lord blessed me with a beautiful overture. It took me maybe three or four days. The tunes were already there, but it was traumatic. And of course it had to be copied for the orchestra. They got every high school music director in the Salt Lake Valley to each take a fraction of the piece and to do their parts. Unfortunately, because of that, the overture was full of errors. Then the orchestra rehearsed it the night before, and of course half the rehearsal was spent correcting the errors. The second time the orchestra read it was opening night.

How did you become involved with the Hill Cumorah Pageant again, after your mission?

I was there as a missionary in 1941, and the pageant was in its fifth year. In the beginning, they had been using classical recordings for the music. The selections were all appropriate, but they came from different contexts; they fit emotionally but not historically.

Now, Dr. Harold Hansen, who was the director and a dear friend of mine, knew that, and so he told many people, "Well, some day I've got to get my own score to this production."

In the summer of 1953, we were back finishing up the classwork for my doctorate degree at the Eastman School of the University of Rochester, twenty miles away from Palmyra. While we were there, Harold Hansen brought over his assistant directors, about four of them, to see the opera in Rochester on a summer night.

Well, it rained out that night, so there was no opera. Harold Hansen knew where we lived, so he brought his four guys over to my home when this rain was going on, and fortunately we had some apple pie and ice cream, so we fed them dessert, and he opened up on the fact that he was disturbed that seventeen years had gone by and he didn't have his own score. And he said, "I think that you're the composer to write this score."

So Harold Hansen asked me to become a composer for his score for the Hill Cumorah Pageant in the summer of '53, and I got a letter from the First Presidency shortly after that confirming the appointment. He told me it was going to happen; he said, "I'm asking you informally now, but the real invitation will come." He didn't say a contract. And it wasn't a contract. I got no money from the writing of that. It was a church assignment.

That score lasted thirty-one years. It was heralded immediately as being a wonderful thing — from the critical reviews of Rochester to the cast's and crew's and Church's response to it — and that blessed my life.

It is a very satisfying thing for a composer to have a project last

thirty-one years, particularly a Church-related project. I would get letters every year from someone in the cast: "Heard the score; it's wonderful." You can't beat that kind of experience.

I used to wonder, "Does that make it important to me?" Of course it does. It was important to me that the Saints themselves felt it was beautiful and wonderful and supportive to the purposes of the pageant; and the Church felt the same way.

The Hill Cumorah Pageant was evaluated by the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency about every three years. In 1986, Elder Oaks made it a point to go to the pageant.

He was there for several nights. He went about an hour early, because the audience started to accumulate an hour early. He especially wanted to talk with the non-member audience. In fact, he would really prefer to talk to people who have seen it before, because they would then have an opinion about what it contained.

His later report to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve was, "Everyone loves the spectacle. It is a gorgeous thing to look at. Not only when Christ comes out of the sky, but many of the scenes are very dramatically and beautifully portrayed and thrilling to the non-member. They are thrilled by it; they want to keep coming back. But ultimately," he said, "the fact that the Hill Cumorah Pageant is about the Book of Mormon as a testament of Jesus Christ is something that almost none of the non-members could articulate the way a Latter-day Saint would."

So he suggested that the wonderful original script be rewritten for the non-member. They hired Orson Scott Card, and he rewrote it with basically the same story, but he did it with that objective.

They asked me to come back to Palmyra in 1987 so I could see the last production of the old version and then talk the next day about the new one. After the last performance (I was there for the last two performances), we all shed tears, as it was fifty years that it had been going. The next day we met all day and talked about the time schedule.

Basically, I had to write a new score, even if I used the same themes. I could maybe borrow some of it, but it had to be tapered to the time dimensions of the new script. The Church representatives told me the brethren wanted it the next year. You don't argue with a general authority, so I said, "Okay, the Lord will have to bless me."

And so, for nine months I booked out what my schedule would be every day. I had so many hours for each scene. I would plan so much time to conceive the scene musically and get it written concretely to the textual demands of the time of the scene.

Then I would orchestrate the scene immediately, during the next twenty hours of my time that were set apart to this project (four hours here, three hours there, and so forth).

I did all that planning of my time, and then I had to religiously live up to it. If I got behind, then I had to somehow shave the period for the next scene down so I could make it up. That was constantly my problem. Some of them I did quite quickly, and other scenes took longer. You just can't determine that. So I never could live 100% to my time schedule, but it was a help to have it, to know that I was ahead or behind.

And of course I was on my knees before every one of those periods. All my life I have done that.

I finished it nine days early, not two days. Nine days seems like a glorious amount.

You often talk about your experience with the Cumorah Christ theme. Could you share that with us?

Oh, yes, the problem of the Christ theme. I got the invitation to write the first score in 1953, and I didn't finish — it wasn't complete — until 1957. The reason for the delay was that I couldn't write a good Christ theme.

I wrote seventeen poor Christ themes. I have never written seventeen thematic problems. The Christ theme, I wrote seventeen of them. In my own judgment, none of them were right. The seventeenth was almost right. I thought, "Ah, this is close," and I orchestrated it for full symphony orchestra and choir. I got the BYU symphony and choirs to read it, perfect it, and then record it.

We had the Smith auditorium, completely vacant except for Harold Hansen and my wife in the audience, way at the back of the hall. I could tell in the first ten seconds that number seventeen was not good enough, but I went through the motions of perfecting it so that we got a near-perfect recording of it in an hour's time. The choir was wonderful, and the orchestra was very cooperative, so I had no complaints against anybody except myself; but I knew this wasn't going to do it.

When we got through, I thanked the orchestra, thanked the choir, and later thanked the directors that made it possible. Then I went back to see Harold Hansen and my wife. As Harold began to come to me, I went back there and said, "Harold, you don't have to say anything. I know already this is not good enough."

He said, "Brother, I'm glad you said that," or something like that. He didn't think it was good enough either. So, I said, "You wanted this score the next summer. Three years later, no good — seventeen failures.

I think I need a blessing from one of the General Authorities."

He said, "You know, I'm having some problems with my part of the Cumorah pageant, being the director and the artistic head of it. Let's go up together and both of us get blessings." So he phoned Elder George Q. Morris, and we drove up to meet him, to explain to him what our problems were, and that we were in need of a blessing. When we got up there, Elder Morris had been called within the last half-hour to an emergency death of one of his own family members. He didn't even have time to phone us; we had already left when this happened. But he asked Elder Harold B. Lee to take his place. He was a pretty good substitute.

The Quorum of the Twelve is a busy group, but he met with us as though he had nothing else to do. He said, "Brethren, tell me what your needs are." We explained our situation to him. It took about forty-five minutes to find out about the pageant, because he knew very little about it. But he knew about Christ, and he knew about problems of portraying Christ. He didn't know what a composer does with that, but he knew that it was an important function.

Before he gave the blessings, he said, "I will not record these blessings. I usually do, but I don't think I need to in this case. When you go back to Provo, you brethren are welcome to put into writing what you can remember of these blessings, and let that be your guide. Your memories will be enhanced, and I don't need to record it." So we accepted that. He then gave a beautiful blessing addressing Hansen's problems, then he came to me.

When I got to Provo, I could remember ten things that he had said, and I wrote them all down; I've always kept them close. One statement I will never forget: "You will hear the music in the night."

I didn't know how to interpret that at the time. I knew it was pretty remarkable because it was so unusual. I never hear music in the night. This time I was going to hear it in the night. The music presumably would be the Christ theme. I was moved by that statement. It was concrete — pretty specific yet ambiguous.

About two weeks later, I thought of a wonderful theme — not in the night — and I wrote it down in five minutes. It was very brief, nothing long, maybe thirty seconds at the top. Nice and tight, and very beautiful.

I thought, "This is worth orchestrating like I did the seventeenth one." I took the time to write down the orchestration for the full symphony orchestra and for the choir. I did it very fast.

About two nights later, around five o'clock in the morning, I was quite asleep, and I had a dream, and the dream was that I was in the tabernacle and I was conducting the Utah Symphony and BYU choirs in this eighteenth version.

One statement I will never forget: "You will hear the music in the night."

Now, I don't dream very much. I'm not a dreamer. But this was very clear. I could see the engineers in the control room. I knew what their first names were. I saw the concertmaster, Harold Wolf, a dear friend of mine, down to my left, playing his heart out. I saw Joanne Ottley, nineteen-year-old soprano, and her husband in the choir. I could see their faces very vividly. This was no fuzzy dream.

And I remember raising my baton, starting that off, and I heard that music in the night that President Lee told me I would hear. I heard it very clearly, and it was gorgeous. The dream lasted for maybe a minute — maybe less than a minute. And the Christ theme was there three times. And I knew that it was the right one; that dream confirmed it.

When I woke up, I knelt in prayer and said, "Thank you, thank you." It was one of the great spiritual experiences of my life to have the prophet of the Lord give me a blessing that came literally true and confirmed to me that I had the right theme. That's why the Hill Cumorah Pageant is very important to me: The Lord gave me two incredible blessings. He gave me the music and then he gave me a great spiritual experience of having the reality of a prophetic statement from a prophet of the Lord on my behalf and on behalf of the pageant come true in my sleep.

What inspired you to write *Joseph! Joseph!*?

My sister-in-law, Claudia Bushman, has a habit of making agendas for the whole family. And we all love her for that. We don't take offense to that at all; she is such a beloved person. But Claudia was the initiator of this. She writes family letters.

In one of her letters in the early nineties, on my copy of the letter, she said in the postscript, "Oh, by the way, Crawford, you've done the Book of Mormon music with the Hill Cumorah, and you've done the trek with *Promised Valley*. Now you ought to write an opera on Joseph Smith."

So I'd have a musical play, a pageant, and an opera; three different kinds of musical theater, with three different subjects, all involving the gospel. She wrote two or three sentences, that's all it was.

I wrote back and said, "Claudia, writing an opera would take two or three years. I don't have two or three years. Besides, the real question is, who is going to produce it?"

I thanked her for the compliment, of course, but I said, "This is not possible." That didn't stop her at all. Over the next year, maybe every third letter, she'd say, "By the way, Crawford, I'm not giving up on that suggestion. I think it's a great idea. Your refusal is baloney," or something like that.

That went on for quite a while, and sometime, I don't know the exact sequence or the time, I finally gave in.

Since it was written, *Joseph! Joseph!* has had two wonderful pairs of performances: the first pair at the Assembly Hall in April of 2004, and the second pair in Los Angeles in November of 2005. All of these performances had wonderfully favorable responses by four full-house LDS audiences. *Joseph! Joseph!* has had some blocks, but I fully expect it will eventually be produced in many places again to favorable and enthusiastic responses. It ultimately will be one of my most important works.

How does the gospel affect you as an artist?

As a composer, with all eight hundred and seventy-four pieces, I had two prayers. I have an "empty-page prayer." I look at the page, and I've got to fill it with beautiful music. Where is that going to come from? I don't have beautiful music within me. It's got to come from the Lord, but he is going to give it to me. So the empty-page prayer is a prayer of supplication: "Help me do something beautiful for this need." And that was certainly true with *Promised Valley,* that was certainly true with the Hill Cumorah Pageant, and that was certainly true with *Joseph! Joseph!*.

Then there's the second prayer: I got a page. The Lord has given it to me. I get on my knees next to my piano or next to my desk. "Thank you for this beautiful music. Thank you, Heavenly Father."

As a Latter-day Saint composer, the most important ingredient is my relationship with my Heavenly Father to write beautiful things for His children.

Two prayers: "empty page," "full page." It's been that way all my life. And it may not be just one prayer, or two prayers; it's a week of prayers, or a month of prayers.

And so as a Latter-day Saint composer, the most important ingredient is my relationship with my Heavenly Father to write beautiful things for His children, for the kingdom, and the Lord has blessed me so abundantly with that. ▪

Tomoko Shimada

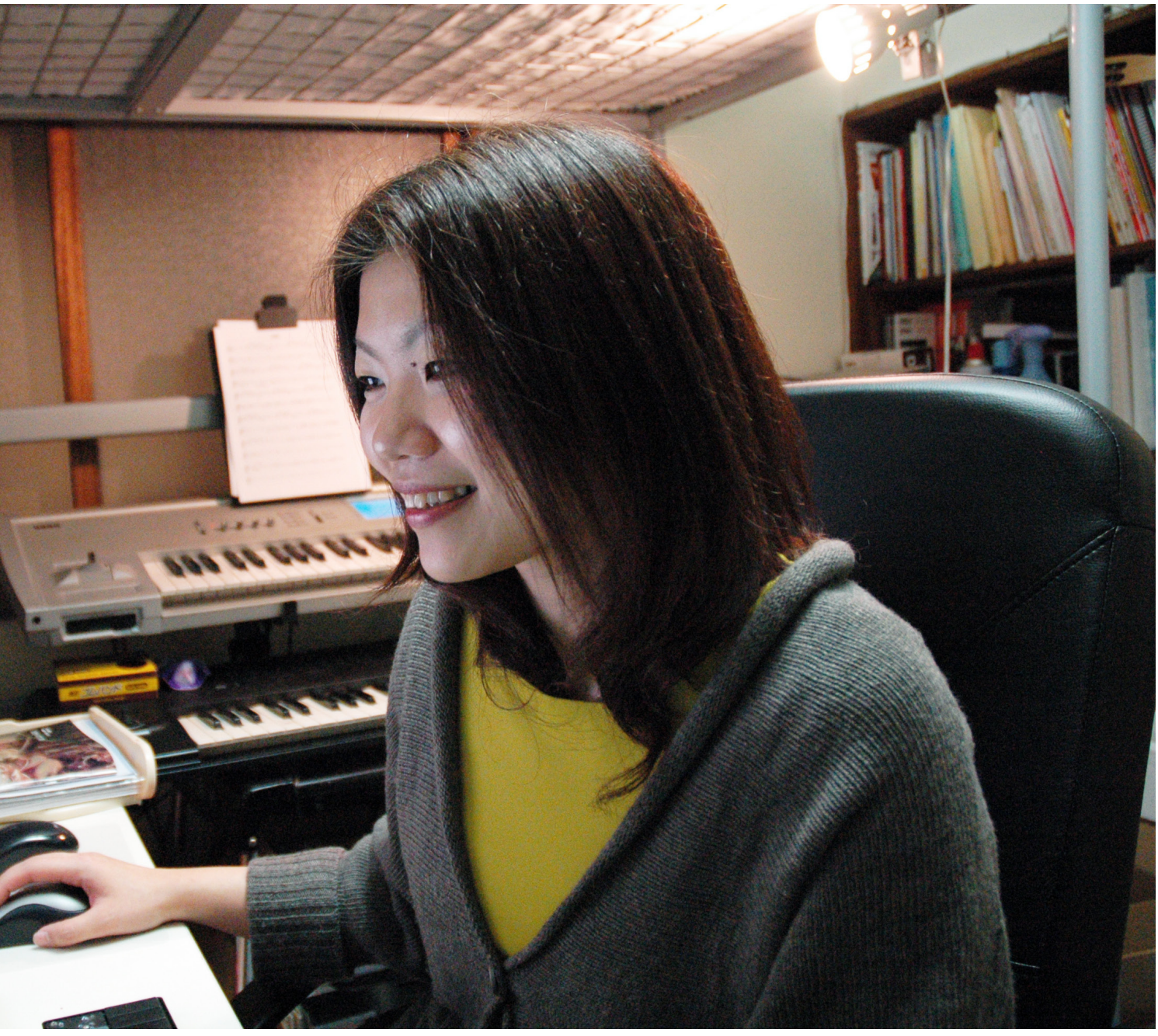
INTERVIEW BY **ANNEKE MAJORS** | PHOTOS BY **TOMOKO SHIMADA**

As a missionary living in the bouncing cosmopolitan port city of Yokohama, Japan, I was accustomed to being surrounded with tantalizing hints of world culture — culture I was trying to avoid. But it hummed like an electric undercurrent, splashing around me in the form of bright posters in the trains, soggy flyers trampled under commuter feet in the station, epic graffiti scrawled across the carefully groomed urban district of Sakuragi-chou. And, as the time neared for me to go home, some of it began sneaking into my suitcases.

The last preparation day I spent in Yokohama before I went home to the States was for paying attention to packing details and running errands. The collapsible pull-handle on my suitcase was jammed and wasn't so collapsible anymore, so we took it two doors down from our little apartment on a windy narrow street in Hongou-chou and knocked on the door, hoping Brother Shimada was home. Luckily the family was there and we were greeted by Brother and Sister Shimada, who had just returned from Hiroshima, the third of several missions they've served together. Their daughter Tomoko came out of her studio in the back room, headphones still around her neck, and greeted us warmly. I explained to them my suitcase dilemma and asked if they might be able to think of a way to either repair the handle or maybe at the least have some sort of a tool to cut it off so I could make it onto the airplane. "Oh — are you transferring?" Brother Shimada asked. "The Eternal Transfer," his savvy wife explained.

As they got to work with the suitcase and fed us all sorts of hospitable bean cakes and warm barley tea, I had a favor to ask Tomoko. I knew she worked in music of some sort, and I knew she was in the right demographic to have trustworthy taste.

"Tomoko Shimai, I haven't been able to listen to Japanese music while I'm a missionary, but I want to get some to take home with me. I was wondering if you had any recommendations?"



Her eyes lit up. Not only did she have recommendations, but she sent me home with a stack of CDs, some studio demos, and some shrink-wrapped commercial releases: some J-Pop and some earnest efforts by Japanese Mormons to record spiritually uplifting music in their native tongue. It ended up being one of the souvenirs I treasured most.

I now keep in touch with Tomoko through blogs and that blessed whimsical contraption that is Facebook, and I was pleased to get to interview her for *Mormon Artist* and find out a little bit more about her life and career:

When did you first get started in music?

I started to take piano lessons when I was four years old, and I played in my first band as a drummer when I was fifteen. I became a keyboardist in a band when I was in college, about eighteen years old. At the same time, I started learning about the computer and music, just by myself—I didn't go to any school. I just read magazines and stuff and learned it.

What style of music are you most interested in?

Acid jazz, soul and funk. I like the old music.

And you learned that through playing with the band? Or through learning yourself?

Both. I've gone through almost all kinds of music so far. Rock, heavy metal, jazz, pop, country music. Just everything.

Tell us about your job and about the music that you do on your own.

My music work is mostly for commercial products, like PlayStation games and PC video games, and also for ringtones.

And I arrange piano versions of songs. Today I arranged some J-Pop music for ringtones.

Who do you work for?

I work as a freelancer for lots of different clients — I don't belong to any company.

When you're not making music for work, what kind of music do you make on your own?

Pop music or piano house music. Also trance. I'm into club music these days.

What part of your music or your job do you think is the most challenging?

When I don't have enough time to create the music. Sometimes they give me a very short schedule, and there are many things that I want to put into the music but, because of the time constraints, I can't. I don't like that.

What's the most fun part of it?

It's fun all the time, actually, because I just love the music. It's fun to work with the music.

What was it like for you growing up LDS in Japan?

I don't think it's hard. And I don't think it's hard even today, but I think I'm very different from others. Not only being LDS but being a Christian is very different in Japan. Sometimes people ask me a lot of questions about Christianity. I like that.

How has being LDS affected your music and your career?

I didn't care about this when I was a lot younger, but lately I feel I'm supposed to use my musical talent for the Lord's work. I want to create music that can help people to be uplifted, to be happy, and to be touched. But sometimes it's very hard — for my job, I have to make some "moody" music, so I have to be careful. I don't want to make people sad through my music.

What are your dreams for the future?

My current position is as composer and arranger, so it's production work. But I want to become a professional player, instead.

I play in a band as a hobby today, but someday I want to release a CD from the Mission label.

Has teaching music been a good experience? What have you learned?

It's been a very good experience. My students are not familiar with the music at all. Their school is for game programmers, not for musicians. So, they really don't know about the music.

Last year they asked me, "So teacher, what is a melody?" I had a hard time answering that question.

But I found out if I teach them in detail, step by step, they get it so quickly, and they have fun with the music. They couldn't do anything in the beginning, but they can now compose their own music, and that's a lot of growth.

From your own experience, what advice would you give to young LDS people who want to have a future in music?

Becoming a professional musician is very, very hard. Of course you need the musical skills and some good sense, but it's not the most important thing, I think. The most important thing is the communication skills and your heart.

If you have a desire to help people with your music, I think you will be a success. ▪

I want to create music that can help people to be uplifted, to be happy, and to be touched.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Matt Whitaker

INTERVIEW BY **MEAGAN BRADY** | PHOTOS BY **TIFFANY TERTIPES**

WEB: **TRUTHANDTREASON.COM**

RYAN LITTLE

Matt Whitaker is a screenwriter, director, and producer with such film credits to his name as Saints and Soldiers, *the second and third* The Work and the Glory *films, and the PBS documentaries* Ancestors *and* Small Fortunes. *He is currently working on a feature film of the Helmuth Hübener story.*

I just want to tell good stories.

How did you get started in the filmmaking profession? Was it something you always wanted to do?

When I was young I actually wanted to be an actor. Or a movie star. I wanted to be a movie star and if acting was a part of that, then I would do that too. I went to BYU, and when I was a freshman I was actually majoring in drama — in acting. I did that until I went on my mission.

It was while I was a missionary in Paris that I figured out it would be pretty tough to be an active member of the Church and to make a living as an actor. I started thinking about moving to the other side of the camera, so when I got back from my mission I started enrolling in the film program. Back then it was a lot easier than it is now; it's very competitive now to get into the film program at BYU. I started taking film production classes in '89 and fell in love with it. I realized that I much preferred being on the other side of the camera.

One of the things that I figured out was that, although I loved acting, I wasn't that great of an actor. But I found out that I could bring a good, believable performance out of someone else. I really fell in love with that part of the process.

So, I graduated from BYU in film production in 1992. Then I had to work my way up the ladder and start at the bottom as a production assistant. I went down to Los Angeles and did a summer internship for a production company while I was a student at BYU. I worked for free down there, but it has continued to pay dividends. You come

back to Utah and say, "I worked in L.A.," or, "I did this in the film business in L.A.," and it carries a lot of clout, whether it should or not.

I was very fortunate, very blessed, to get breaks very quickly into the directing field, which was what I wanted to get into — writing and directing. My first professional gig was a little project for the Church. It was actually on parking lot maintenance, how to take care of your church parking lot. You have to start somewhere.

But after that I started doing a lot of seminary films and then branched out and started doing documentaries for PBS. The whole time I was screenwriting. That was kind of like my night job. I would get up early and stay up late and write screenplays and then make movies during the day.

Were the screenplays your own projects, or were they for the same organizations?

A lot of it was my own stuff. Stories that I wanted to tell that were inside of me and had to come out somewhere, so I would write them.

You mentioned that you worked your way from doing things like working as a foley assistant all the way up to writing, directing and producing. What is your favorite hat to wear?

I love the writing process ninety percent of the time. Otherwise, I hate it. I often refer to a quote by another writer named Gene Fowler who said, "Writing is easy. It's just a matter of staring at the blank page until your forehead bleeds."

Sometimes it's like that; I do get writers block. But when I'm not there I absolutely love that process of imagining, of creating something that no one has ever seen before and typing it into a script.

And then if you're lucky enough or fortunate enough to have that script actually go into production and get made into a film, to see it actually happening is just magic. It's a rush.

When your role on a project is as a screenwriter, how much does that carry over into the actual filming of what you have created?

It depends on the project. I have been very fortunate in the scripts that I've written but haven't directed because the directors have been very generous and wanted me on set to get my input.

As a screenwriter, you're constantly doing rewrites — every single day, every single night — while you're shooting. An actor will say, "What if this scene went this way? In the scene we're shooting tomorrow, what if I said this, this, and this?" Then the director says, "That's great." Hopefully I will get to have my input, but I know my place as a screenwriter. You are invited to the set and if the director asks for your input then you give it, but it's not my place as a screenwriter to say, "No, it has to be this way," or, "I wrote it because of this," or whatever.

When we did the second and third *Work and the Glory* films I was out there for a lot of that. For *Saints and Soldiers* I wasn't able to be there because I was working on another project while they were shooting, although I was invited.

How are projects like *The Work and the Glory*, which is drawn from source material already in existence, different from something that comes out of your imagination? How do you work with an existing text and how do you change it to make it more appropriate for the screen?

Adapting a novel into a screenplay is a very specific process — and it's something that I've had some experience at. I wasn't involved in the first *Work and the Glory* film, so when they asked me to come on for the second and third films the first question that the producer asked was, "Have you read the books?"

I had read all nine of them, actually. But once I took the job, I dove back into the source material. You have to. You read it, and you reread it, and you mark it up, and you're folding pages.

Any time you have a four-hundred-page book that's going to turn into a two-hour movie you have to take out a whole lot of stuff. So what I'm looking for when I dive back into it knowing that I'm going to adapt it into a screenplay are the threads that resonate, the threads that will have an arc and carry us through a good two-hour story.

With *The Work and the Glory*, for instance, so many great threads are weaving all over that. Gerald Lund did a great job weaving together so many different strands and threads and storylines. But I took mainly the father-son/Benjamin-Joshua storyline and really focused on that. A lot of other things, unfortunately, had to fall by the wayside. But it's finding that thread, and then finding what has to be taken out, what can stay, and what has to be added in.

We're not filming the book; we're making a movie based on the book. And it's a different medium, a different way of telling a story. Usually you end up coming into a movie a lot later than the book. We may start at chapter eight instead of chapter one because that is where the story starts filmically.

I've noticed that most of your work so far has been in the Mormon field, geared toward Mormon audiences with themes that are relevant. Is that something you consciously planned or is that the way your career has naturally flowed?

I think that living in Utah dictates that a little bit. A lot of the work that's in this area has LDS-related

themes and stories that people are trying to tell around here. It's been a great experience, but those are not the only stories I want to tell.

As an LDS filmmaker, it's been wonderful to be able to tell some of our stories and I plan on telling a lot more of them. But it's never been my intent to propagandize with this. I'm really all about telling good stories, or trying to tell good stories. And if a story has a theme that relates to my faith, that's wonderful. If it doesn't but it's a great story, that's wonderful, too. I just want to tell good stories.

Earlier, you talked about how books and movies are different mediums. With *Saints and Soldiers* you did a documentary before you made the feature film, and with the subject of Helmuth Hübener you're doing the same thing—a documentary and now a feature film. What makes you come back to this same source material from these different approaches?

It was a different situation for each of those two examples. For *Saints and Soldiers,* I had done the documentary *Saints at War,* and then Ryan Little and Adam Abel, the director and producer of *Saints and Soldiers,* came to me. They were interested in the idea of telling a World War II story and having some LDS characters intermixed with other characters. So we took some true stories from the documentary that I had done and interwove those with other true stories that we were aware of to create a storyline that was based on actual events, but was, at its essence, a fictionalized story. So, that was one where I had done the documentary and thought I was done with it, and they came back to me and said, "Hey, we want to make a film about this. Are you interested?"

With *Truth and Treason*, the Helmuth Hübener story, I did the documentary, and the story wouldn't let go of me. And that's one where while I was editing the documentary I started writing the screenplay to adapt it into a feature film. Every once in a while a story just takes control and you have to tell it.

How did you come across the Helmuth Hübener story?

It was when I was working on *Saints at War* and I had interviewed a German member of the Church who had served in Hitler's army. I was fascinated by that perspective of what it was like to have grown up in that environment, to have served on that side, and to be an active member of the Church.

So while I was doing that, another associate of mine, Rick McFarland, approached me and said, "Hey, have you ever heard of the Helmuth Hübener story?" He had served his mission in Germany and was familiar with the story. I told him that I was vaguely aware of it. He said, "I think that one of these resistance fighters is still alive. I think he lives in Salt Lake. Let's see if we can find him."

I think we actually just opened up the phone book and looked up Karl-Heinz Schnibbe and there he was. We called him on the phone and said, "We're interested in your story. Could we come and meet with you?" He said, "Of course."

He invited us up and we sat down in his house and he told me the story and I was just blown away. I was astounded by the story that this sweet, little old man had to tell about what they had done when they were sixteen, seventeen years old. I spent a lot of time with Karl. I took him back over to Germany, to Hamburg where it had happened, inside some of the cells where he was held. Some of them were still in existence. It was just a very powerful experience. His friend Helmuth was executed, was beheaded by guillotine.

We went back to that site where he was executed in Berlin, which is now a national memorial, and were actually in there with Karl. And while we were there this busload of German high school kids came out on a fieldtrip.

So we're filming with Karl while they're kind of wandering around and there's a photo of the Helmuth Hübener group on the wall and one of my crew was talking to the teacher of these kids and pointed to the photo of Karl as a seventeen-year-old and said, "You see that kid? That's him right over there." And he pointed to Karl as the old man standing there. The teacher's jaw dropped and he immediately gathered all of his students around and said, "Tell us your story."

I stepped back and watched Karl as he was talking to kids who were sixteen and seventeen years old—the age he was when he was fighting against Hitler—and I was watching the kids, watching their wide eyes, and I saw that some of them were getting it. That it was getting inside.

There were tears in their eyes, and that was when I realized that this story was more than just a little PBS documentary. This was a story that could really speak to a worldwide audience. That's when I came back and really started in earnest working on the screenplay.

What's your favorite project so far?

It's hard to say. I've been working on this and nothing but this for the past four and a half years. But as far as favorite projects that are finished, that are out there, I'm very self-critical of the work that I put out.

One project that I could say that I'm proud of is actually a documentary I did for PBS called *Small Fortunes*. It was an incredible experience filming it, and the end product—again, when I watch

RYAN LITTLE

it I see everything that's wrong with it — but in that one I can also see that there's a lot that does work.

And I've seen that it's actually had an impact. That's rewarding. To make a movie, to tell a story and have it have an impact, actually change the way people live their lives, that's rewarding.

Is that an idea that you came up with or were you approached for *Small Fortunes*?

I was approached by a friend that I work with, another filmmaker, who asked if I had ever heard of Muhammad Yunus, and I hadn't.

And he said, "Well, have you ever heard of microcredit?"

"Vaguely," I said.

He explained to me what it was. "Muhammad Yunus is this Bangladeshi man who is kind of seen as the father of the microcredit movement. He's going to be in Salt Lake. I think I can get a short interview with him if you'd like it."

I said, "What the heck, let's do it."

When I got the camera crew and went in to interview him I didn't even know what questions to ask him, so I had to ask somebody who knew more about him and the microcredit movement to tell me the questions to ask him.

He walked into the room — and this is a man who's not Christian, he wasn't raised Christian or anything — and the light of Christ just shone from his countenance.

This was somebody who had dedicated his whole life to feeding and helping the poor help themselves out of extreme poverty.

I came away from that thinking, "We've got to do more with this. This is incredible."

It was in conjunction with BYU Television — they had actually wanted to make a documentary about the same thing — so we joined together on that and shot it in 2004 in India and Bangladesh, then the Philippines, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, and throughout the United States. It was just unbelievable — an incredible experience.

Your current project is the Helmuth Hübener project. Are you looking at other projects or is that your main focus?

I have other scripts that are at various stages, but now I am wholly focused on telling the *Truth and Treason* story.

I have tentative plans for some projects that I may want to do after this, but quite frankly, I am so focused on this that I'm going to get this story told and then we'll see what happens after that.

Taking an idea from the conceptual stage to the finished project is an immensely long process. Can you tell us where you are and where you hope to take it in the near future?

We are in a stage right now that's called development where we have a screenplay that we are very pleased with. Of course it's always evolving; everyday I'm still working on it. But it's to a point where we feel comfortable sending it out to actors to see if we can attach actors to certain roles and get those in place as we go forward, trying to raise the money to make a fairly large independent film.

We're to the point now where we have some really good actors attached, and we have some great Academy Award-nominated and Academy Award-winning crew on board. And we've got about half of our financing in place.

The plan is to finish that out and be able to shoot this summer or this fall in Budapest. We'll be filming in Budapest. The events took place in Hamburg but we can't shoot it there. Hamburg was leveled in 1943, just a year after Helmuth was executed, and later rebuilt, but it's difficult to film there. It doesn't look like it used to; it's very modernized.

After scouting a lot of different European countries we landed in Budapest and found that it's a beautiful city; it actually looks a lot like 1941 Hamburg and it was the right place to shoot.

So we've partnered with a production company that's based in Budapest and are in the process now of pulling together the remainder of the financing, pulling together the right team members, the right cast, and getting ready to go.

How involved has Karl-Heinz Schnibbe been in this process?

Actually quite involved. It's been great — what a blessing. I was just working on a scene where we have Helmuth in his cell the night before he is going to be executed, and I thought, "What was it really like?"

So I called him up and asked, "Karl, what do you know about where Helmuth was?"

And he said, "He would have been handcuffed to the wall. One of his arms was always handcuffed to the wall, so if he tried to stand up, he couldn't stand up completely."

I don't where else I would have found a detail like that that, but I called Karl up because he was in some of those cells. He was arrested by the Gestapo, he was tortured by them.

Again, when I was writing an interrogation scene with the Gestapo, I just called up the man who was interrogated by them and said, "How did this work?"

And he said, "Well, what they would do is one would sit on this side of the room and one would sit on the other, then they would fire questions at you and you had to look back and forth at both of them. It was to rattle your brain." These are just incredible, beautiful details that we have because he was there.

Are you an artist who happens to be a Mormon or a Mormon who is also an artist?

To a certain extent I think that's just semantics. I'm a Mormon who's aspiring to be an artist. I know that my faith informs my work, but I also feel that my work informs my faith. I feel that these projects that I'm working on have strengthened my faith.

And not just LDS-themed projects, or projects that have LDS ties to them. My faith was strengthened by working on the *Small Fortunes* project, but I also do feel that my faith strengthened that project.

So, it's hard for me to separate the two. It really is a conflation of those two ideas of work and faith. I know that being Mormon helps me be a better storyteller, a better filmmaker.

It may seem to be at odds because there are a lot of movies that I won't go see, that everyone in the business tells me I have to see. I made a decision early on that there are certain films that I'm not going to go see and I don't go see them.

That can be a drawback in trying to be a well-rounded filmmaker and storyteller. However, the benefits that my faith brings to me as a storyteller and as a filmmaker far outweigh any drawbacks that may come.

Just the upbringing that I've had, and frankly the strength of the Spirit — learning how to follow those really subtle promptings, which, throughout our life we're taught. When you're on the set and working with an actor and being able to discern if there was truth communicated in that performance or if there was a little bit of falseness to it, I rely not only on my talents and abilities, but I rely on the Spirit to do that. So as an LDS filmmaker I know that it helps me.

You are an active member of the Church and are very successful in a field that isn't always seen as Mormon-friendly. How do you think that the work that you do helps build the kingdom?

I don't know that any film will change the world. I doubt that any one film will. But there is real power in telling good stories, whether it's on film, or in a book, or around a fire. There is real power in story.

I aspire to be able to tell good stories that will move, that will entertain, but that will also edify.

Let's just go out and tell good stories, and if there are Mormon ties to them, great. If not and they're good stories, great. Let's tell good stories and see if we can affect some people. ▪

Michael Flynn

INTERVIEW BY **ANDREA PEARSON** | PHOTOS BY **GREG DEAKINS**

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Michael Flynn is an actor with an extensive résumé in television, film, and theatre. He has played a variety of roles including a sheriff, a stake president, a doctor, a lawyer, and a Pharisee. He also portrayed Pontius Pilate in The Lamb of God. *Recently, Michael has made available a series of classes called the Actors Workshop where he devotes his time to teaching others about the acting craft.*

What acting role models do you have? Have your role models changed as you've gained experience?

There are a lot of actors whose work I really admire. The usuals — Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, Gene Hackman, Peter O'Toole, and many others — but I've never really been a role model kind of person. Other than Mickey Mantle, center fielder for the New York Yankees, and that was when I was eleven.

How did playing sports influence or help your acting career?

Competition. I like competition. When I'm playing racquetball I have the same mental attitude as when I walk into an audition. Auditioning is enjoyable because of the competition. I do admit I like to win.

What was the deciding factor in becoming an actor?

The fact that I wasn't a good enough athlete to make it in high school sports. I needed to do something with my time in high school, something that would keep me after school so I wouldn't have to go home. Theatre worked really well. We had a lot of rehearsals after school. And I enjoyed the work, the people.

Who were your early influences in acting?

My dad is the earliest influence. Back in the day of double features, he would drop me and my brother off at the movies on Sunday afternoons. I saw a lot of movies as a kid and had an interest in film, but it never occurred to me that I

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could actually do it. Then one day while I was a sophomore at George C. Marshall High School, outside of Washington, D.C., I was walking down the hallway when the drama teacher approached me and asked me to come in and try out for a play. I'd never done that before, but I auditioned and got a small part. I realized it was something I could do; something I could be good at.

The teacher's name was John Reese. He was terrific and very influential, more so than any other acting teacher I've ever had. I didn't know anything about acting before him and he taught me a lot. Especially a love and respect for the theatre. I've never lost that.

What was your big break to getting on the big screen?

I'd always done stage up until about 1980 when I moved to Utah. The filming industry here was pretty big at the time. I got an agent right away and auditioned for the film *Footloose* and I got a pretty small role in it. But for some reason, almost 30 years later, people remember I was the cop. That blows me away. I don't even remember myself in the film. I guess that was the start. I remember reading the script and thinking the film would never fly. Silly me.

How does TV differ from movies?

You shoot a lot faster with TV. After a twelve-hour work day on a feature film you might get two minutes that you can actually use, often less. In television it's not unusual to do seven or eight, sometimes ten pages a day, which comes out to about eight to ten minutes a day. But then you have small-budget independent films. They are similar to TV in that you shoot upwards of ten pages a day. It all depends on the budget, the script, and a lot of other factors.

As far as acting goes, it's pretty much the same. You bring the passion to it, you bring the emotion to it. That's really what it's all about. The passion.

Which project have you most enjoyed being a part of?

The Best Two Years was the most enjoyable. That was a blast. The writer/director Scott Anderson is a long-time best friend of mine and we actually did the play called *The Best Two Years of My Life* together. Scott wrote and directed it in the early eighties and we produced it in the mid-eighties.

We put together a videotape of the play and used it to raise money to make the film. We spent two weeks in Holland and shot all the exteriors there, then came back here, rehearsed for a week, and shot the interiors in Alpine, Utah. We used an older home, a vacant house that had a European feel to it.

What projects are coming up and are in the planning stages?

First, I'm playing the part of Emma Smith's father in an upcoming film about Joseph Smith. Next, we're producing *Midway to Heaven*, based on the novel by Dean Hughes. Lastly, we have the film rights to the first three books Anita Stansfield wrote. She's written the screenplay for her novel *First Love and Forever* and we're in the process of raising money for that, along with the Dean Hughes production.

What was your favorite role to play?

I like being the bad guy and have done it a lot of times. One of the more interesting roles I did was an LDS film done by the Church where I played Pontius Pilate in *The Lamb of God*. It was interesting to play a historical character and to do research into him, to find out what he was about. There isn't a whole lot written about him, but he was an interesting individual to portray.

On stage I've been able to do a lot of enjoyable roles. A few of my favorites are Arthur in *Camelot*, Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, John Adams in *1776*, and Michael in *I Do, I Do!*

How has your acting evolved over the years?

I hope it's gotten a lot better. I try to improve all the time. I think I've gotten more subtle, more intense in some ways.

Why did you start the Actors Workshop?

I like actors. I like working with actors. I thought, "If this is something I really like doing, I need to be doing it for myself, as a business." I've taught acting classes before, but someone else has always hired me to do it, and I thought, "Hey, I should just do it on my own." And it's worked out quite well.

Tell us about it.

The Actors Workshop is a four-to-six-week course for groups of ten or twelve. We meet once or twice a week for a three-hour segment. We focus on monologues, scenes, and improv. I like to see actors work and I like to push them to become better, to understand the core issue of being an actor, which is showing passion in their work. Passion is what drives the industry — you need to really understand what your character wants, why they do what they do. Hopefully I help actors achieve this passion in our workshop.

Did you ever see yourself doing what you're doing now?

No. I decided I was going to be an actor at sixteen, but it never occurred to me before that. I come from a background of government workers. Everyone worked for corporations, but nobody was entrepreneurial. I decided early on that

I wanted to be completely different from everyone and everything around me.

That had something to do with why I joined the Mormon Church — I would be the only Mormon in my family. I still am the only member.

Of course, I love the Church and have always had a very strong testimony of it, but an added bonus for me was that I'd be the first Mormon, the first missionary, the first guy to live out west.

The only thing I ever saw myself doing was anything completely different from everything I knew. And I have done just that.

Tell us about your conversion.

I was raised in a fairly non-religious home. As I think back I can see that there was a belief in a higher being, but organized religion was clearly not a part of my upbringing.

When I was seventeen years old living in the Washington, D.C., area, a friend of mine joined the Church. She had a lot of enthusiasm and would pass me notes in our U.S. government class telling me I needed to look into this Mormonism thing. At the time I had no clue as to what a Mormon was; I'd never even heard the word. She wanted me to go meet with the missionaries and that was about the furthest thing from my mind. I was into theater and girls.

She was persistent and I finally told her if she could get a bunch of cute girls into this missionary meeting then I'd be happy to show up. She did it — got a bunch of girls together and had the missionaries come over. I had no idea or concept of what a missionary would look like. I probably thought they'd be dressed like Catholic priests because I'd gone to a Catholic school for a year when I'd lived overseas.

When I first walked in I saw a flannel board they were going to use with pictures to help tell the stories. My initial thought when I saw the flannel board was that we'd pour gasoline on it and light it on fire and dance around it or something.

They started talking about Joseph Smith and I remember thinking, "Wow, that's really cool." I'd never heard of Joseph Smith before, and I don't know that I could've even found Utah on a map. I thought how cool it was that this guy had seen God and Jesus Christ. It never occurred

to me that they'd be lying. Why would they? They taught me the six discussions and I was in right from the beginning.

I told my parents I wanted to be baptized but they asked me to wait a month to be sure. After the month I told them I still wanted to be baptized and they said, "That's fine, whatever." A year later I went on my mission to France.

How was it serving a mission as a new convert?

I was in the field with missionaries who'd been missionaries longer than I'd been a Mormon. I found out pretty quickly that I knew absolutely nothing about the Mormon Church. When I went on my mission I hadn't even read the Book of Mormon all the way though yet. Back then they didn't teach French at the LTM, so I served a two-and-a-half-year-long mission — the extra six months were for me to learn the language. I picked it up fairly quickly because I'd taken French in high school.

I must say that my mission has had a huge influence in my life. It was difficult. There were times when I just wanted to give up. But, through persistence and a lot of thought and prayer, I was able to hang in there and get through the first six months. After that it was pretty smooth.

It was a great experience and a tremendous blessing in my life. Not a day goes by that I don't reflect on some aspect of my time in France. I still speak the language, and I vacation in France often.

How has being a member of the Church influenced you while acting with non-Mormon actors?

There have been a lot of times when I've turned down roles because of the story, the language, or not wanting to be associated with a particular project. I was called into read once for the role of a

godfather who had a lot of disgusting, foul language in his speech. My agent told me up front that she didn't think I'd be interested in it, but that they really wanted me to read for it. So I read the material and found that I liked the character. I rewrote the monologue and took all the offensive stuff out. The director really liked it, but the producers wanted the bad language. So I passed on it.

Sometimes you'll audition for a role and the scenes you read for the audition are fine, but after you accept the role and get on the set you'll find they've been rewritten, or there are new scenes you didn't have up front with offensive or inappropriate material in them. Occasionally I've had to go to the director and ask if we could rewrite sections. I've never had anyone tell me I had to say it the way it was written. But I've had to make the decision where if push comes to shove I will walk away. Either they rewrite or get someone else. This hasn't ever happened though. Every time I've had a problem they've told me to say it the way I want to say it and I'm good to go.

There was one time I was at a wardrobe fitting and I went through five or six wardrobes that I'd be wearing in the film. Then the wardrobe lady told me that was all, except for the scene where some guys and I would be naked in the hothouse, run out of it, cross a field, and jump into a river. I called my agent and told her about the scene, telling her there was no way it was going to happen. She called the producer who said we'd get a body double, but that wouldn't work for me because people would watch and think it was me. They finally cut the scene. I'm not sure if it was because of me, but in the end I didn't have to deal with it.

What do you most hope to accomplish through your acting, directing, and producing?

Accomplish? First and foremost, I want to support myself and my family. Then the question becomes, "How do I do that?"

I like making family-oriented films — films my children and grandchildren can enjoy.

My greatest hope would be to create a library of films that families want to see over and over again. So far it seems to be working. Time will tell. I still have a lot of movies to make and a lot of stories to tell. ▪

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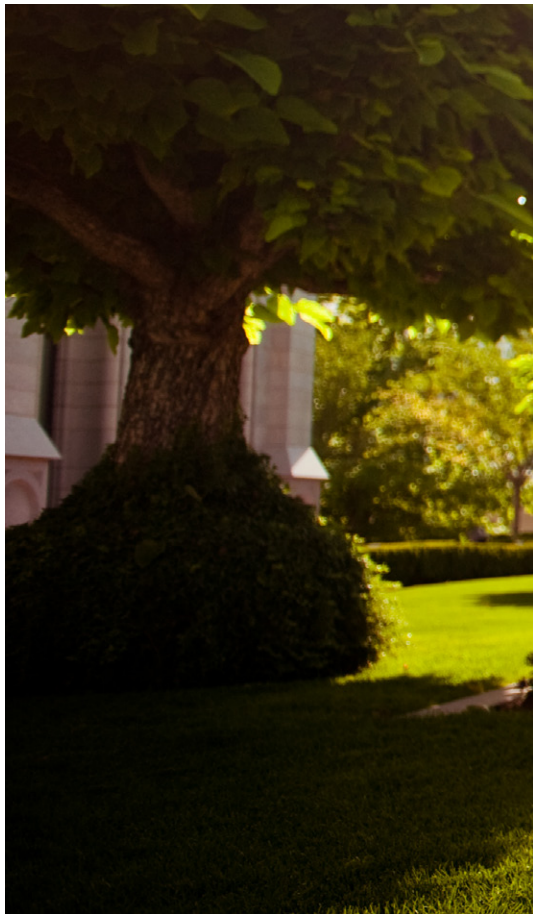

Twitterers

Those featured in Mormon Artist *who are also on Twitter.*

Brandon Sanderson *@brandonsandrson*
Christian Vuissa *@vuissa*
Dani Jones *@danidraws*
Howard Tayler *@howardtayler*
Jessica Day George *@jessdaygeorge*
Julie Wright *@scatteredjules*
Melissa Leilani Larson *@mel_leilani*
Nicole Sheahan *@nicolesheahan*
Robison Wells *@robisonwells*
Scott Jarvie *@jarvie*
Seth Estrada *@seth_at_savant*
Shaun Barrowes *@shaunbarrowes*
Tyler Chadwick *@kingtawhiao*

SCOTT JARVIE

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