COME, THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING

AMERICAN FOLK HYMNS & SPIRITUALS

TABERNACLE CHOIR

ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE | MACK WILBERG, CONDUCTOR
Eloquent, straightforward, and full of homespun vigor, the American folk hymn of the early nineteenth century reflected the robust enthusiasm and hardiness so characteristic of life on the frontier. Simple religious texts, easily learned, were set to popular melodies drawn from folk songs, ballads, and dances of the day, creating a lively hymn tradition that flourished in the camp meetings and revivalist gatherings of the “Second Great Awakening.” It was truly a music of the people.

Similarly, the African-American spiritual—a close cousin of the folk hymn—expressed the profound emotions of the slave experience while drawing on the same musical sources and religious ideals that formed the American folk hymn. Other sacred song traditions also grew from these same roots. The musical worship of the early Mormon Church, for example, often included newly-penned texts sung to popular tunes of the day, and one of the most beloved LDS hymns, “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” is itself an authentic American folk hymn.

This recording honors the enduring vitality of these folk hymns and spirituals and their ability to anchor the soul in faith. From the sturdy strains of “Saints Bound for Heaven” and the fervent entreaty of “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” to one of the most popular folk hymns of all time, “Amazing Grace,” these songs and hymns gave comfort, hope, and confidence to the early American pioneers of two hundred years ago. Their power and simplicity still inspire us today.
NO.1 SAINTS BOUND FOR HEAVEN

American folk hymn (THE SAINTS BOUND FOR HEAVEN)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

One of the most important published sources of American folk hymnody, William Walker’s *Southern Harmony* of 1835 includes over three hundred melodies. Walker, a Baptist song leader in South Carolina, compiled these folk hymn tunes from a variety of sources, including colonial-era psalm settings and shape note singing traditions, African-American spirituals and slave songs, folk tunes, dances and other popular entertainments. “Saints Bound for Heaven”—Mack Wilberg’s arrangement of a folk hymn drawn from Walker’s *Southern Harmony*—illustrates the confidence and exuberance found in many of these hymns, which stand as the musical embodiment of frontier faith in nineteenth-century America.

Our bondage it shall end by and by.
From Egypt’s yoke set free,
Hail the glorious jubilee,
And to Canaan we’ll return by and by.

Our Deliverer He shall come by and by.
And our sorrows have an end,
With our three-score years and ten,
And vast glory crown the day by and by.

And when to Jordan’s floods we are come,
Jehovah rules the tide,
And the waters He’ll divide,
And the ransom’d host shall shout, “We are come.”

Then with all the happy throng we’ll rejoice.
Shouting glory to our King,
Till the vaults of heaven ring,
And th’r all eternity we’ll rejoice.

NO.2 MY SONG IN THE NIGHT

American folk hymn (EXPRESSION)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

In the Old Testament, both Job and David speak of God’s caring love as “a song in the night,” a source of refuge and divine calm. This image is the foundation for the Southern folk hymn “My Song in the Night,” whose plaintive melody found in the hymn collection *The Sacred Harp* and entreatying lyrics form a heartfelt petition for respite from the cares of the world. The words are partly an adaptation from Joseph Swain’s poem *Redemption* (published in London in 1789), a poem that also spawned other familiar hymn texts, including “O Thou in Whose Presence,” “Redeemer of Israel,” and “His Voice As the Sound.”

O Jesus, my Savior, my song in the night,
Come to us with Thy tender love, my soul’s delight.
Unto Thee, O Lord, in affliction I call,
My comfort by day and my song in the night.

O why should I wander an alien from Thee,
Or cry in the desert Thy face to see.
My comfort and joy, my soul’s delight.
O Jesus, my Savior, my song in the night.

NO.3 WE’LL SHOUT AND GIVE HIM GLORY

American folk hymn (REVIVAL SONG)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

The Olive Leaf, a collection of folk hymns published in Philadelphia in 1878, includes the rousing revivalist song “We’ll Shout and Give Him Glory.” The “Great Awakenings” of the nineteenth century had introduced the camp meeting—originally a Scottish tradition—into American religious life, and lively camp meeting songs such as this were designed to foster fervor and enthusiasm for Christ’s work.

I’m on my way to Zion,
The New Jerusalem.
We’ll shout and give Him glory,
For glory is His own.

I feel the work reviving,
Reviving in my soul.
We’ll shout and give Him glory,
For glory is His own.

Oh, how I love my Savior!
Because He first loved me.
We’ll shout and give Him glory,
For glory is His own.
HIS VOICE AS THE SOUND
American folk hymn (SAMANTHRA)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

Another hymn text based on Swain’s Redemption, “His Voice As the Sound of the Dulcimer Sweet” is a corollary to the Song of Solomon, borrowing similar biblical metaphors to describe the Lord’s beauty, goodness, and majesty. This text is usually paired with the hymn tune known as “Samanthra,” also from Walker’s Southern Harmony. Wilberg’s arrangement of this haunting minor-key melody underscores the rich imagery of the lyrics, which speak of sweet music, cedars of Lebanon, perfumed air, lips of righteousness and grace, and eyes that spread love throughout heaven.

His voice as the sound of the dulcimer sweet, Is heard through the shadows of death; The cedars of Lebanon bow at His feet, The air is perfumed with His breath.

His lips as a fountain of righteousness flow, That waters the garden of grace, From which their salvation the Gentiles shall know, And bask in the smile of His face.

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HOW BRIGHT IS THE DAY
American folk hymn (SAWYER’S EXIT)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

The words to the lively folk hymn “How Bright Is the Day” were penned by Reverend S. B. Sawyer, a Baptist preacher in South Carolina in 1850. He reportedly wrote this text on the same day he died, with a request that it be sung to the melody of the familiar Irish song, “Old Rosin, the Beau.” This tune was almost ubiquitous in nineteenth-century America—it was used for political campaign songs, a Civil War song, a comic opera air, and a temperance song. Sawyer’s new hymn, paired with the familiar tune, was printed in the 1859 edition of The Sacred Harp, where it was titled “Sawyer’s Exit.”

Love sits in His eyelids and scatters delight Through all the bright regions on high, Their faces the Cherubim veil in His sight, And tremble with fullness of joy.

He looks, and ten thousands of angels rejoice, And myriads wait for His word, He speaks, and eternity filled with His voice, Re-echoes the praise of her Lord.

How bright is the day when all people Receive the sweet message to come, To rise to the mansions of glory, And be there forever at home.

The angels stand ready and waiting, The moment the spirit is gone, To carry it upward to heaven, And welcome it safely at home.

The saints that have gone up before us, All raise a new shout as we come, And sing hallelujah the louder, To welcome the travelers home.

DEATH SHALL NOT DESTROY MY COMFORT
American folk hymn (MOUNT WATSON)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

The subject of “Death Shall Not Destroy My Comfort” is similar to “How Bright Is the Day,” both hymns detailing the hope for a joyous transition, through death, into a heavenly afterlife. But the mood of this hymn is far more contemplative. Its solemn melody comes from The Olive Leaf, and the lyrics—as was often the case with folk hymns—are an amalgam of several hymn texts. The first two verses were published in The Camp Meeting Chorister of 1830, while the last verse appeared in Joshua Leavitt’s Christian Lyre, published in 1833. The refrain is borrowed from yet a third source.

Death shall not destroy my comfort, Christ shall guide me thro’ the gloom; Down He’ll send some hea’ny convoy, To escort my spirit home.

Oh, hallelujah! How I love my Savior! Oh, hallelujah! That I do; Oh, hallelujah! How I love my Savior! Mourners, you may love Him too.

Jordan’s stream shall not o’er flow me, While my Savior’s by my side; Canaan, Canaan lies before me! Soon I’ll cross the swelling tide.

See the happy spirits waiting, On the banks beyond the stream! Sweet responses still repeating, “Jesus! Jesus!” is their theme.
No.7 MY GOD, MY PORTION, AND MY LOVE

American folk hymn (DUNLAP'S CREEK)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

The English pastor Isaac Watts possessed an apparently inexhaustible gift for poetry, with over 700 hymn texts and psalm paraphrases to his credit. “My God, My Portion, and My Love” is Watts’s extended paraphrase of Psalm 73:26, “...but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” The tune, collected by Pennsylvania surveyor and school teacher Freeman Lewis, was first published in 1814. It is known as “Dunlap’s Creek” because it has often been attributed to Amzi Chapin, an American folk hymn composer who lived at Dunlap’s Creek, near Brownsville, Pennsylvania, in the late eighteenth century. Other tune books credit the melody to Lewis himself.

My God, my Portion, and my Love,
My Everlasting All,
I’ve none but Thee in heav’n above
Or on this earthly ball.

What empty things are all the skies,
And this inferior clod!
There’s nothing here deserves my joys,
There’s nothing like my God.

No.8 BOUND FOR THE PROMISED LAND

American folk hymn (THE PROMISED LAND)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

“Bound for the Promised Land” has appeared in every American Methodist hymnal since 1808 and was a favorite in nineteenth-century American camp meetings. It was also included in Walker’s Southern Harmony. The words were written by the London-based Baptist preacher Samuel Stennett, and were published in England in 1877. But the tune is a genuine American folk hymn tune that bears a strong resemblance to an early nineteenth-century dance melody. Unusually, it appears in nineteenth-century hymnals in both major-key and minor-key versions.

On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan’s fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie.

There gen’rous fruits that never fail
On trees immortal grow;
There rocks and hills and brooks and vales
With milk and honey flow.

I am bound for the promised land,
I’m bound for the promised land,
O who will come and go with me?
I am bound for the promised land.

I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey.
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In vain the bright, the burning sun,
Scatters his feeble light;
’Tis Thy sweet beams create my noon;
If Thou withdraw, ’tis night.

Let all that dwell above the sky,
And air, and earth, and seas,
Conspire to lift Thy glories high
And speak Thine endless praise.

The whole creation, join in one,
To bless the sacred Name,
Of Him that sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb!

No.9 I WANT JESUS TO WALK WITH ME

African-American spiritual
Arrangement by Moses Hogan
Soloist: Alex Boyé

Following the American Civil War, African-American spirituals were transformed from oral-tradition slave songs into an artistic tradition in their own right. Collections of spirituals began to be published, and performing groups—most notably the Fisk Jubilee Singers—spread the fame of the spiritual across the country. “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” was arranged by Moses Hogan, who until his untimely death was a preeminent arranger of this genre. The song expresses a theme common throughout this traditional repertory: The patience and devotion of an oppressed people who look to God for solace in their trials.

I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey.
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, walk with me.
When my heart is almost breaking.
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

When I’m troubled, Lord, walk with me.
Lord, when my head is bowed in sorrow.
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.
African-American spiritual
Arrangement by Moses Hogan
adapted by Benjamin Harlan

The Fisk Jubilee Singers included a song called “Old Time Religion” in their 1873 repertory list. But in 1889, Charles D. Tillman, a singing evangelist and song publisher, heard a group perform a similar spiritual (though apparently with a different tune) at an 1889 camp meeting in Lexington, South Carolina. He adapted the lyrics and the melody and published it as “Old Time Religion,” and it is Tillman’s version that is now better known. This spiritual’s popularity was further boosted when it was included in the 1941 movie Sergeant York.

Give me that old time religion,
It’s good enough for me.
It was good for the Hebrew children,
It’s good enough for me.
It was good for Paul and Silas,
It’s good enough for me.
It was good for my grandmother,
It’s good enough for me.

Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho,
And the walls come tumblin’ down.
Talk about your kings of Gideon,
Talk about your men of Saul,
But none like good old Joshua
At the battle of Jericho.
Right up to the walls of Jericho
He marched with spear in hand.
“Go blow that ram-horn,” Joshua cried,
“Cause the battle am in my hand.”

Harry T. Burleigh, the pioneering African-American singer/composer, published “Deep River” in 1916. It was the first (and would prove to be the most popular) of Burleigh’s published vocal arrangements. But the sources for “Deep River” reach back into the tradition of spirituals and plantation songs that Burleigh learned from his grandfather, an escaped slave. Invoking common biblical metaphors of freedom, deliverance, and salvation, such as “crossing over” the River Jordan into the peaceful “campground” of the Promised Land, this song speaks both of emancipation from physical captivity and an assurance of spiritual relief. Burleigh himself regarded these songs as “prayers” that proclaim “a religious security as old as creation, older than hope, deeper than grief, more tender than tears.”

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,
Deep river, Lord,
I want to cross over into campground.
Oh, don’t you want to go to that Gospel feast,
That promised land where all is peace?

Deep river, my home is over Jordan
Oh, deep river, Lord,
I want to cross over into campground.
No. 13  Down to the River to Pray

American folk hymn/African-American spiritual
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

“Down to the River to Pray” enjoys the distinction of being one of the few African-American spirituals to be also regarded as an authentic American folk hymn. It was published in Southern Harmony years before the effort to collect and publish African-American spirituals gained momentum during the Civil War and Reconstruction. A more pensive version of this hymn recently gained wide exposure through the Grammy-winning soundtrack for the movie O Brother, Where Art Thou? But in this arrangement, Mack Wilberg returns the hymn to its spirited rustic origins.

As I went down to the river to pray,
Studyin’ about the good old way,
And who shall wear the starry crown.
Good Lord, show me the way.

Oh, sisters, let’s go down,
Let’s go down, come on down,
Oh, sisters, let’s go down,
Down to the river to pray.

No. 14  Rock-A-My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham

African-American spiritual
Arranged and adapted by Howard A. Roberts
Soloist: Alex Boyé

In arranging this favorite spiritual for chorus, jazz musician Howard Roberts sought to retain the intricate rhythmic layering of traditional spirituals, a feature he felt was important in modern choral arrangements of the genre. Roberts wrote and conducted this version of “Rock-A-My Soul” as the finale of Revelations, a 1960 dance work by the Alvin Alley Dance Company.

Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham,
Oh, rock-a-my soul.

I may be weak, I may be strong.
I’m leaning on His mighty arm.

My soul is glad, my soul is free.
I’m goin’ home to live with Thee.

No. 15  Softly and Tenderly

Music and text by Will L. Thompson (THOMPSON)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

Although technically not a folk hymn, “Softly and Tenderly” was written by Will Thompson, an Ohio-born poet, composer, and publisher who produced several large collections of sacred and secular songs. One of Thompson’s best-loved hymns, “Softly and Tenderly,” from his 1880 collection titled Sparkling Gems, has reportedly been translated into more languages than any other Christian hymn. It was also a favorite of the famous revivalist preacher D. L. Moody who, on his deathbed, said to Thompson, “Will, I would rather have written ‘Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling’ than anything I have been able to do in my whole life.”

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals He’s waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me.

Come home, come home,
Ye who are weary, come home;
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling.
Calling, O sinner, come home.

Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
Pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not His mercies,
Mercies for you and for me?

O for the wonderful love He has promised,
Promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, He has mercy and pardon,
Pardon for you and for me.
American folk hymn (AMAZING GRACE)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

Englishman John Newton was a prolific hymn writer, penning nearly 300 hymn texts. His best known is the largely autobiographical “Amazing Grace,” published in 1779, which describes his conversion from a libertine slave-trader to a faithful believer. The last stanza is not, however, by Newton, appearing anonymously in the 1829 American publication *The Baptist Songster*. The famous melody, which was almost certainly influenced by Scottish folksong traditions, first appeared in early nineteenth-century collections of American folk hymns such as *Columbian Harmony*, *Southern Harmony*, and *The Sacred Harp*.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

The term “Ebenezer” in verse two is a figurative reference to recognizing God’s help in one’s life. (See 1 Samuel 7:12 where it is used as a token of gratitude for deliverance.)

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I’m come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand’ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.

No. 17

American folk hymn (NETTLETON)
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

Robert Robinson, a Protestant preacher in London and Cambridge in the mid-eighteenth century, penned the hopeful and imploring lyrics for “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” when only 23 years old. But a well-known story suggests that his later life was fraught with despair. One day Robinson encountered a woman studying this hymn in her hymnal. She asked him what he thought of the hymn, and Robinson replied, “Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then.”

Robinson’s text is usually paired with the hymn tune “Nettleton,” which was first published in Wyeth’s *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*, a very popular collection produced by Pennsylvania publisher John Wyeth in 1813.

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, as a fetter, Bind my wand’ring heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.
The Choir has its own recording label—Mormon Tabernacle Choir®—whose releases include this album and a number of other excellent CD and video products. (For detailed product information, please visit the Choir’s Internet website at mormontabernaclechoir.org.)

The Choir’s weekly Music and the Spoken Word program has an unparalleled record of continuous network broadcasting. Heard each week since 1929, the program features musical selections by the Choir, accompanied by the magnificent Tabernacle organ and frequently the Orchestra, interspersed with inspirational readings. Originating from the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, the broadcast is carried on radio, TV, the Internet, and cable networks across the country and around the world.

Mack Wilberg was appointed Music Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square in March 2008. He had served as the Associate Music Director from 1999 to 2008. A former professor of choral music at Brigham Young University, he is one of the preeminent composers and arrangers of choral music in America.
CREDITS

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Interim Assistant to the Music Director: Ed Thompson
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Cover and album design: Croxton Design

MUSIC CREDITS


TECHNICAL CREDITS

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MUSIC AND THE SPOKEN WORD

For air times and stations carrying the Choir’s weekly broadcast, Music and the Spoken Word, visit musicandthespokenword.org

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“Softly and Tenderly”: Arrangement unpublished.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD Title</th>
<th>Image</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider the Lilies</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Consider the Lilies" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirit of America</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Spirit of America" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace Like a River</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Peace Like a River" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>America's Choir</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="America's Choir" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sing, Choirs of Angels!</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sing, Choirs of Angels!" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose Something Like a Star</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Choose Something Like a Star" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Is Spoken Here</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Love Is Spoken Here" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then Sings My Soul</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Then Sings My Soul" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now Let Us Rejoice</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Now Let Us Rejoice" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wonder of Christmas</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="The Wonder of Christmas" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showtime!</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Showtime!" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirit of the Season</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Spirit of the Season" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Requiem</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Requiem" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Called to Serve</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Called to Serve" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rejoice and Be Merry!</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Rejoice and Be Merry!" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise to the Man</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Praise to the Man" /></td>
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### DVDs Available from The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVD Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rejoice and Be Merry!</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Rejoice and Be Merry!" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Joy of Christmas</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="The Joy of Christmas" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Silent Night, Holy Night</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Silent Night, Holy Night" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America's Choir</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="America's Choir" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 2</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 2" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 3</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 3" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 4</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Christmas with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Volume 4" /></td>
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</tbody>
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NO. 1  SAINTS BOUND FOR HEAVEN (2:53)  
American folk hymn (THE SAINTS BOUND FOR HEAVEN)  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 2  MY SONG IN THE NIGHT (4:39)  
American folk hymn (EXPRESSION)  
Text adapted from Joseph Swain  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 3  WE’LL SHOUT AND GIVE HIM GLORY (3:59)  
American folk hymn (REVIVAL SONG)  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 4  HIS VOICE AS THE SOUND (5:29)  
American folk hymn (SAMANTHRA)  
Text adapted from Joseph Swain  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 5  HOW BRIGHT IS THE DAY (3:18)  
American folk hymn (SAWYER’S EXIT)  
Text by Reverend S. B. Sawyer  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 6  DEATH SHALL NOT DESTROY MY COMFORT (7:19)  
American folk hymn (MOUNT WATSON)  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 7  MY GOD, MY PORTION, AND MY LOVE (5:30)  
American folk hymn (DUNLAP’S CREEK)  
Text by Isaac Watts  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 8  BOUND FOR THE PROMISED LAND (2:44)  
American folk hymn (THE PROMISED LAND)  
Text by Samuel Stennett  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 9  I WANT JESUS TO WALK WITH ME (3:54)  
African-American spiritual  
Arrangement by Moses Hogan  
Soloist: Alex Boyé

NO. 10  OLD TIME RELIGION (3:06)  
African-American spiritual  
Arrangement by Moses Hogan; adapted by Benjamin Harlan

NO. 11  THE BATTLE OF JERICHO (2:39)  
African-American spiritual  
Arrangement by Moses Hogan

NO. 12  DEEP RIVER (4:35)  
African-American spiritual  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 13  DOWN TO THE RIVER TO PRAY (3:58)  
American folk hymn/African-American spiritual  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 14  ROCK-A-MY SOUL IN THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM (3:07)  
African-American spiritual  
Arranged and adapted by Howard A. Roberts  
Soloist: Alex Boyé

NO. 15  SOFTLY AND TENDERLY (5:55)  
Music and text by Will L. Thompson (THOMPSON)  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 16  AMAZING GRACE (6:25)  
American folk hymn (AMAZING GRACE)  
Text by John Newton  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

NO. 17  COME, THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING (6:09)  
American folk hymn (NETTLETON)  
Text by Robert Robinson  
Arrangement by Mack Wilberg

(Tune names in parentheses.)

Total time: 75:53