

for advanced study. Hills became assistant editor of *Times and Seasons* on 15 January 1842 and began to write up the Lyceum's proceedings for the newspaper. His accounts included this reverent column:

We are pleased to see the laudable zeal manifested by some of our musical friends, to bring about a uniform and tasteful style of sacred singing. Among a people emigrated from different countries, with different prejudices and habits as we are, this is no easy task, and we can but admire the improvements made, and the judicious order established within a few months past. By the by, we peeped in the other evening, during the performance of the Musical Lyceum, and heard what will make us try to peep in again.

A proper and expressive articulation of the words constitutes the life and soul of music; intelligence thus clothed with the robes of melody, and harmonic numbers, moves gently over the spirit, imprints her heavenly footsteps, and awakens all its energies. We should not be so sure that the performances before hinted at were good, were it not that we are sure we have a tolerably *good ear* for music, or an ear for good music and we are delighted, whereas our *devil*, who is known to have a bad ear for good music, and a good ear for bad music, was quite differently affected; he crowded in edgewise, but soon deserted,—said he could not stand the racket.

But for all his noble intentions, Hills and his crusade succumbed to scandal. Both Hills and his friend Mayor John Bennett had persuaded a number of women to embark in an early but disapproved form of Mormon polygamy, a marriage system which Bennett called “spiritual wifery,” but which went beyond the spirit in its consummations. (Bennett, a physician, apparently had promised abortions to “spiritual wives” who conceived.) After an open affair with Sarah Pratt, whose husband was proselyting in England, Bennett was cut off from the church. The Saints then disfellowshipped Hills (August 1842) when the young Mary Cliff announced she was carrying Hills’s baby.<sup>34</sup> Plummeting from grace in the eyes of his public, Hills quickly lost his musical eminence, although, ironically, he retained his municipal judgeship.

As Hills’s influence began to wane, the singing school’s role in Mormonism expanded. In the seven years after M. C. Davis began the first choir, choral music had begun to take precedence over congregational music in Mormon gatherings. In 1842 the new women’s organization of the church, the Relief Society, founded its own choir to sing hymns for its occasional gatherings. By 1843 a number of Mormon settlements outside of Nauvoo had formed their own groups.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile in Ohio W. W. Phelps endeavored to keep alive the Kirtland choral tradition. Called to be caretaker for the now desolate temple there, Phelps hosted the Mormon emigrants who occasionally passed through on their way to

Nauvoo and played the part of the choirmaster, often standing alone in one of the choir galleries and singing solo.<sup>36</sup>

When Benjamin Willber left on a mission to the eastern states, Stephen Goddard, a fine bass singer and one of the musical wardens of the city, took over the choir, which by the time of Joseph’s death had at least forty-five singers: twenty-seven women and eighteen men.<sup>37</sup> Under Goddard their repertoire ventured beyond hymns and Masonic songs to the contrapuntal anthems of William Billings and others. (The Mormons apparently had overcome the common objections to such works that they were too complex to be understood by the common man, that the polyphony obscured the words, and that they kept the public from joining in.<sup>38</sup>) A review of Goddard’s choir reveals his popularity:

One word for the leader of the Choir. When in the great congregation of an assembled multitude, numbering variously from five to ten and sometimes twenty thousand. [sic] The high praises of Jehovah are sung, and every heart beat high in unison to the joyful lay as it echoes from the general throng. We are ready to reflect upon the loftiness, theme, and the grandeur, and harmony with which such scenes are associated—and we are ready to enquire who is the mover of this mighty mass. Notice being given for music, all eyes are eagerly placed upon one individual—the hymn and tune are found—the voices are tuned—at a moment the enrapt feelings of thousands blend in one common anthem or hymn of holiest song and the reviving countenances of the throng, forces the conviction on the mind that *God (dard)* was there.<sup>39</sup>

In the beginnings of Mormonism Joseph and his followers emphatically declared the need of the common people to band together, economically, culturally, and spiritually. In Nauvoo, a city relatively free from gentile hostility, the Mormons determinedly advanced their own culture, attempting to make a heaven on earth patterned after the glories of the world’s great cities. Arguments for the advancement of music in Mormonism included one writer’s hyperbole that “rising generations in coming time will look upon you [the patrons of music in Nauvoo] as the founders of the greatest city in the west, and the greatest benefactors of the age in which you lived.”<sup>40</sup> To unify the Saints in spirit, congregational singing sufficed. But the boisterous chanting of the masses could not suit the building of God’s kingdom in Zion. Mormon leaders began to side with the American spirit of musical reform, epitomized by Lowell Mason, who wrote that to indulge in congregational singing, “everything that belongs to taste in music must be given up.”<sup>41</sup> In Mormonism, choirs ascended above congregations and musical formality overtook spontaneous expression.

One of the last acts of the Nauvoo citizenry was to build a public music hall near the temple, primarily to give the choir a resonant hall in which to perform. Joseph had often complained of the burden that