

Research

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IN THIS ISSUE:

The Clingers
Collaborations
Joanna Hersey
IAWM Conference
President's Message
Teaching Composition
Women at the Piano
Reviews
Reports
Members' News



Photo by Andreas Branch

NINA EIDSHEIM | Keynote Speaker, IAWM Conference

ARTICLES



The Clinger Sisters with Danny Kaye

The Clingers: From Girl Group to Rock and Roll Band

MYRNA LAYTON

A few years ago, in a discussion about Mormons living in Utah who had pursued careers in popular music, Dr. Michael Hicks, a Brigham Young University professor (now emeritus), mentioned a group of singing sisters, The Clinger Sisters, who were contemporaries of the Osmond Brothers. Intrigued and interested in learning more, I started looking in the indexes to scholarly journals and in books about girl groups, rock music and gender, and Hollywood performers, but I could not find any references to The Clinger Sisters. I was much more successful when I expanded my search to newspapers in Utah and California and music industry magazines. Melody and Peggy Clinger, at ages nine and seven, respectively, began to sing duets in and around their home town of Orem, Utah.¹ They were joined by younger sisters Patsy, age six, and Debra, age four, on stage at the Orem Farm Festival in 1956, which marked the start of quartet singing by the sisters.² The Clinger Sisters quickly became popular entertainers in Utah, sometimes accepting performance

opportunities that were hundreds of miles away. Even in bad weather, their father drove the girls great distances to keep performance appointments that were often at church-sponsored events and mostly unpaid.³

As time went on, the girls received vocal coaching from Val Hicks, who also coached the Osmond Brothers.⁴ The Clinger Sisters performed so winningly at local barbershop singing competitions that they were sent to Kansas City to compete at the national level.⁵ This honor led to more local performances, which Mrs. Clinger carefully noted on a calendar. When the girls' performance schedule reached 188 in one year, and with encouragement from Hicks, the Clinger parents made the decision to relocate to California to give the girls a chance to have a real career in music.⁶

The sisters made their television debut in January 1963, featured on the *Andy Williams Show* with their family friends, the Osmond Brothers, who were under contract with the show.⁷ The Clingers and the Osmonds sang a double quartet especially arranged for the occasion by their shared vocal coach, Hicks.⁸ A few months later, the Clingers were delighted to begin regular appearances on the *Danny Kaye Show* on CBS. "Being asked to sing with Danny Kaye is a great thrill," the girls reported to the newspaper back home.⁹ Advertisements about the "Clinging Singing Sisters," a new "harmony-singing foursome" promoted their addition to the show's cast of characters.¹⁰

3 Interview with Patsy, Debra, and Melody Clinger, May 18, 2022.

4 "LDS Fete Dates Ensembles of Sweet Adelines," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 26, 1961, 41.

5 "Clinger Sisters to Be Honored at Benefit Program," *Orem-Geneva Times*, June 7, 1962, 6.

6 "American Mothers Committee to Honor Four from Valley," *Los Angeles Valley News*, April 6, 1973, 38.

7 "Quartet of Orem Sisters to Make National TV Debut," *Provo Daily Herald*, January 15, 1963, 5.

8 Interview with Patsy, Debra, and Melody Clinger.

9 "Orem's Clinger Sisters Signed for Network Show," *Provo Daily Herald*, October 10, 1963, 12.

10 "Clinging Singing Sisters," *Willoughby [Ohio] News Herald*, October 19, 1963, 52.

The Clinger Sisters: A Girl Group

Jacqueline Warwick, in her 2002 dissertation, addresses the topic of girl groups. She writes, "Girl Group music emphasizes female adolescent concerns such as boys, parties, and the strictness of parents, and most songs relied on a team of professional songwriters, studio musicians, and controlling producers directing young, untrained vocalists."¹¹ According to this description, The Clinger Sisters should be classified as a girl group. As Debra Clinger attests, "We were young, and we were girls, and it was men that were producing us."¹² The sisters had "female adolescent voices," and for them "singing [was] an important extension of 'girl talk.'"¹³ Singing together, talking together, laughing together—the Clinger girls were best friends, and their loving rapport with each other was an attractive aspect to their performances.

The sound backing their adolescent voices in their performances and recordings was "dominated by orchestral instruments," another hallmark of the girl group.¹⁴ This was true of their appearances on the *Danny Kaye Show* (1964–1967); all of their songs were backed by the house orchestra.¹⁵ Their appearance was also typical of girl groups—they had "a resemblance of costume, voice, movement, hair... a look that could be appropriated or, more idealistically, shared" by audience members.¹⁶ This began before they moved to Hollywood. When they started performing together as children, their mother dressed them alike, and this continued when Hollywood costume designers took over clothing decisions.¹⁷

11 Jacqueline Warwick, "I Got All My Sisters With Me: Girl Culture, Girl Identity, and Girl Group Music" (Diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2002), x.

12 Interview with Patsy, Debra, and Melody Clinger.

13 Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 155.

14 Ibid., ix.

15 Interview with Patsy, Debra, and Melody Clinger.

16 Cynthia Cyrus, "Selling an Image: Girl Groups of the 1960s," *Popular Music* 22.2 (2003): 189.

17 Interview with Patsy, Debra, and Melody Clinger.

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First all-female rock and roll band to appear on American Television.

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AUSTRIAN COMPOSER-PIANISTS ACROSS THE ART MUSIC/ENTERTAINMENT DIVIDE

Camilla Frydan (1887-1949): Austrian Composer

MYRNA LAYTON

While the Austrian singer, pianist, songwriter, and composer Camilla Frydan (née Herzl) is little known today, in the 1920s and 30s she was quite literally at the center of Viennese entertainment culture—part of the circle of the influential Austrian cultural historian, philosopher, translator, journalist, actor, cabaret performer, and theatre critic Egon Friedell (né Friedmann, 1878-1938)—and her successful career

Camilla was also a successful piano teacher, performing on stage with her students.³

Despite her gifts as a pianist, Camilla wanted to become a singer and studied with the renowned Austrian contralto Marianne Brandt (née Bischof, 1842-1921), who had studied with Pauline Viardot-Garcia.⁴ She advanced quickly and was soon an accomplished



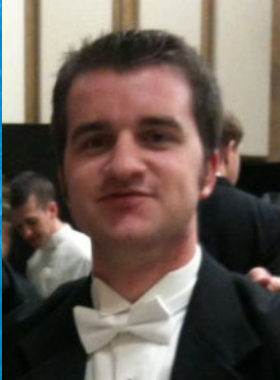
Miss, please, are you musical?

With various precarious ways to win over women,
Due to wiles and the styles of excuses I'm given,
If one lady's unimpressed
With flowers, candy, and pleasant cheer,
As a short last resort, I suggest:
"Please tell me if you have a talented ear?"

"Miss, please, do you have musical skills?"
Doing duets with you—now let me be blunt—
Mademoiselle, it would give me unending thrills,
If I always could have your accompaniment!
Just tell me the register, tell me the key!
I'll play so incredibly true and pure,
In C-sharp in G-sharp in A-sharp in F-sharp,
I'll play so long as you can endure.

Translation by Richard Hacken

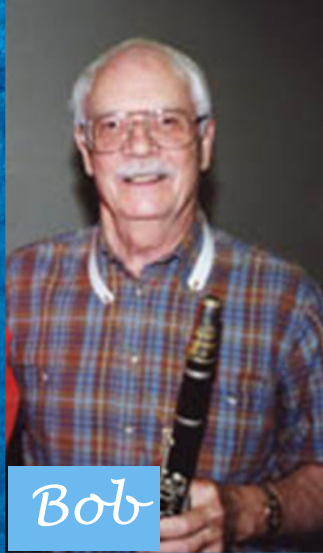
My cast of "chosen ones..."



Andrew



John



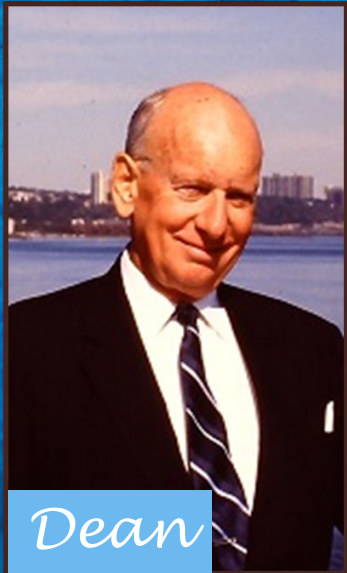
Bob



Guess Who



Ernie



Dean



O.A.



Clingers



Camilla

2022

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2023



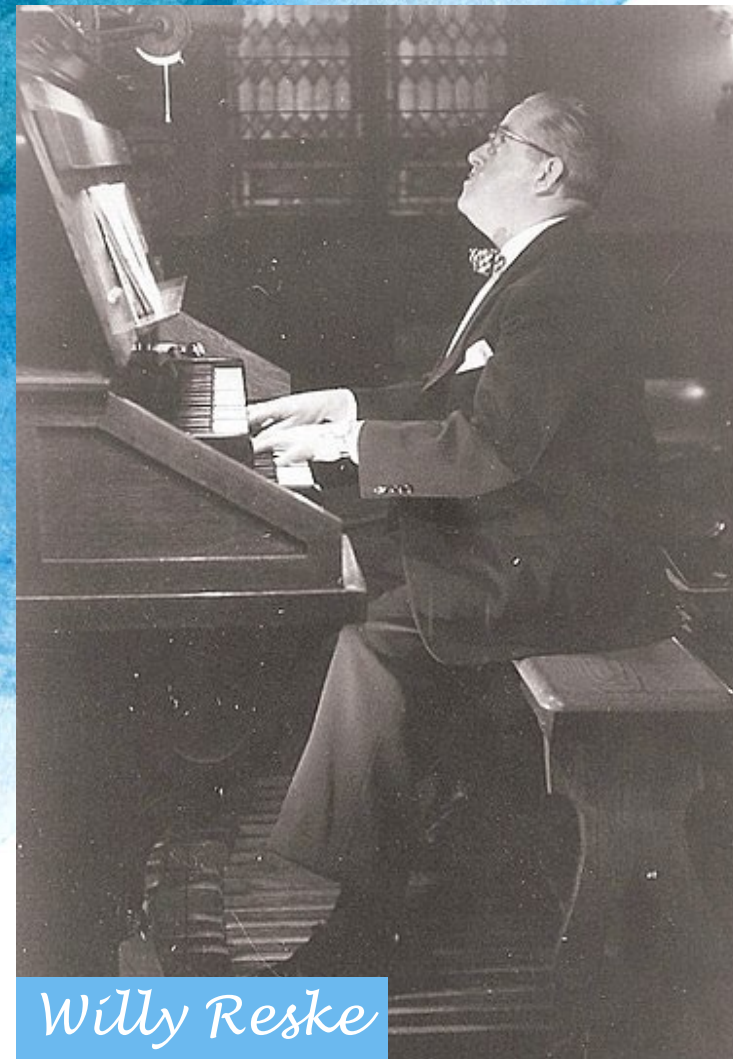
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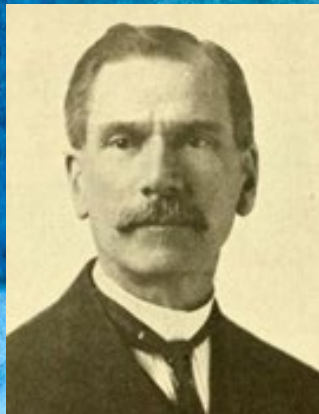
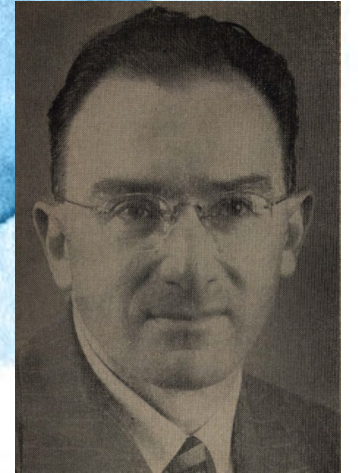
Mildred Tanner Pettit

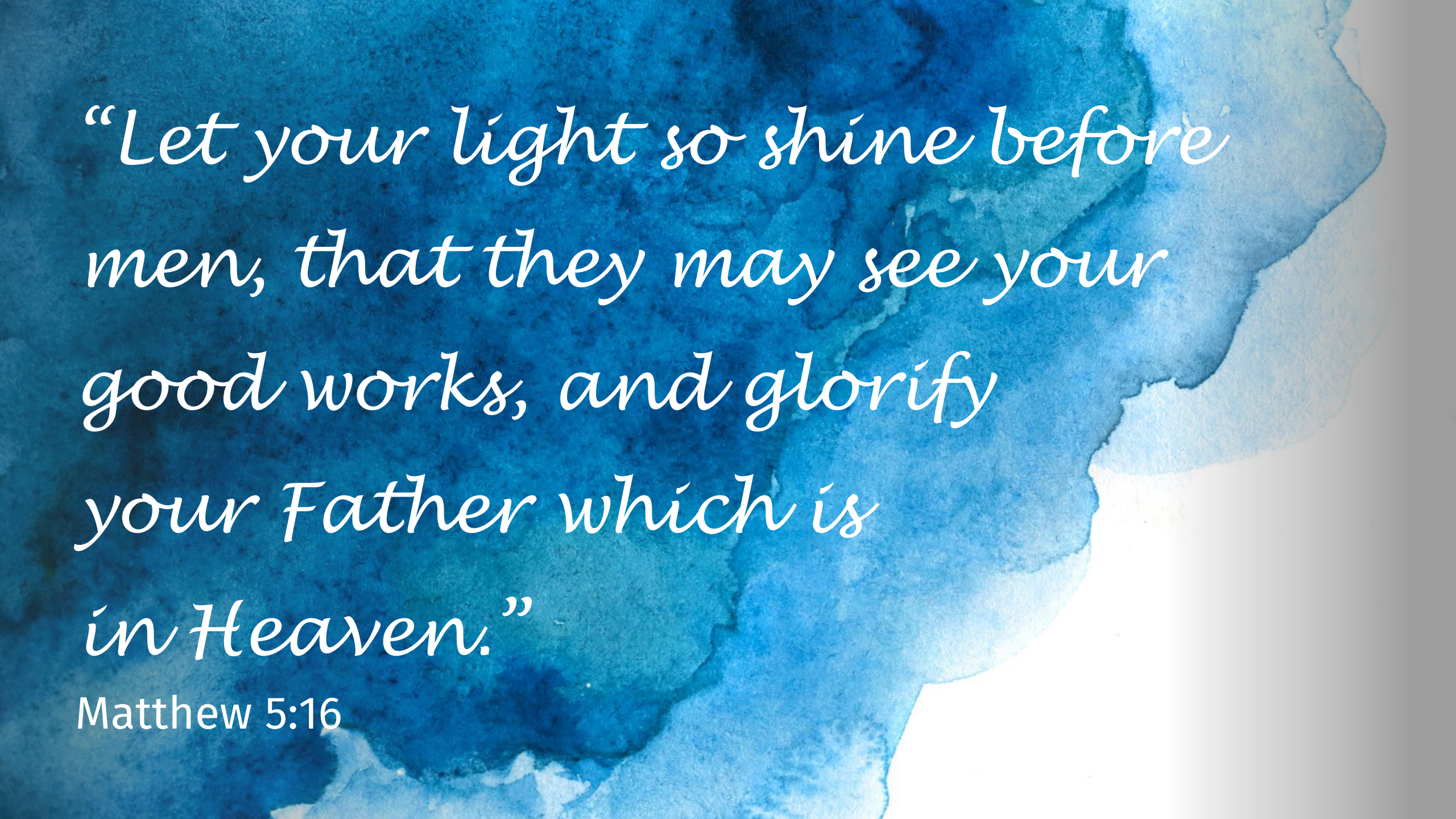


Moïselle Renstrom



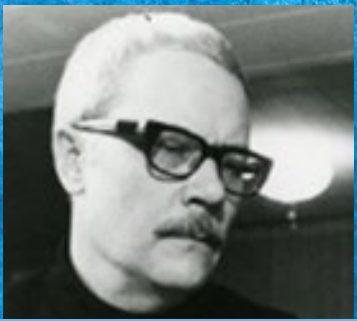
Willy Reske



The background of the image is a blue watercolor wash. It features various shades of blue, from deep navy to light sky blue, with soft, blended edges and some darker, more saturated areas. The overall effect is artistic and serene.

*“Let your light so shine before
men, that they may see your
good works, and glorify
your Father which is
in Heaven.”*

Matthew 5:16



Bob McMullin



Kay Brown



Mildred Pettit



Lorenzo Mitchell



Ruth Gatrell



Georgia Bello



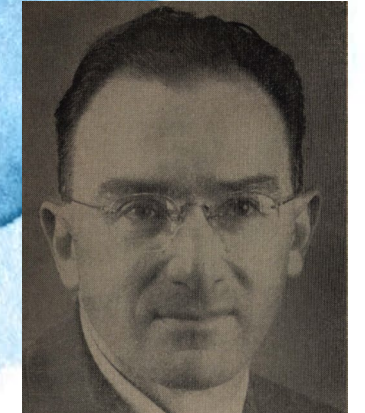
Irene Tempest



Marie Anderson



Frances Taylor



Earl Hazelle



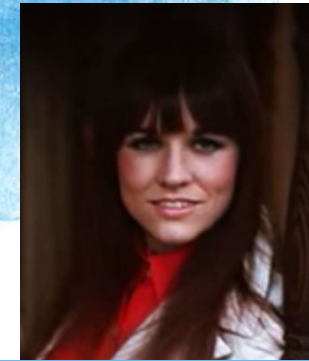
Maurine Dewsnap



Edwin F. Perry



Moiselle Renstrom



Peggy Clinger



Vanja Y. Watkins

“We’re all *the chosen* one in our own Life”

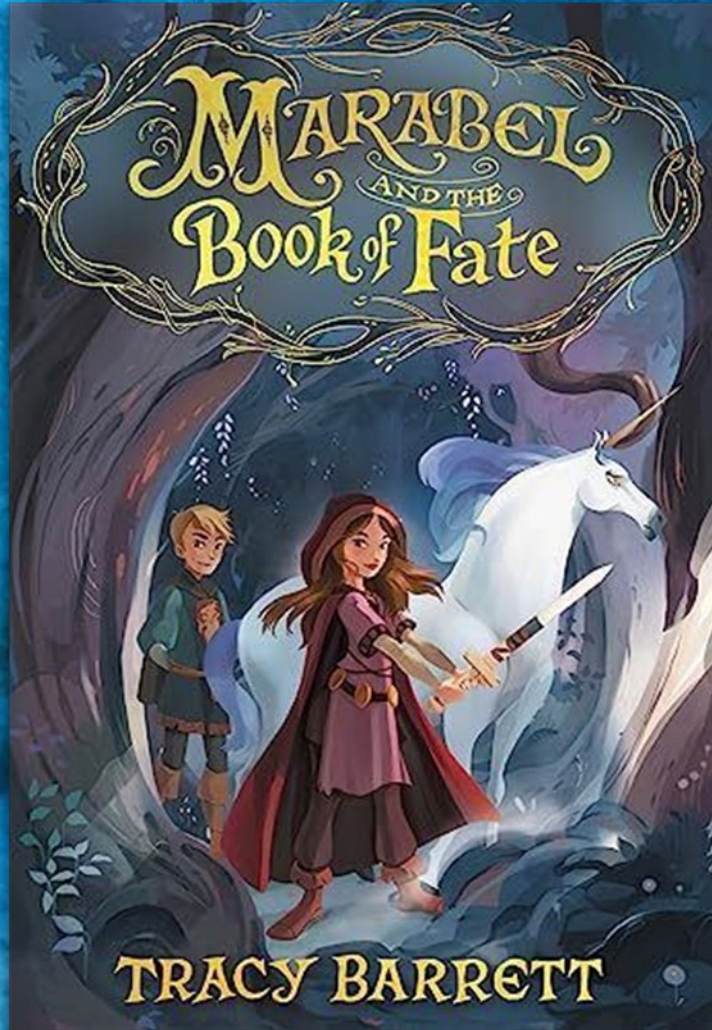


Photo from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Chosen_-_Jesus_touches_the_leper.jpg

The background of the slide is a vibrant blue watercolor wash. The colors range from deep, dark blues to lighter, almost white blues, creating a textured, organic feel. The watercolor is applied in a way that it seems to bleed from the top left towards the bottom right, leaving a white space on the right side of the slide.

Thank you

Myrna Layton

myrna_layton@byu.edu