

Harmonic Heber Hits Home  
Bronx II Branch Roadshow  
1990

Cast of Characters:

Heber J. Grant

Sister Grant, his mother

Jennifer Jensen, a girl he admires

Singing Students

Professor Charles J. Thomas, a singing teacher

Elder Rudger Clawson

Elder J. Golden Kimball

Alexander Schriener, tabernacle organist

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Make up sponge

Q-Tips

Old shirt

Tissues

Scene 1 -- Professor Thomas's Classroom

(A sparsely furnished western classroom, a music stand, a blackboard with a staff and notes on it in chalk. The name "Professor Charles J. Thomas" is written in elaborate script.)

(Enter Heber J. Grant and Sister Grant stage right. Heber wears a bandana around his neck. His mother wears a long frilly cotton dress, a hat, and carries a big black handbag.)

Mother: Now Heber, you be good in class and do everything Professor Thomas asks you to do.

Heber: Mother, why do I have to take singing lessons?

Mother: Heber, my son, you cannot carry a tune. I have tried for years to teach you to sing, but the neighbors have been complaining.

Heber: But Mother, we live on a farm. Our next door neighbors live three miles away!

Mother: It wasn't the Andersons, dear. It was the Larsons. They live FIVE miles away. Look who's here, Jennifer Jensen, the pretty girl from your school.

Heber: (Aside) I'll die if I have to sing in front of HER. She'll laugh at me.

(Enter Jennifer Jensen stage left, prettily dressed)

Jennifer: (formally) Good morning, Sister Grant. (almost flirting) Hi, Heber.

Mother: You look charming today Jennifer. Now Heber wouldn't you like Jennifer to be one of your wives when you grow up?

(Mother Grant exits blithely with a wave of her handkerchief. Heber nods in reply to his mother, then looks at Jennifer and becomes very embarrassed.)

Heber: (reproachfully) Mother!

(Two other singing students enter stage right.)

(Professor Thomas enters stage left. He is dignified and wears a black suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie.)

Students: (together in chorus) Good morning, Professor Thomas.

Professor: Good morning boys and girls. Today we have new student in our singing class. Everyone welcome Heber Grant.

Students: (together in same chorus) Good morning, Heber Grant.

(Professor Thomas glares at the class for this mockery)

Professor: Heber, I would like you to start out by singing Come Come Ye Saints.

Heber: (singing terribly in a cracked monotone) Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labor . . .

Professor: (patiently) No, stop. You aren't breaking stones for the temple. Sing the notes smoothly.

(The other students giggle.)

Heber: (a little frightened, sings exactly as before) Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labor . . .

Professor: (impatiently) No, no stop. My cow sings with more melody. Try to sing the tune.

(The other students laugh.)

Heber: (almost snickering, sings exactly as before) Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labor . . .

Professor: (shouting and breaking his baton) No, no, no, stop it, I say. I give up. Heber, you will never in this world learn to sing. You may get another chance in the spirit world. But please do us all a favor and stop trying now. (He exits stage left in despair).

(The other students exit laughing loudly. Only Jennifer remains behind. Heber slumps his shoulders, discouraged.)

Jennifer: Now Heber, don't be discouraged. Anyone with a reasonably good voice and plenty of perseverance can learn to sing. You just have to be willing to practice a lot.

Heber: I'll never be able to sing.

Jennifer: Yes you will. Remember when you were terrible at baseball and wanted to be on the championship team? You threw a ball at the side of Bishop Wooley's barn for hours and hours every day until you were good enough to be on the best team. You should do the same thing with singing.

Heber: You're right Jennifer, I'll practice singing, no matter what the neighbors and Professor Thomas say.

(Music, the cast files onto stage behind Heber and Jennifer. All

sing to the tune of the Impossible Dream, but not too slow)

To sing, the unsingable song,  
To tune all the notes that are wrong,  
To count, the uncountable tempo,  
To prove that I'm not a ding dong.

To reach the unreachable pitch,  
To wait while I'm counting the rest,  
To croon when my throat is too wayward,  
To sound as if I were the best.

This is my goal, that I master my tone,  
To sing praises to heaven,  
Such that no one will groan.

This is my goal, that I master my voice,  
So that people will listen,  
If they're given a choice.

And my ward will be better for this,  
That one boy with the voice of King Kong,  
Sings out with the wind of a steamboat,  
To sing the unsingable song.

(All exit, curtain).

Scene two -- A buggy between Holbrook and St. Johns  
Years later

(Heber J. Grant, now a general authority rides in a mock up of a buggy with Rudger Clawson and J. Golden Kimball. All are in dark suits, white shirts, black hats. Elder Clawson rides in front with the reins and Heber rides in back with Elder Kimball.)

Clawson: That was a great stake conference today in Holbrook.

Kimball: A heck of a conference. The only problem is that it's a pretty darn long way back to St. Johns.

Clawson: It will take hours to go sixty miles in this buggy. I wish someone would invent the automobile so we general authorities could get around faster.

Kimball: Automobile, Shmautomobile, those darn scientists better get to work on the airplane.

Heber: Brethren, I have an idea. I have been practicing singing lately. ~~Wouldn't~~ <sup>Wouldn't</sup> be all right if I sang 100 hymns on the way to ~~Holbrook?~~ <sup>St. John</sup>

Kimball: Darn it, Heber, that's one heck of an idea.

Clawson: I guess that will have to do until they invent the car stereo.

Heber: (Confidently, but still singing badly) Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labor fear.

(Clawson and Kimball join in this singing, but exchange worried glances when they hear Heber sing)

Clawson: (shortly) Lovely, Heber.

Heber: (alone now) Sweet is the work, my God, my king.

(a person crosses the stage with a sign that says "40 songs later." As it passes in front of the buggy, Clawson and Kimball change positions, plugging their ears. Clawson has to drive the buggy with one hand and put that shoulder to his ear or two hands on his ears with the reins in the crook of his elbow. He tries a number of positions, none of which work well in his goal of blocking his ears and driving the buggy at the same time. As the sign goes by, Heber sings the last line of a song. His singing is not quite so bad as before.)

Heber: . . . tells me I've a mother there. (speaking) There that was Oh My Father.

Kimball: Darn it Heber, this can't go on. You sing like a banshee from Heck.

Clawson: I think I will have a nervous breakdown if you sing any more, Heber. Fortunately psychiatry has already been invented. Unfortunately there aren't any psychiatrists in the west yet.

Heber: (Laughing) Thank you for your support brethren. I think we should just stick to our bargain. I have sixty songs to go. (He sings in country style) Ere you left your room this morning.

(a person carries a sign across the stage that says "After 100 songs." As it passes in front of the buggy, Kimball and Clawson slump in their seats as if they had passed out. Heber sings the last line of a song. This is the best he has sung yet.)

Heber: . . . We're going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell. Well brethren, thank you for letting me sing those 100 hymns. And just in time. Here we are in St. Johns.

Kimball: Heck, Heber, you are the persistantest man in the whole darn world.

Clawson: (looking in front of the buggy) More persistent than our horse. I think you sang it to death. ~~(He slaps his forehead as if just remembering something) Fate! I forgot that earplugs were already invented! (He pulls two cotton balls out of his pocket, looks at them ruefully and tosses them over his shoulder)~~

(Music, to "Oh, what a beautiful morning." **The cast files onstage and Heber slips back among them.** Clawson and Kimball come to the front)

Oh what a gladsome arrival.  
Oh how we're glad that we're here.  
We're glad that Heber's done singing.  
He can be hard on the ear.

Oh he learned that he should be persistent,  
Yes he learned that he should be persistent.  
He sings and he scares all the cougars away,  
Still we wish that he'd save it for some other day.

(Heber comes to the front. All continue to sing)

Oh how I love to be singing.  
Songs are the prayers of the heart.  
~~I know that if I just practice~~  
I can achieve perfect art,  
I can achieve perfect art.

Scene 3 -- The Salt Lake Tabernacle  
Years later

(The Mormon Tabernacle Choir is lined up to sing in a V formation. The women and the men are dressed alike. Alexander Schrinier enters in a tuxedo. Organ pipes grace the background.)

Schriner: Brothers and sisters of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, for today's performance, we have a special guest. The president of the church, Heber J. Grant, has come to hear us sing.

Choir: (buzzing with excitement) Oh boy! . . . the prophet! . . . I've been looking forward to this . . . I want to shake his hand . . . I knew him when we were children.

**(Heber enters in a dark suit, with his characteristic beard, smiling)**

Schriner: **(shaking his hand)** We are grateful for your support of the choir, President Grant.

**Heber: The choir's music inspires me. I also love to sing.**

Jennifer: (she is a member of the choir) President Grant and I took singing lessons together.

Schriner: (stunned) Is that right? President Grant, did you train alongside our star soprano soloist?

Heber: (quite<sup>o</sup> pleased with himself) That's right, I used to sing with her, although I was not as good as she was. (he sings, better than ever) Come come ye saints, no toil nor labor . . .

Schriner: Would you mind ~~joining your voice with ours and singing the solo?~~ <sup>singing with us</sup>

Heber: (flattered but modest) ~~Heh, heh. Seram, OK?~~ <sup>I've always dreamed of being able to sing with the choir</sup>  
(Schriner <sup>and you</sup> conducts the choir in the final number, to the tune of "Oh the farmer and the cowboy should be friends")

Once-a boy was trying hard to sing a song,  
But the melody and notes were always wrong.  
Mother tried to teach him how,  
But still he sounded like a cow,  
And teachers tried to help, but not for long.

~~Still he tried  
yet he tried.  
For a friend had taught him how to practice well  
Persistence was the way to go.  
Though other people told him no,  
And now his voice is clear as any bell.~~

Heber J. Grant <sup>worked</sup> ~~tried~~ hard at singing  
Heber ~~Grant~~ rehearsed his song  
If we recognize our weakness  
Weak points can become more strong.

~~I've always dreamed of being able to sing with the~~  
Singing in the choir and now after years  
of hard work and practice  
I think I can do it