

'Beatlemania' wows crowd

Review » SLCA and friends salute the Fab 4 at Libby Gardner.

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Nothing sells better than the Beatles, even half a century after the legendary band's beginnings. Savvy programmer that he is, Brady Allred capitalized on the band's recent surge in popularity with "Beatlemania," a concert featuring his Salt Lake Choral Artists and assorted guests. The event was a box-office success even by SLCA standards, selling out in record time and necessitating the addition of a matinee performance; artistically, the evening offered some surprising payoffs as well.

Allred spiced up the program with variety. The full 160-voice SLCA ensemble sang celebratory numbers such as "Here Comes the Sun" and "Let It Be" with spot-on harmonies and plenty of power. The smaller Chamber Choir shone in a handful of more intimate arrangements, most of them made popular by the King's Singers. The Women's Choir contributed fun performances of "If I Fell" and a couple of tunes by the Beatles' contemporaries. The new Young Choral Artists delighted the crowd with well-rehearsed, enthusiastic renditions of hits such as "When I'm Sixty-Four." And the cover band Get Back kept the evening moving with faithful versions of the Beatles' more rocking tunes, such as "Get Back," "Please Please Me" and "Back in the U.S.S.R."

The Beatles weren't just a pop-culture phenomenon, but sophisticated songwriters whose music stands up to a variety of reinterpretations. The SLCA Chamber Choir's madrigal-style rendition of "Can't Buy Me Love" was a prime example. It came off far better than the superfluous version offered by vocal quintet T Minus 5 in a contrived "sing-off." Perhaps the evening's highlight, though, were the dueling versions of "Blackbird": Allred's associate, Aimee Frederick, led the Chamber Choir in one arrangement while Allred led the full choir in another. Both came off with panache.

Sing-alongs on "Hey Jude" and "All You Need Is Love" sent the crowd home happy.

Salt Lake Choral Artists

The choir and assorted guests celebrate the music of the Beatles in a surprisingly varied program.

With » Conductors Brady Allred, Jane Fjeldsted, Aimee Frederick and Jessica Lee; Beatlemania Children's Choir/Young Choral Artists; Get Back; and T Minus 5.

Where » Libby Gardner Concert Hall, University of Utah.

When » Saturday.