

The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Choral Artists continues to bloom

By Celia R. Baker

Special to The Tribune

Published: October 7, 2010 06:10PM

Updated: October 8, 2010 03:43PM

It's difficult to say which choir in Salt Lake City is best — they are numerous, and each has a unique personality and mission.

It is easy to say which choral group is the most prolific.

Since its inception six years ago, the Salt Lake Choral Artists (SLCA) community choir has spawned new choirs at a surprising rate. The initial group quickly trebled to become a concert choir, a chamber choir and a women's choir.

Two more have blossomed in recent months: a small, professional-quality choir called Salt Lake Vocal Artists and the Young Choral Artists, for children 7 to 15.

In all, there are more than 300 singers under the SLCA umbrella, and artistic director Brady Allred is planning for more growth.

Allred, who also is director of choral activities at the University of Utah, organized the 16-voice Vocal Artists after receiving a prestigious invitation to bring a top-notch choir to Spain's Tolosa International Choral Competition. Allred had previous success at the competition with his University of Utah Singers, but couldn't take that group for the late October event because it falls during the school semester.

Instead, he will take 40 singers chosen from the SLCA Concert Choir, and from within that group, the new Vocal Artists ensemble.

If Allred has his way, as he often does, the Vocal Artists will become a paid group of highly trained singers who perform, tour and record at a professional level.

"I very much believe that those who have gone to school and studied music should be able to make a living, and not just be volunteers for the rest of their life," he said.

Community groups remain at the center of SLCA's structure, though, giving performance opportunities to singers and practical experience to the conductors Allred mentors. SLCA's

Women's Choir and Chamber Choir are led by musicians who studied their craft with Allred at the University of Utah: Jane Fjeldsted and Aimee Frederick, respectively.

The newest choir, Young Choral Artists, is helmed by Jessica Lee, another Allred alumnus of graduate conducting studies.

Allred said expanding SLCA's offerings allows more people to sing in choirs, makes a wider variety of repertoire possible on each concert, and increases opportunities for his conducting protégés.

Lee is an accomplished pianist and conductor with a gift for working with children, Allred said. She successfully prepared a one-time-only children's choir for SLCA's "Beatlemania" concert last year and is enjoying the new challenge of founding an ongoing choir for young voices.

Young Choral Artists — YoCA — is an after-school program divided into beginning and advanced choirs. Each choir meets for one afternoon per week at the McGillis School in Salt Lake City. The choirs sing a variety of musical styles.

"We want to train [the children] to produce the appropriate sound for the repertoire they are singing," Allred said. "They'll learn to use head voice to sing Rutter and Britten appropriately, but for doing contemporary and popular things, like the Beatles, find a different vocal color that still is healthy."

YoCA's current challenge is singing the Latin texts of John Rutter's "Mass of the Children" with understanding.

"It talks about life, relationships to God and each other, and how to live the best life possible," Lee said. "That could almost be a symbol of what YoCA is all about — living life to the fullest and being the best person you can be."

Lee and Allred hope to grow the new choir into a group that provides opportunities for children throughout the Salt Lake Valley. Other elements of SLCA's five-year plan are similarly optimistic. Allred intends to continue commissioning new works for his choirs, making recordings and increasing SLCA's presence on YouTube.

A tour to the British Isles with the SLCA Concert Choir is planned for 2012, and the SLCA Summer Choral Institute will continue and expand. The most pressing goal is to acquire a permanent home for SLCA's choirs, which currently rehearse at Salt Lake City's First Baptist Church. Negotiations with the owner of a suitable building in Salt Lake City are under way.

"I dream big," Allred said.

—

Sing we joyous all together

P The Salt Lake Choral Artists present “One Joyous Voice,” featuring performances by each of its five choirs, as well as a joint performance of John Rutter’s “Mass of the Children” accompanied by chamber orchestra. Conductors are SLCA artistic director Brady Allred, Jane Fjeldsted, Aimee Frederick and Jessica Lee.

When • Saturday, Oct. 16, at 7 p.m.

Where • Libby Gardner Concert Hall on the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City.

Tickets • \$25 for adults; \$10 for students and children. Advance tickets, 801-953-1793 or www.saltlakechoralartists.org. Tickets also available at the door.

© 2010 The Salt Lake Tribune