

## Choral artists deliver a holiday treat

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SALT LAKE CHORAL ARTISTS, Libby Gardner Concert Hall, University of Utah, Dec. 18

Christmas concerts by the Salt Lake Choral Artists are always a treat. Director Brady Allred always tries to find something new or different to present and he certainly succeeded in that endeavor this year.

The annual holiday concert was held over the weekend in Libby Gardner Concert Hall and it was a British affair with Utah Premiere Brass, a Utah County-based British-style brass band accompanying the choir for part of the program and with a rarely heard work by Benjamin Britten, one of Britain's most significant 20th century composers.

The Choral Artists and Utah Premiere Brass performed a set of seven Christmas carols in new band/choir arrangements specifically done for this program.

The major work on the program, however, was Britten's cantata "Saint Nicolas." The work recounts the life of Nicolas, who became the model for the later Santa Claus.

Nicolas lived in the fourth century and is credited with a number of miracles, including one in which he resurrected three young boys who were murdered. For that and other miracles Nicolas was canonized and became the patron saint of children.

Britten's work is a wonderfully rich and vibrant account of major aspects in Nicolas' life. At times it's very intense and dramatic, but always lyrical.

Joining the combined forces of the Choral Artists was tenor Todd Miller. At Saturday's matinee performance, Miller sang with conviction and feeling, imbuing his part with finely crafted lyricism and vibrant expressiveness.

The choirs sang wonderfully, including the children's choir and the three young soloists (Benjamin Battistone, Nathaniel Battistone and James Corcoran). The orchestra, assembled for this concert, played well and Allred brought depth and sensitivity to his interpretation.

Also singing their own sets were the Women's Choir, under Jane Fjeldsted and the Children's Choir under Jessica Lee.

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