

"Carmina Burana' is breathtaking"
by Edward Reichel
Deseret News, October 31, 2006

The Salt Lake Choral Artists opened its new season over the weekend with a resplendent performance of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana." But more than just being a stunning season opener, Orff's choral masterwork also heralded the ensemble's new name.

Formerly known as the Utah Choral Artists, the group was forced to change its name by the Utah Chamber Artists earlier this year; the latter feared the similarity in names was detrimental.

As far as the renamed Salt Lake Choral Artists are concerned, however, no matter what they call themselves, their concerts are on a high professional level, thanks to director Brady Allred's exceptional leadership. He elicits a dynamic performance from his singers, and they give him what he expects of them.

Allred has shown he isn't afraid to go out on a limb with his singers, either. Mozart's great C Minor Mass, K. 427, late last season, and now Orff's stunning "Carmina Burana," have proven that the 150-voice choir is up to any challenge Allred might throw at them.

Saturday's performance was of a quality and caliber that belied the choir's volunteer status. The Choral Artists, augmented by the University of Utah's A Cappella Choir, sang forcefully, with self-assurance, passion and feeling to the point of bursting the confines of Libby Gardner Concert Hall.

Allred showed an intimate knowledge of the work. His reading captured the breadth and immensity of the score, while at the same time paying careful attention to small details of expression and nuance. That came especially to the fore in the "Cour D'Amour" ("Court of Love") section, which deals with the sensuality of physical love. The chorus and soloists gave a richly colored performance that underscored the voluptuousness of the music.

Joining the chorus were soloists Genevieve Christianson, soprano; George Dyer, tenor; and Clayne Robison, baritone. The three sang breathtakingly. Robison was particularly remarkable in "Estuans interius" ("In Rage and Bitterness") and, with Christianson, in "Tempus est iocundum" ("Pleasant Is the Season").

Orff gives the tenor only one solo, but it's one of the most visually stunning numbers in the entire work, and Dyer made the most of it. "Olim lacus colueram" ("The Roasted Cygnet Sings") is a wickedly witty song describing the last moments of a roasted swan before it is devoured by the hungry guests at an inn. Dyer gave a painfully vivid performance that captured the imagery wonderfully.

The Salt Lake Symphony accompanied the singers and played radiantly. Allred kept his large forces in balance - no small accomplishment in Libby Gardner, where the acoustics can be challenging, particularly with such a vast number of performers