

"Choral Artists present forceful, evocative 'German Requiem'"  
by Catherine Reese Newton  
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Salt Lake City has an abundance of excellent choral conductors, especially for a community its size: Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Barlow Bradford of Utah Chamber Artists, Susanne Sheston of the Utah Symphony and Utah Opera choruses, even the Utah Symphony's Keith Lockhart, who has done some of his most memorable work in choral music. Another first-rate conductor, Brady Allred, came to town a couple of years ago and quickly proved a force to be reckoned with. Saturday, he led Salt Lake Choral Artists in a stirring performance of Brahms' "German Requiem."

It's another sign of Salt Lake's active and vibrant musical scene that Saturday's concert wasn't even the first performance of the "German Requiem" here this month. Lockhart and the Utah Symphony gave a powerful reading of the piece a week earlier.

Why so many "German Requiems"? Why not? The Utah Symphony's performances were in Brahms' German, while Salt Lake Choral Artists did a new English-language edition by the late Lara Hoggard - in the audience's language, as the composer intended. Besides, the "German Requiem" is a masterpiece worth hearing over and over. Saturday's performance played to a near-capacity crowd at the University of Utah's Libby Gardner Concert Hall.

The 150-voice choir and the Salt Lake Symphony responded readily to Allred's dynamic direction, achieving an impressive range of musical colors. For example, a clean, cool sound in the opening "Blest are they who are sorrowful" brightened and warmed at the words "shall with rejoicing in joy be reaping." In the second movement, "For mortal flesh is as the grass," Allred brought the singers to a goosebump-inducing fortissimo in the final unison passage, then had them fade gracefully away like the withering grass. Another exhilarating crescendo came at the words "joy everlasting" in that movement's concluding fugue.

Allred conducted with a good sense of the work's overall shape, making the central movement, "How lovely are thy dwellings," a calm, comforting interlude.

The chorus' forceful delivery of the lines "the dead shall then rise up incorruptible" and "Death, where is thy sting! Hell, where is thy victory!" was another high point, as the singers followed Allred in an exciting accelerando. The final movement, "Blessed are the dead," brought the work to a soothing close.

Soloists were baritone Christopher Holmes and soprano Carol Ann Allred. Holmes sang with pleasing, resonant tone in "Lord, teach me to know the measure of my days on Earth" and "Lo, I unfold unto you a mystery." Soprano Allred, who is also the conductor's wife, brought an air of consolation to "You now are sorrowful" with her serene interpretation.