

"Chorus of praise for easygoing Allred"  
by Celia R. Baker  
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If conductors are supposed to be high-strung, volatile egotists, Brady Allred isn't living up to the standard.

No one minds. The University of Utah's affable director of choral activities is defying other expectations---and his success is being noticed.

In Utah, Allred is known for directing top-notch concerts and recordings with his university groups; effectively mentoring a new generation of choral conducting students; and raising the profile of the Salt Lake Choral Artists, a respected community choral organization.

The buzz around Allred took on international vibrations when the University of Utah Singers, which he formed when he joined the U. music faculty in 2003, began winning overseas choral competitions, including the prestigious European Grand Prix International in 2006.

Now the Singers are in demand in Europe, and so is Allred, who will judge a festival in Germany this spring and conduct choirs in Europe this summer. Last December, the U.'s choral department received a \$1.25 million gift, attracted in large part by Allred's accomplishments.

Salt Lake City's Kem and Carolyn Gardner funded the Ellen Neilson Barnes Presidential Endowed Chair in Choral Studies to honor Carolyn Gardner's late mother---and because they are fans of Allred and the U. of U. Singers, whose concerts draw "the Who's Who of Salt Lake City," according to Kem Gardner.

"We decided to do something to honor Brady and let him know how much he is appreciated," Kem Gardner said. "It's important to have someone like Brady, with his enthusiasm and skill, training up a whole generation of musicians to keep choral music in the forefront in Utah."

Allred said the money will be used to offer scholarships to undergrad singers and graduate assistants, help with recording and touring costs, and add new music to the choral repertoire.

"We can commission new pieces, premiere those, and let students have the experience of working with composers very closely and watching a piece come to fruition," he said.

Robert Walzel, director of the U.'s School of Music, said the two things that impress him most about Allred are the conductor's high degree of musicianship and his ability to motivate students. "He has a gift for being able to blend work on fundamentals of singing in with whatever repertoire he is doing, and it's absolutely seamless," Walzel said. "He develops concepts of singing that allow choirs to learn new material quickly and at a high artistic level."

Rachel Webster, a senior in choral music education at the U., said Allred is a "people person" who takes pride in his students' accomplishments and makes them work hard to earn it.

"There's just nothing better than pleasing him. When you know you've done it, you're walking in the clouds."

Allred's fascination with music started early. While he was growing up in Memphis, Tenn., he learned piano and several band instruments. He became conductor of his high school's band orchestra and choir, as well as accompanist for other groups.

An accomplished flutist, Allred considered becoming an orchestral player before settling on choral conducting while earning a bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University. He is married to soprano Carol Ann Allred and performs often as her accompanist. The two earned master's and doctorate degrees together at Eastman School of Music. The Allreds have four daughters, ranging from 8 to 18.

"Surprise, surprise---they all enjoy music," said Brady Allred. "We have some fun on family trips, all singing together."

Allred's key to balancing family life and a skyrocketing career is "careful scheduling." As always, there is plenty coming up this spring. The Singers will give the world premiere of a new work for double chorus and handbells by William Hawley on March 8; the U.'s choral department will present a rare performance of Monteverdi's "Vespers" in April; and the Utah Choral Artists will present Mendelssohn's "Elijah" in May.

#### UNDER BRADY'S BATON

The University of Utah Singers is the top choral ensemble at the U.'s School of Music; its 45 to 50 singers must pass a tough audition. In 2006, the group won the European Grand Prix International Choir Competition in Tolosa, Spain, after qualifying to enter by winning the Florilège Vocal de Tours International Choir Competition in France in 2005. As a result of the Grand Prix win, the Singers were hosted at three French choral festivals last summer. As invited artists, all of the group's travel expenses in France were paid.

The U.'s A Cappella Choir is also an auditioned ensemble, with 65 to 80 singers. Voice performance majors, choral music education students and students majoring in other music and nonmusic fields are found in both choirs.

The Salt Lake Choral Artists, which isn't performing today, is a community choir organization with a 160-member concert choir, a 42-member chamber choir and a 57-member women's choir. Besides presenting several concerts each year, the group sponsors a summer choral institute for individuals and families who want to participate in choral performances without full-time membership in a choir.

The group's next performance is Mendelssohn's oratorio "Elijah" on May 10 in Salt Lake City's Libby Gardner Concert Hall. Learn more at [www.saltlakechoralartists.org](http://www.saltlakechoralartists.org).