

"Review: Salt Lake Choral Artists celebrate different cultures"
by Robert Coleman
The Salt Lake Tribune, October 20, 2008

Brady Allred's efforts to share world music during the Salt Lake Choral Artists' "Multicultural Celebration" at Libby Gardner Hall Saturday night were met with enthusiastic approval.

Allred divided his choral forces into three ensembles - a women's chorus, a chamber choir and a large concert choir - to sample music from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific Rim.

The combined ensembles opened with David Maddux's arrangement "O Sifuni Mungu," an African sensory work with aleatoric sounds, which required audience participation to rub hands together, snap fingers and slap thighs. Soloists Cecil Sullivan, Steve Knell and Jennifer Angulo called out chants that elicited the chorus' response.

The Chamber Choir followed with a set of Latin American songs. The group demonstrated secure vocal technique, clear diction and centered pitch. Allred allowed his singers ample expressive freedom, and the group's shared musical vision gave the performance unity throughout.

The Concert Choir sang two sets of songs written by British composer David Fanshawe. Fanshawe, an ethnomusicologist, traveled the world recording sights and sounds he encountered and incorporated the research into his musical creations.

The ensemble sang five movements from his "African Sanctus" and three selections from "Pacific Songs." Fanshawe's music was accompanied by Laurel Enke on piano, Matthew Oakden, string bass, Sonja Noykos on flute (Pacific Song), a percussion ensemble, dancers and a tape of atmospheric sounds and ethnic singing recorded by the composer on his travels down the Nile River and to the Pacific Islands.

While the taped contribution was authentic and interesting, it often overpowered the live musicians' well-honed performance.

The evening's most appealing selections were a Taiwanese song, "Dui Dui Dang Ah," that mimicked the sounds of a train journey and Aboriginal Australian music, "Past Life Melodies," that utilized overtone or throat singing to fascinating effect.

Jane Fjeldsted led the women's chorus in delicate and expressive music from Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. Associate conductor Aimee Frederick directed the Concert Choir in lush and detailed music, also from the Philippines.

The concert ended with an audience favorite, the rhythmic Nigerian carol "Betelehemu." Congas, bongos and dancers added to the spectacle as the concert ended in a whirl of sound, movement and color.