

# The Salt Lake Tribune

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Review: Salt Lake Choral Artists' 'Mass for Peace' is riveting  
Review • It details the human condition when the threat of conflict is omnipresent.

By Robert Coleman

Special to The Tribune

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Being labeled “profound” can be the kiss of death for a piece of new music. It’s usually code for atonal and difficult. But Brady Allred and the Salt Lake Choral Artists presented a relatively new work Saturday, featuring sweeping, tonal melodies that kept listeners riveted throughout the hour that it took to perform its 13 movements.

The selection was Welsh composer Karl Jenkins’ “The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace.” Jenkins dedicated the mass to victims of the Kosovo crisis when it was premiered 11 years ago. But the mass encompassed a much broader spectrum, detailing the human condition where the threat of conflict is omnipresent and the effect that the machines of war have on civilization is devastating.

The composer assimilated text from the Latin Mass, the Bible, an ancient Sanskrit epic called the Mahàbhàrata, and authors such as Kipling, Tennyson and a Hiroshima bombing survivor, Sankichi Toge.

Images projected on a screen, prepared by Dave Reeder, accompanied the music.

A 15th century French tune, “L’homme armè” (The armed man), was featured in the first and last movements. The tune’s Celtic flavor, accompanied by static drum accompaniment, provided the same effect as Ravel’s hypnotic “Bolero.” The excellent contracted orchestra added variations throughout the stretto-like buildup until each movement’s brilliant, climatic ending.

Traditional elements of the mass, such as “Kyrie,” “Sanctus,” “Agnus Dei” and “Benedictus,” were represented and sung in Latin. Other movements, sung in English or French, were titled descriptively: “Charge,” “Angry Flames” and “Torches.” The last of these described the Hiroshima bombing.

Allred masterfully blended the forces of 150 singers and the full orchestra through the music’s dramatic arc, highlighting the ability of his singers to move the listener. Mezzo-soprano Holly Sorenson soloed during several movements with a warm vocal depth that carried well in Libby Gardner Hall. Cellist Julie Bevan was featured extensively during “Benedictus.” Her fluid tone over the orchestra’s accompanying pedal tone was transcendent. The trumpet section contributed

to the mass' militaristic tenor with fanfares and principal Joe Reardon's ethereal off-stage playing.

The concert opened with the Vocal Artists and the organization's children's choir singing another Jenkins work, "Adiemus" from "Songs of Sanctuary." The singers, ringing the orchestra in the upper choir loft, chanted the lyric, adding layers of sound, spiked by the children's bright voices, until the hall was filled with engaging, rhythmic music.

The children's choir, directed by Joan Brinton and John Walker, also serenaded the audience from the David Gardner Hall atrium as they arrived for the concert.

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S.L. Choral Artists' 'Mass for Peace'

R A large-scale, anti-war mass kept the audience spellbound.

When • Saturday, Oct. 15

Where • Libby Gardner Hall, 1365 E. Presidents Circle, University of Utah campus, Salt Lake City

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