

U. Singers ready for European tour

By [Edward Reichel](#)

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In the six years that Brady Allred has been the University of Utah's director of choral conducting, he's taken his choirs to two major choral competitions in Europe — and come home with winners both times.

Now, Allred's hoping to make it three for three.

Later this month, the University Singers will participate in the prestigious International Chamber Choir Competition in Marktoberdorf, Germany, a small town about 60 miles outside Munich. They'll compete against 11 other choirs from eight countries.

"We're entered in two categories," Allred told the Deseret News. "One category is for mixed choir, the other is for a youth choir for singers 21 and younger."

Each category consists of two rounds, and the choirs are required to perform a varied repertoire that represents several musical periods. There is no elimination after the first round, Allred said. "The elimination took place during the application process." Several hundred choirs from around the world applied, and only 12 were selected to compete.

Allred doesn't want to speculate on the outcome, but he knows the competition will be tough. "The Marktoberdorf competition is a high-level festival. They set themselves apart from the others."

After already winning two international competitions, Allred knows that all eyes will be on him and his choir. "I know the pressure is on me," he said. "We've won everything we've entered up to now."

Allred knows the Marktoberdorf competition well. Two years ago, he was a member of the jury. And back in the 1990s, when he was the music director of the Pittsburgh Bach Choir, Allred took his ensemble to Germany to enter the competition.

"I took them twice," he said. "The first time was in 1995, but we didn't place that year. We returned in 1997 and won."

The competition doesn't begin until May 29, and by then, his choir will have its repertoire down pat, Allred said. He knows the importance of having the singers hone their voices and polish their repertoire prior to a big competition. That's why he's taking them on a 2 1/2 week tour of central Europe before coming to Marktoberdorf.

"Doing so many concerts lets our performances be professional. I want us to perform at a very high level, and repetition lets us do that."

Their last stop before going to Marktoberdorf is Munich, where they will record their current repertoire in the city's famous Himmelfahrtskirche.

"The last time we were in Munich, we recorded our 'A Jubilant Song' CD there," Allred said. "The church was available again, so we're going to take advantage of it."

Between Monday, when Allred and the choir leave for Europe, and the start of the competition, they'll have performed about a dozen concerts in a variety of venues. And they're not just taking one or two preset concert programs with them.

"Because the venues are different, we're going to have a different program for each," he said. "For some, we'll just be doing sacred repertoire, and for others, we'll be doing folk and sacred repertoire."

To prepare for the competition and tour, the singers have had to learn and memorize 45 different works, ranging from pieces by Renaissance composers to traditional folk songs and Broadway tunes. They're also taking with them three commissioned works, two by Nancy Wertsch and one by Imant Raminsh, which will receive their European premieres during the tour.

"The students have had a lot of music they've had to learn this year," Allred said. "Besides the tour and competition repertoire, which they've had to memorize — and, by the way, we're going to be the only choir at the competition who'll be performing from memory — there was also the Christmas repertoire and Arvo Part's *Te Deum* and Tan Dun's *Water Passion*."

Before leaving for Europe, Allred and the choir will give a special farewell concert today in Libby Gardner Concert Hall to give concert-goers a taste of what Europeans can expect from the U.'s premiere vocal ensemble.

"We'll be doing a large sampling of our repertoire. There is going to be something for everyone at this concert, and I hope people will come to the concert and support us."

The group's latest CD, *"The Cloths of Heaven,"* featuring its 2007-08 repertoire, will be available at the concert.

Many of the ensemble's performances have been posted on YouTube and most of its repertoire is available on iTunes-U.

There is also a University of Utah Singers fan club on Facebook, and people will be able to keep track of the group's tour and follow it during the competition on its Web site, singers.utah.edu.

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If you go...

What: "A Grand Night for Singing," University of Utah Singers Bon Voyage Concert, Brady Allred, conductor

Where: Libby Gardner Concert Hall, University of Utah

When: May 10, 7:30 p.m.

How much: \$7 general admission, \$3 students

Phone: 801-581-7100

Web: www.kingsburyhall.org

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