

Review: The Washington Chorus' 'A Candlelight Christmas' at The Kennedy Center

dcmetrotheaterarts.com/2016/12/12/review-washington-chorus-candlelight-christmas-kennedy-center/

Mark Ludder

12/12/2016

Once the energized crowd was seated and ready, Guest Conductor Andrew Clark, (Director of coral activities at Harvard), had us all stand up for some vocal warm ups. Moans, laughter and hearty Ho, Ho, Ho's were enough to convince him the audience was prepared to participate in a 56-year Washington tradition know as [A Candlelight Christmas](#).

Once the lights dimmed, those assembled settled back in their seats. A single soprano voice lifted everyone's spirits to begin the processional as nearly two hundred choristers holding candles strode slowly toward the stage from the rear of the concert hall singing "Once in in Royal David's City" by H.J. Gauntlett.

The next selection was "O Come All Ye Faithful" which The Washington Chorus' Music Director Julian Wachner reorchestrated to include the audience – so we were back on our feet. Thankfully for every sing-a-long, the house lights were raised so reading the included lyrics was never a problem.

More than 90 minutes of traditional Christmas music, a few unfamiliar selections from abroad and wonderful new arrangements of some favorites held true to the promise of sparking the Christmas spirit that many seek to hold throughout the year.



'A Candlelight Christmas.' Photo courtesy of The Washington Chorus,

A particularly lively and wintry version of John Rutter's "Sing We to This Merry Company" featured syncopated elements of bells and percussion.

An unexpected treat of the show was the inclusion of Gaithersburg's Northwest High School's Chamber Singers, directed by Stephanie Baker. They began with my personal favorite selection of the evening – "Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming" by Michael Praetorius. The High School's participation is part of the The Washington Chorus' [Side-by-Side education and outreach program](#). Later in the week, H-B Woodland's Chamber Singers will also have the opportunity to share the stage with The Washington The Washington Chorus.

As the High Schoolers left their risers to intermix with the TWC professionals, an instrumental piece called FLOURISHES for brass & organ by Carlyle Sharpe filled the hall with majestic pipes, whip cracks and sleigh bells from a tambourine, and a brass conversation which I thoroughly enjoyed.

After the intermission, Jessica Wabler treated us to a soprano solo during “Mary Had A Baby” in a Gospel inspired arrangement by William Dawson.

American operatic Tenor Carl Tanner made a guest appearance to sing “O Holy Night” by Adolphe Adams and I must say he hit the ultra-high note right out of the Hall!

Everyone who was able showed their appreciation following George Frideric Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” with a well-deserved standing ovation.

Running Time: Two hours, including including a 20-minute intermission.



The Washington Chorus Presents A Candlelight Christmas plays through December 22, 2016, at The Washington Chorus performing at The Kennedy Center’s Concert Hall – 2700 F Street, NW, in Washington, DC. For tickets, call the box office at (202) 467-4600, or Toll-Free: (800) 444-1324, or purchase them [online](#).

RATING: ★★★★★

© 2017 DCMetroTheaterArts. All Rights Reserved.