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A Chanticleer Christmas at Disney Hall

R. Daniel Foster · Friday, December 22nd, 2023

The San Francisco-based male a cappella group Chanticleer presented its holiday concert at the Walt Disney Concert Hall on December 13. The program varied widely, from sacred music (Josquin des Prez' "O Virgo virginum") to some *de rigueur* holiday froth ("Ding, Dong! Merrily on High"). Also tossed in: Christmas spirituals and a song featured in an animated film.

As per tradition, the group entered holding candles singing "O Adonai" from Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen. It was a solemn start that continued with the Prez selection along with "O Admirabile Commercium" by Johannes Regis. The latter is a complexly layered piece, but not without delight. It often veers into being playful. Little of Regis' music survives, so showcasing it is always a noted gesture.



Walt Disney Concert Hall / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Chanticleer's keystone holiday piece is "Walking in the Air," a song written by Howard Blake for the 1982 animated film, "The Snowman," based on the 1978 children's book of the same name—written by Raymond Briggs. Countertenor Logan Shields gave a flawless performance that soared, mastering the song's ethereal feel, AND backed by always-capable ensemble.

Called "the world's reigning male chorus" by New Yorker, Grammy Award-winning Chanticleer was founded in San Francisco in 1978 by singer and musicologist Louis Botto. The group has sold over one million recordings and performed thousands of live concerts to audiences around the world.

Named for the "clear-singing" rooster in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Chanticleer first became known for its interpretations of Renaissance music. It later became a pioneer in the revival of the South American baroque as it recorded several award-winning titles in that genre.



Chanticleer / Photo courtesy of the LA Phil

The Disney Hall concert concluded with a rousing medley of Christmas spirituals—from "Rise Up, Shepherd and Follow" to "Go, Tell It on the Mountain."

Chanticleer tours its holiday concert throughout November and December with concerts in Sacramento, Carmel, Berkeley, Oakland, Petaluma, Stanford, and San Francisco where it concludes the tour on December 23.

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