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Review Up!

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Services](#)

[Auditions](#)

[On A Role](#)

[Thank You!](#)

LOVE IS...

a concert featuring

Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* a concert version and other selections

presented by

THE PHILADELPHIA CHORUS, Raquel García, Artistic Director



There was barely an empty seat to be found at The Philadelphia Chorus' performance of LOVE IS inside the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

This was my second time attending a performance of The Philadelphia Chorus, Directed by Artistic Director Raquel Garcia and accompanied by Judith Large. Based on my experience at their holiday concert last December, I had a feeling it would be well attended and was sure to arrive early. Not only does The Philadelphia Chorus have a following, but Raquel Garcia has her own adoring fan base. You can hear the chatter about Raquel while waiting for tickets, refreshments and intermission. The audience has nothing but good things to say about her and her talent.

The concert was primarily focused on George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* featuring soloists Iris Fairfax and Norman Garrett. I had never heard the music of *Porgy and Bess* before and these performers brought the show to life without a set, lighting and very little choreography. Garrett sang for several characters throughout the performance and would subtly change pieces of his costume to help the audience follow the story line. You could see him take on the personality of each character as he did so, and was an absolute joy to watch. Fairfax's voice was beyond words as she sang *My Man's Gone Now* during the first portion of the performance and she continued to amaze us through the evening. As the opera moved from one song to the next, I noticed it was hard for the audience to hold back their applause and wait for the appropriate time to praise the performers. The audience made sure to show their appreciation by giving standing ovations at the end of Act 1 and again at the end of Act 2.

Porgy And Bess was framed between other love songs such as *I Am Loved* by Christopher Harris, *Taking A Chance On Love* by Vernon Duke and *Somebody To Love* by Freddie Mercury. It was a pleasure to watch the chorus sing *Taking A Chance On Love* because you could see each of them truly feeling the music as they swayed to the rhythm, which is something they no doubt learned from Raquel. To paraphrase a previous review of

Raquel's works "Garcia was very in tune to the music that surrounded her... (she) was so hypnotic in her movement that one could feel the emotion... the choir is passionate and expressive-it is because of her guidance".

Another soloist that should absolutely be recognized was Justin Gonzalez who's solo in *Somebody To Love* was the perfect ending to the show. Gonzalez has the voice to do this song justice and I hope that he gets the opportunity to perform it again and again for audiences. The entire company should be proud of themselves, the audience came to see a show about love, and love is what they got.



Alisa Ambrose is a graduate of Arcadia University with a BA in Liberal Studies with a focus on Public Relations of The Arts. She currently works full time in Marketing and performs with with Methacton Community Theatre. She will be producing "Dear Edwina JR." this fall with MCT.

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[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Services](#)

[Auditions](#)

[On A Role](#)

[Thank You!](#)

