

Bach Society of Saint Louis  
**Christmas Candlelight Concert**

Reviewed by John Huxhold

From visiting the cozy little shops in St. Charles to office and neighborhood parties to light shows at Tilles Park, December in St. Louis has some lovely holiday rituals that make the season bright. The best of those is the annual Candlelight Christmas Concert by the Bach Society in Powell Hall. And this year they did not disappoint.

The first half of the program began with selections from the first three scenes of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with soloists Gina Galati, soprano, Don Frazure, tenor, and Curtis Streetman, bass. Conductor A. Dennis Sparger kept the tempos brisk, with the orchestra never overwhelming the chorus. Along with the soloists they sang with great gusto and precision without sounding harsh or strained.

The second half began with the lights dimmed for the traditional candlelight processional to carols like O Come, Little Children and Good Christian Men Rejoice. Once everyone was back on stage there was a quiet, ethereal piece by Eric Whitacre (*Lux Aurumque*) that was one of the highlights of the evening, hanging over the stage like a beautiful halo.

The Archdiocesan Children's Choir conducted by John Romeri, did some favorite John Rutter arrangements, and the audience got to stand and sing *The First Nowell* and *Hark the Herald Angels* and participate in the festivities.

This concert is the essence of the season, and while the Rockettes down the street may have had something to offer in way of holiday cheer, the Bach Society's concert is one of the best ways I know to celebrate the traditional joys of Christmas.