



Of the litany of holiday events at the American Disney Parks, there is perhaps none more beloved by aficionados than the annual Candlelight Processional performances in Disneyland and Walt Disney World's Epcot. From the pomp and circumstance of the choir to the booming narration of the celebrity readers, the experience of seeing the Processional is deeply moving, even for those who aren't believers. But how did the Candlelight Processional come to Disney's parks in the first place?



To find the origin of the Candlelight Processional at Disneyland, we have to travel back to the park's earliest days. During the park's first Christmas season in 1955, a group of twelve Dickensian carolers under the direction of Dr. Charles C. Hirt of the University of Southern California performed at various points around the park, and other choirs periodically performed at the Main Street Bandstand. The numbers of carolers and guest choirs grew exponentially through the 1956 and 1957 holiday seasons, becoming one of the park's most popular seasonal offerings.

In 1958, Hirt went to park management with the idea of adding a procession of a larger mass choir. As explained on [d23.com](http://d23.com), the first event featured "singers from 16 choirs processing down Main Street to the Plaza where they performed a full concert with the Dickens Carolers singing from the Sleeping Beauty Castle balcony above." The full choir has been a part of the show ever since, and they now perform on a large "Christmas tree" made of risers. Since 1982, the choir has been comprised of cast members who are part of the Disney Employee Choir.



The Processional's final transformation into the form we know today occurred in 1960, when the performance was moved back to the town square area of Main Street, U.S.A., and actor Dennis Morgan was brought in to read excerpts from the Biblical Christmas story to tie together the classic hymns being performed by the choir. Over the course of the decades since, luminaries including Cary Grant, John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Jimmy Stewart, Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, James Earl Jones, Neil Patrick Harris, Jodi Benson, Dick Van Dyke, John Stamos, and Chris Hemsworth have taken their turn at narrating during the event.



Just over a decade after Disneyland's Candlelight Processional took on its modern form, the processional was duplicated for the east coast during Walt Disney World's first holiday season in 1971. The show was performed in Magic Kingdom's town square, in a spot analogous to its Disneyland location, for 22 years. In 1994, the Candlelight Processional was moved to Epcot, eventually becoming the centerpiece of the park's sprawling Festival of the Holidays celebration.



**There are three performances each evening at 5:15, 7:00 and 8:30 p.m. The length of the show is about 45-50 minutes.**

**Candlelight Processional is an amazing production. Well before the event even begins, hundreds of people give countless hours to make each performance memorable.**

**In preparation for [2019] Candlelight Processional shows ...**

- 72 official Disney Cast Choir rehearsals were held with over 700 participating Cast Members to learn 11 song selections, plus 1 Processional and 1 Recessional, totaling 897 measures of music**
- 16 Guest Talent Coordinators trained to prepare for working with 268 Guest Choir Groups containing a total of 18,560 performers from across the country**
- 12 Celebrity Narrators were scheduled to perform in 102 performances, over the course of 34 days (November 27 through December 30)**

**On any given night of a Candlelight Processional performance, there are...**

- 300 Guest Choir Members · 48 Cast Choir Members**
  - 45 Orchestra Members · 8 Voices of Liberty**
  - 6 Fanfare Trumpeters · 1 Conductor**
  - 1 Celebrity Narrator · 1 Sign Language Interpreter**
- supported by:**
- 27 Entertainment/Guest Choir Support Personnel**
  - 10 Event Operations Support Personnel**
  - 5 Managers · 4 Custodial Support Personnel**
  - 4 Caterers · 3 Emergency Aid Personnel**
  - 1 Security Person**