

Let It Be Christmas:

Rock opera celebrates 15 years of bringing Christmas joy through the music of The Beatles

The Kirkwood Performing Arts Center will once again welcome patrons to the annual production of “Let it Be Christmas — A Rock Opera.” The production begins Thursday, Dec. 19, and continues through Saturday, Dec. 21.

This year marks the 15th anniversary for this locally-created production, which tells the story of the nativity — from the first meeting of Mary and Joseph through the birth of Jesus — entirely through the music of The Beatles. This is the third consecutive year that “Let It Be Christmas” is being performed at the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center.

This production has become a St. Louis favorite over the years, and features many community residents including the Rev. Rocky Marlowe of Glendale, creator and director of the show and former pastor at Kirkwood United Methodist Church; Erika (Schupmann) Whittaker, a Kirkwood resident who serves as show’s vocal director and co-producer; Jon Kuhlmann of Des Peres, owner of Kirkwood Florist; Sara (Pieper) Bisgrove, owner of Kirkwood Pet Care; Dan Warner, a Webster Groves resident and owner of Switzer’s Candy Company; Chris Mihill of Shrewsbury, a former KMOX executive; and Samantha (Lord) Keller, a 2013 recipient of the coveted Burton Isaac Award for achievement on the violin.

Several other instrumentalists, vocalists and actors from the St. Louis area round out the cast and crew.

“Let it Be Christmas” was first performed in 2009 in the old lower-level worship space at Kirkwood United Methodist Church to a skeptical crowd, mostly from the church’s congregation. Word of the great performance spread quickly, and the second evening of the show was standing room only.

“On opening night in 2009, Erika and I looked at each other and basically said, ‘Well, here goes nothing!’ We had no idea what people would think of this unique telling of the Christmas story set to Beatles music,” said Marlowe, the production’s creator. “When 450-plus people showed up the second night, we were completely flabbergasted. Fifteen years later, we’re still selling out shows.”

Whittaker said that in many ways, “Let it Be Christmas” has become a means by which families celebrate Christmas together without all the trappings of traditional Christmas celebrations.

“The Beatles transcend generational boundaries like nothing else,” she said. “My own 22-year-old son is a huge Beatles fan — in large part due to this production in our lives — and now he’s been our spotlight operator for the past three years. It never ceases to astound me how the Beatles continue to have an influence on our younger generations.”

“Let it Be Christmas” will be performed Dec. 19-20 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 21 at 2 p.m. at the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center, 210 E. Monroe Ave. Tickets are available at the box office, by calling 314-759-1455 or through [MetroTix.com](https://metrotix.com) (metrotix.com/events/detail/let-it-be-christmas).