

Walt Disney World's Candlelight Processional is a holiday treat whose roots stretch all the way back to the amusement park empire's infancy in the 1950s.



Actor Alfonso Ribeiro, who gained fame from his character Carlton on the 1990s TV hit "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," serves as the celebrity narrator during the Nov. 27 performance. (Courtesy photo)

Now, more than half a century later, three Seminole students can say they were part of the annual winter tradition.

University School's Kylie Drake, 14, and sisters Maryjane Osceola, 14, and Xiora Osceola, 16, were among the students selected from their school choir who performed Nov. 27 at Epcot's American Gardens Theater.

The Candlelight Processional features the story of Christmas as told by a celebrity narrator with an orchestra and choir. Shows were held Nov. 22-Dec. 30 with different casts.

According to Disney's website, "each night, a celebrity narrator tells the biblical tale of a savior born to a virgin in Bethlehem. All the while, gorgeous choral pieces are woven into the production as an orchestra and choir provide an inspirational backdrop with songs of hope and joy."

Maryjane and Xiora's father Everett Osceola said any nerves the girls had about performing at Disney didn't last long.

"They said when they were up there it felt good and that all their hard work paid off," said Osceola, who was among an estimated 300 spectators.

In addition to performing in front of a big audience, the Seminole trio also had a chance to perform with Alfonso Ribeiro, who served as the narrator. Ribeiro starred with Will Smith in the 1990s TV comedy "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," and currently hosts "America's Funniest Home Videos."

Osceola said his daughters didn't know who Ribeiro is, but they are familiar with "the Carlton dance" thanks to seeing it on video games. Ironically, a few weeks after the processional, Ribeiro was in the news for filing a lawsuit against the makers of Fortnite and NBA 2K18 over the use of his "Carlton dance" which he mastered on "Fresh Prince."

The history of the processional's celebrity narrators dates back to a golden age of Hollywood (California) with the likes of Cary Grant, Gregory Peck, Jimmy Stewart and John Wayne. In addition to Ribeiro, this year's lineup included Whoopi Goldberg, Neil Patrick Harris, Pat Sajak and others.

Osceola said Maryjane has been in other choirs, but this is the first year Xiora joined a choir. Being invited to perform at Disney lived up to the expectations of a Christmas-time tradition, including the weather.

"It was cold, but it was fitting because it was Christmas," Osceola said. "When I got the email (that the girls would be singing), I told the whole family. It was really cool. I hope they do it next year, too."



Xiora Osceola, bottom row center, sings in the Epcot Center's Candlelight Processional. (Courtesy photo)





Singers in the Candlelight Processional form a Christmas tree of sorts as part of the performance. (Courtesy photo)



Seminole students from the University School choir gather at their performance in the Candlelight Processional at Walt Disney World. From left, Kylie Drake, and sisters Maryjane Osceola and Xiora Osceola. (Courtesy photo)

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