

Kathleen Battle

“Underground Railroad: A Spiritual Journey”

“...the voice as a whole still had the purity and beauty that has always characterized it, and she performed with flair and class — and sometimes without any accompaniment at all... It all added up to a long, packed and thoroughly enjoyable evening; the capacity audience in the Concert Hall certainly got its money’s worth. Rather than witnessing a memorial to a soprano’s storied past, we got something vital and compelling and very much in the present; and I came away with new respect and admiration for Battle.”
– Anne Midgette, *Washington Post*, January 29, 2018

The Metropolitan Opera

SOLD OUT - Sunday, November 13, 2016 at 4:00PM

Kathleen Battle made an historic return to the Met — accompanied by pianist Joel Martin, choir and special guests including Cicely Tyson, Jussie Smollett, Wynton Marsalis, Cyrus Chestnut, and Riza Printup — in a recital of Spirituals inspired by the journey to freedom along the Underground Railroad.

“Kathleen Battle Returns to the Met After 22 Years. It Was Worth the Wait” [Headline]

“Ms. Battle, 68, sang with remarkable freshness and beauty...she sent high phrases soaring and sang with ethereal elegance...I kept thinking about what a sad loss her absence has been to opera lovers in New York and around the world...this long program, with five encores, was her day, her return...The final standing ovation was tumultuous.”

- *Anthony Tommasini, New York Times, November 14, 2016*

“The magic was back and nobody (including her) wanted it to end...This was easily some of the best singing of her career...mesmerizing...plucked high notes out of the air with spot-on pitch...”

- *David Patrick Stearns, WQXR, November 14, 2016*

“...her voice shimmered and soared above the staff in the ornate but elegant flourishes she inserted into the simple spiritual tunes...The program advances the thesis that the development of the spiritual was closely tied to the Underground Railroad’s mission of liberating the enslaved. As such, the mood of the songs performed gradually became more hopeful and finally joyously determined...”

- *James Jorden, Observer, November 14, 2016*

“...was greeted with a thunderous ovation befitting a beloved singer... She was here to present a thoughtful, fully committed recital. And she did... that unmistakable Battle sound remains remarkably intact...audience collectively held its breath, the years faded away and time, as the saying goes, seemed to stand still... her valedictory appearance was nothing short of triumphant, and one, I dare say, that may well become legendary.”

- *Kevin Fullerton, Parterre Box, November 14, 2016*

CRITICAL ACCLAIM, Previous Performances

“The purity and luster of her upper voice was simply ravishing.” –*The Washington Post*

“She started ‘Mary Had a Baby’ alone and then floated leisurely on a bed of strings, her soprano blooming like a delicate rose and gaining strength and confidence with every glorious phrase. She sounded relaxed, radiating joy, singing with pinpoint diction, perfect pitch and elongated phrasing that gave the impression of endless melody...and when the last pianissimo died sweetly in the air, everyone knew something special had just happened.”

- *Detroit Free Press*

"Battle still retains...the purity and accuracy of the tone, the clarity of articulation (many a singer could learn from her distinct consonants), the ability to connect with a text and make a listener feel the same connection...There's just something magical about that sweet sound...The soprano [Battle] spun out compelling phrases all night, sometimes with jazzy inflections that had terrific spontaneity and naturalness, sometimes with a disarming, Schubertian gentleness...In such moments - and there were many- the full emotional depth and melodic appeal of spirituals came through with affecting grace."

- *The Baltimore Sun*

“She sounds exquisite...[Battle’s] voice was a thrill. It’s light but strong and floats over the orchestra. All the songs were moving, with a power that goes beyond words.”

- *The Buffalo News*

“...this was a riveting performance for every minute...Few professional singers can sustain their vocal powers up to age 67, but Battle’s voice sounds much as it always has – a semi-dark, silken-toned hue with a taut vibrato, perfect clarity and enunciation. Of course, her expression changed as the music and text demanded, from sassy to childish, introspective to passionate, but the singer always returned to her unmistakable signature sound.”

- *Arts Birmingham*

“[An] intelligently conceived evening...Few singers from the classical music and opera realm can hope to approach the authenticity Battle displayed...masterful phrasing and still impressive range in service of the primal feelings that infuse these songs. Her delivery at times was breathtakingly pure and nuanced, at others unprepossessingly conversational.”

- *LA Times Music Blog*

“...She is still quite the creature of the stage, with every gesture and nuance made to stunning effect...Each verse of the spiritual, as she repeated ‘I wish I was never born,’ spoke with a piercing directness that left the audience spellbound at its conclusion...Those seeking a chance to see Kathleen Battle in all her vocal glory were not disappointed. In particular her a cappella rendering of the Spiritual ‘Were You There’ was one of great reverence, with each nuance preparing the listener for the ultimate journey to the cross. ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot’ showcased the remarkable clarity of her voice, particularly the precision of pitch.”

- *Washington Life Magazine*

"...a voice so obviously beyond beautiful and with such depth, that the meaning of the songs were suddenly far clearer to me than ever before."

- *MD Theatre Guide*

"Battle's pure soprano voice made for a stellar performance. She sang a series of spirituals ranging from 'Go Down, Moses' to 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' and infused intense emotion into each song...Last night was an evening to remember."

- *DC Metro Theatre Arts*

"Ms. Battle took us not only on a musical journey, but a spiritual one, as the songs she sang captured the plight, faith, fervor and perseverance of a people on a journey to freedom. Ms. Battle sang this probing spiritual with a fervor that simply could have caused the angels of heaven to weep. Simply ethereal."

- *Washington DC's Best*