



Following its inaugural appearance for a week of services at Westminster Abbey in 2014 during London's sunniest December on record, the RSCM America National Choir continues to be blessed with fair skies and stunning performance venues. The choristers traveled to the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. over the 2016 Martin Luther King weekend, where they sang Evensong on Friday, January 15 and a half-hour choral prelude prior to Evensong on Sunday, January 17, for which they joined the Cathedral Choir of Men and Girls. After a rich and memorable weekend of music and camaraderie, everyone was safely home by the time the snow started to fall on the capital four days later.

It's been an exciting start for the National Choir, whose 40 auditioned members come together once a year from across the country. The brainchild of former RSCM America president Andrew Walker, who also directs the group, the adult choir is now an official component of RSCM America's training mandate, committed to the highest possible standard of performance.

"Considering how little rehearsal time we have together, the blend and overall production is amazing", says Andrew, who selects the music and supplies a complete list to choir members months in advance. It's up to the choristers to ensure they're "note perfect" by the time they arrive so precious practice time can be spent on final polishing. The diverse repertoire featured everything from works by Horatio Parker, Bryan Kelly, Daniel Gawthrop, and Josef Rheinberger to Moses Hogan's beautiful arrangement of *Abide With Me* and a lively version of the spiritual *The Promised Land*.

Many of the singers credit the combined inspiration of breathtaking worship spaces, exquisite music, and Andrew's direction with some of the most profound choral and spiritual experiences of their lives.

The visit also offered opportunities for other musical highlights, including Sunday's late morning Eucharist service at the National Cathedral where the presiding bishop led a moving tribute to the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

For many, one of the National Choir's greatest gifts is the friendships that are rapidly growing among its members. Sunday evening's parting dinner at the Cactus Cantina reflected the joy and harmony that everyone hopes will characterize the RSCM America National Choir for years to come.

– Janice Eichner

As the National Choir's membership evolves through attrition and new auditioning opportunities arise, those interested in becoming members are invited to submit their names to a waiting list. More information is available from Doug Worthington, chair of the steering committee, at dougworthap@gmail.com.