

# Nursing Alumnus and Co-Workers Bring ‘a Little Christmas’ to the White House

By day, Ramapo alumnus Jonell Robles (BSN '13, MSN '19) is an assistant nurse manager at Lenox Hill Hospital, one of 23 hospitals in the Northwell Health system, New York State's largest healthcare provider and private employer. Once his shift is over, however, Robles embarks on another “career” – and he doesn't even have to change out of his scrubs.

The New Milford, N.J., native and 17 of his nursing coworkers comprise the Northwell Health Nurse Choir which was formed in 2020 as a goodwill fundraising project. The group auditioned for NBC-TV's “America's Got Talent” in 2021 and created quite a sensation. (Read about it here: <https://www.ramapo.edu/news/press-releases/nursing-alumnus-and-co-workers-show-america-theyve-got-talent/>)

Since then, Robles and the Northwell Health Nurse Choir have received invitations to perform on several other big stages, including Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Garden, but none bigger than in the East Room at the White House in Washington, D.C. The request came from First Lady Dr. Jill Biden herself; the performance was part of the White House Spirit of the Season special which aired on PBS on December 21, 2021.

(<https://www.pbs.org/video/northwell-health-nurse-choir-performs/>)

We asked Robles to share his experience.

**Q: First “America's Got Talent,” now the White House! How did this come about?**

*After appearing on “America's Got Talent,” the choir caught the eye of many others – including Dr. Jill Biden – who personally invited the choir to participate in the White House holiday special.*

**Q: In keeping with your inspirational song selections, the choir performed “We Need a little Christmas.” Was that a unanimous choice?**

*Yes – this fun, joyous Christmas selection was a perfect song choice for the group, with an overall feeling that just uplifts your spirit! I think it's fitting to say we needed more than just “a little Christmas.” These past few years, our world has experienced stressful and traumatic times, in which we needed the Christmas spirit now more than ever. As part of our mission, we want to continue to spread hope and joy, and holiday cheer to all those who need it!*

**White House performance here** <https://www.pbs.org/video/northwell-health-nurse-choir-performs/>

**Q: How was it to meet and perform for the President and Dr. Biden?**

*It was an absolute honor to be invited to meet and perform for President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden at the White House. They were both so happy, gracious, and very humble. They were so excited and happy to see us, just as we were happy to see them! They each spent some time with the choir, and made us feel so special. Words cannot express how eternally grateful we were for the opportunity and experience.*

**Q: You were in some pretty impressive company for the White House special, including Andrea Bocelli, Norah Jones, Pentatonix, the Jonas Brothers, and the United States Marine Band who also performed. Did you get to meet any of them or were you all filmed separately?**

*I wish! Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, for safety purposes we all had to be filmed separately.*

**Q: Tell us about singing in Carnegie Hall and on “Live with Kelly and Ryan.”**

*Both were surreal!*

*Carnegie was so surreal and truly amazing! Singing on stage and looking out into the audience, I was over the moon! It’s always been a dream of mine to perform at one of the most prestigious iconic venues in the world. We felt very lucky!*

*And it was cool to be on the set of “Live with Kelly and Ryan.” What an honor to participate in their New York Christmas special. Kelly [Ripa] and Ryan [Seacrest] are such fun-loving people. Their personalities are great, they are both so lovely with lots of great energy. It was so much fun getting in the holiday spirit with them.*

**Live with Kelly and Ryan clip here (Jonell is featured at 1:14)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxjVuDC1UeA>

**Q: After “America’s Got Talent” was over, how frequently did the choir sing together?**

*It’s always an incredible, fun time when we get together. After AGT, the group got together in preparation for a few exciting performance opportunities, including Essential Workers’ Night at Madison Square Garden for the NY Rangers and NY Knicks, the ANCC [American Nurses Credentialing Center] National Magnet Conference, MasterVoices concert at Carnegie Hall, Dear Evan Hansen on Broadway, the Christmas special at the White House, Live with Kelly and Ryan, and the “Today” show.*

**Q: What’s next? Any upcoming plans for 2022?**

*We do have more exciting opportunities lined up for this year. To hear more updates and exciting things we have planned, stay tuned and continue to follow our journey on [www.northwell.edu/choir](http://www.northwell.edu/choir) and @northwellhealthnursechoir on Instagram.*