

Concerts on the Square is bringing in more Motown, additional food vendors and not one but two champion youth musicians in 2025.

The free, six-week series, which regularly draws 50,000 people to the Capitol lawn and surrounding streets, begins its 42nd season on June 25 and will be held weekly on Wednesday evenings through July 30, the **Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra announced Sunday.**



A crowd of thousands waits for the start of a Concerts on the Square performance in 2024. The popular Wednesday-evening series kicks off this year on June 25.

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WCO Music Director Andrew Sewell, who conducts the concerts, said the season will kick off with a lineup of Motown singles from Radiance. The female singing group from Las Vegas is closely affiliated with Spectrum, a male Motown group that was a hit with audiences when it performed at Concerts on the Square in 2022.

That opening concert also will feature music by Delafield composer Autumn Maria Reed, one of several contemporary composers of color whose work could be featured on an upcoming “Musical Landscapes in Color” album release from the WCO.

The two teenaged musicians who tied for first place in this year’s WCO Young Artist Concerto Competition will be highlighted July 2. That youth competition is attracting “more and more” talent since the COVID-19 pandemic, Sewell said, and featuring the winner — or, this year, winners — “is always something we look forward to.”

The spotlight will be on the orchestra itself for the July 16 concert, which features two WCO musicians as soloists. “That program is meant to feature what the chamber orchestra normally would do at an indoor concert, say — so the public gets an idea of our ‘other’ life as a chamber orchestra as we go indoors,” Sewell explained.

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The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra performs year-round. Its annual Masterworks series is presented in Capitol Theater at the Overture Center for the Arts in Downtown Madison. In winter, the orchestra is known for its performances of Handel’s Messiah with chorus and the live music for Madison Ballet’s “The Nutcracker.” Its youth programming includes an upcoming **concert for students and teachers on March 14** in Capitol Theater.



Soprano Angela Brown returns to Madison to perform with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra on July 9 at Concerts on the Square.

THOMAS M. MUELLER

The WCO's outdoor repertoire this summer will include a Pink Floyd tribute featuring the group Jeans n' Classics, a frequent guest for Concerts on the Square.

"I've had this (Pink Floyd) concert in my pocket for four or five years," Sewell said. "Their leader said, 'I'd like to do "Dark Side of the Moon"' and this year it felt right."

This year Concerts on the Square also will add about five new food vendors to Capitol Square as a way to support local businesses and restaurants and to provide more food options for the audience, CEO Joe Loehnis said. Concerts on the Square also will continue its Volunteer Affiliate program, where six small businesses can get free brand recognition similar to a sponsorship in exchange for providing a group of volunteers to help at a concert.

"Our crowd just keeps getting larger and larger," Loehnis said. With five video screens, digital resources and local partnerships, "Everything we do is to create a fully immersive musical experience."

All of the Concerts on the Square concerts are held at 7 p.m. Wednesdays on Capitol Square (Thursdays serve as rain dates). Blankets can be set out to reserve a picnic spot on the Capitol lawn starting at 3 p.m. Reservations for table seating near the orchestra at the King Street corner of the Square are tax deductible; for details, see wcoconcerts.org/tables



Pianist Sylvia Jiang will help close out the 2025 season this summer of Concerts on the Square.

SYLVIA JIANG

The concert lineup announced Sunday includes:

June 25, Dancing in the Street: Motown Hits by Radiance: This Las Vegas-based female group performs hits from The Vandellas, Aretha Franklin, The Supremes and more. The concert also will feature an original work by local composer Autumn Maria Reed.

July 2, Celebration of Liberty: Along with patriotic hits such as “Stars and Stripes Forever,” the tied winners of the WCO’s 2025 Young Artist Concerto Competition are featured in this concert, with 15-year-old pianist André Previn Peck performing Rachmaninoff and 17-year-old violinist Indre Raghaven playing Sibelius.

July 9, American Song: Soprano Angela Brown joins the WCO for a concert of 20th century music, featuring works by Gershwin, Bernstein and John Carter and highlighting the compositions of Black composers. Brown, who has a wide-ranging career in international opera, returns to Madison after performing with the WCO during its 2023-24 Masterworks season.

July 16, Mozart and Mahler: The spotlight is on the orchestra with Mozart’s “Marriage of Figaro” and Symphony No. 40, plus the “Adagietto” from Mahler’s Symphony No. 5. WCO harpist Johanna Wienholts and principal flute Brandon LePage will be featured in music from Debussy and Carlos Simon.

July 23, Dark Side of the Moon: Jeans n’ Classics pairs with the WCO in a fusion of rock and orchestra to pay homage to the groundbreaking album by Pink Floyd, who performed in Madison in 1973.

July 30, Shostakovich and Beethoven: Concerts on the Square wraps up with a performance featuring pianist and rising star Sylvia Jiang, playing Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in F. The finale for 2025 also includes Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5.

Photos: Tiempo Libre performs at Concerts on the Square



An appreciative crowd fills Capitol Square Wednesday evening for the season opener of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra's Concerts on the Square series, which featured guest Tiempo Libre, a three-time Grammy-nominated Afro-Caribbean music group. Tiempo Libre was scheduled to open the 40th anniversary season of Concerts on the Square last year, but that show was canceled after smoke from wildfires posed a health hazard.

SAMANTHA MADAR, STATE JOURNAL



Attendees watch Tiempo Libre perform at Concerts on the Square in Madison, Wis., Wednesday, June 26, 2024. Even after recent heavy downpours, the lawn seating was dry enough for the crowd.

SAMANTHA MADAR, STATE JOURNAL



People watch Tiempo Libre perform from a rooftop at Concerts on the Square in Madison, Wis., Wednesday, June 26, 2024. The free, annual concert series from the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra is held on six consecutive Wednesday evenings, with performances beginning at 7 p.m.

SAMANTHA MADAR, STATE JOURNAL



A man stretches before Tiempo Libre performs at Concerts on the Square in Madison, Wis., Wednesday, June 26, 2024.

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Thousands of people wait for Tiempo Libre to perform at Concerts on the Square in Madison, Wis., Wednesday, June 26, 2024.

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