

2026
PROGRAM



Andrew Sewell
Music Director

JUNE 24 / JULY 1 / JULY 8 / JULY 15 / JULY 22 / JULY 29

WISCONSIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



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CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE®

2026 Season

June 24, 2026

**JOEL & JOHN:
PIANO MEN LEGENDS**
JEANS 'N CLASSICS

July 1, 2026

UNITED IN SOUND
ROB DZ, MADISON HIP-HOP ARTIST

July 8, 2026

DUO D'AMORE WITH STRINGS
SUZANNE BEIA, VIOLIN
& KARL LAVINE, CELLO

July 15, 2026

UNDER PARIS SKIES
TIM KLIPHUIS BAND

July 22, 2026

HOLLYWOOD HITS
ANGELINA CHANG, PIANO

July 29, 2026

RHAPSODY SQUARED
STEWART GOODYEAR, PIANO

CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE®



The 43rd season of Concerts on the Square is here, bringing another summer of music, community, and tradition to the heart of Madison.

For over four decades, the **Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra** has proudly presented Concerts on the Square—not just as a summer tradition, but as a reflection of our mission to *strengthen communities through innovative, high-quality artistic experiences that entertain, inspire, and unite diverse audiences*. It is a mission we share with you—our community, the heart of this tradition, and the spirit that keeps it alive.

Earlier this year, we launched our *Sunday from the Square* e-newsletter. In the first edition, I shared our aspiration to serve as a cultural ambassador for Madison. To us, that is not simply a title, but a call to action. While we carry this goal throughout the year, it's most visible at Concerts on the Square, where more than 200,000 gather each summer for our free concert series. Your presence and shared experience help shape the cultural landscape of our city.

Since **Pleasant T. Rowland** founded Concerts on the Square, more than six million people have gathered here—families, neighbors, first-timers, and lifelong attendees—drawn by the joy of live music under open skies.

What began as a bold idea has become a defining Madison tradition and an economic driver, generating nearly **\$16 million** annually for our local economy.

While Concerts on the Square is **free to attend**, it is **not free to produce**. Bringing this music to life costs over **\$1.1 million** each season. Support from generous sponsors, table reservations, and concessions covers about \$800,000. The rest comes from **generous individuals** like you who believe that music can create a better, more vibrant community.

In 2025, the ringing of 5,000 cowbells launched our inaugural Concerts on the Square **Night of Giving**—and you made some noise in the best possible way, tripling on-the-Square donations from previous years. While we still had ground to cover, your generosity brought us closer to lowering our costs. This summer, be on the lookout for another chance to join your blanket neighbors and ring out your support for this beloved tradition.

To all who make Concerts on the Square possible—our supporters, sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and each of you—thank you. Thank you for showing up, for listening deeply, and for helping build this community together. May your summer be filled with purpose, connection, and joy—through music and through one another.

With gratitude,

Joe Loehnis
CEO

Dear Friends,

We are excited to welcome you to our banner 2026 Concerts on the Square season.

We open on June 24 with the music of Elton John and Billy Joel, performing with longtime collaborators Jeans 'n Classics, featuring a variety of their record-breaking hits. For our annual Fourth of July celebration, enjoy the sounds of the *1812 Overture* alongside works by Madison hip-hop artist Rob Dz, as well as Leatha Stanley and Friends. We recognize and honor our veterans and those who have served, with the *Armed Forces Salute*. Concertmaster Suzanne Beia and principal cellist Karl Lavine take the stage for *Duo d'Amore* in an all-classical program featuring solo works by Donizetti, Ravel, and Dvořák. Gypsy swing, jazz, and folk violinist Tim Kliphuis, makes his debut with the orchestra in *Under Paris Skies*, blending the music of Stéphane Grappelli, Django Reinhardt, and his own compositions. Our nod to Hollywood features blockbuster film scores from *Casablanca* and *Ben-Hur* to *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and more. In our grand finale, *Rhapsody Squared* highlights the virtuosity of Canadian pianist, Stewart Goodyear, performing not one but two rhapsodies for piano and orchestra by Gershwin and Rachmaninoff, as well as his own compositions, *Life, Life, Life*, and Caribbean-inspired *Callaloo*.

We look forward to sharing our summer with you. Thank you for supporting Concerts on the Square.



Andrew Sewell
Music Director



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Trumpet



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Musician Roster

WISCONSIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Suzanne Beia+
Leanne Kelso++
Hillary Hempel
Sherri Zhang
Katherine Floriano
Kristian Brusubardis

Violin II

Gerald Loughney*
Tim Kamps
Anna Carlson
Wes Luke
Steven Wilke

Viola

Nora Frisk*
Diedre Buckley
Janse Vincent
Christopher Dozoryst

Cello

Karl Lavine*
Timothy Archbold
Trace Johnson

Bass

Matthew Boothe*
Victor Stahoviak

Flute

Brandon LePage*
Elizabeth Kleiber

Oboe

Lindsay Flowers

Clarinet

Nancy Mackenzie*
JJ Koh

Bassoon

Amanda Szczys*
Midori Samson

Horn

Emma Potter*
Mike Szczys

Trumpet

Forrest Albano*
Robert Rohlfinding

Timpani

Kent Barnhart*

Percussion

Lana Wordel*

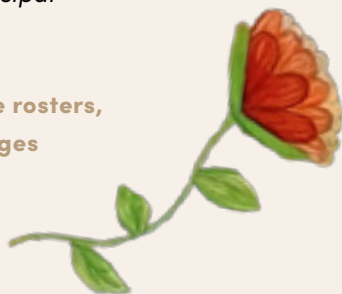
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++ *Assistant Concertmaster*

* *Principal*



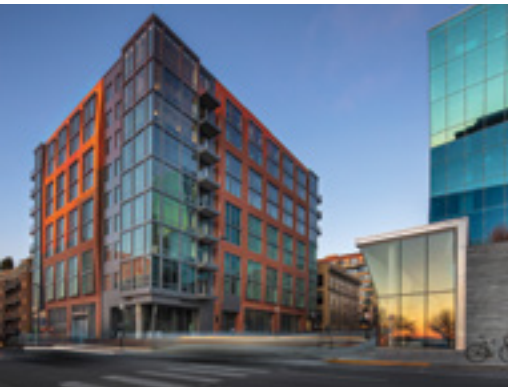
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Andrew Sewell

MUSIC DIRECTOR



Andrew Sewell enters his 27th season as Music Director of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra this summer and his 10th season with the San Luis Obispo Symphony on California's Central Coast. A conductor in demand, he has successfully built the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra into a regional and nationally known ensemble. In California, he has inspired the Central Coast community with exhilarating performances at Cal Poly's Performing Arts Center in San Luis Obispo.

During his tenure with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Maestro Sewell has brought the orchestra to new artistic heights, expanded the repertoire, and provided new experiences for the audience through innovative and adventuresome programming. In 2023 the WCO embarked on a five-year recording project, *Musical Landscapes in Color*, recording living Black composers and composers of color. To date three albums have been released - *Harmony in Black*, *Convergence*, and *Endeavor*. A fourth album, *Transcendence*, is planned for the upcoming season.

Maestro Sewell has served previously as Music Director of the Wichita Symphony (2000–2010) and Mansfield (OH) Symphony (1997–2002); Resident Conductor of the Toledo Symphony (1995–2000); and Assistant Conductor of the Memphis Symphony (1994–1995). As a guest conductor, he has led the Toronto, Detroit, Milwaukee, Florida, Columbus, Toledo, Syracuse, Illinois, Monterey, Gulf Coast, and Eugene Symphony Orchestras as well as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony, Dunedin Symphony, National Symphony of Mexico, Kyushu Symphony (Japan), City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, OK Mozart Festival, Peninsula Music Festival (WI), and Masterworks Festival, Spartanburg, (SC).

A native of New Zealand, Maestro Sewell received his music training on the violin, piano, and cornet, and began conducting at age 16. Six years later, he made his professional opera debut with Mercury Opera and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. Winning the Australian Guarantee Corporation's Young Achiever Award allowed him to further his studies abroad. Sewell holds a Master of Music degree with Honors in Conducting from the University of Michigan.

In 2025, he was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award by Destination Madison, for his 25 years service as Music Director of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. In 2017, he was awarded the Service to Music Award from the Association of Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras, and in 2013, he received the Rabin Youth Arts Award for Individual Achievement, by the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra, for his services to youth and education. He and his wife, Mary, live in Madison, WI.

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Tonight, as music fills the square, we're honored to stand alongside our neighbors, friends, and partners who have supported us for a century. Here's to the next 100 years of building, growing, and celebrating together. Cheers!



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Joel & John: Piano Men Legends

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

Billy Joel's mother insisted that he take piano lessons, and by the age of 22 his creative playing had made him a pop music star. His commercial breakthrough came in 1977 with his best-selling album *The Stranger*, which included the runaway hit singles "Just the Way You Are," "Movin' Out (Anthony's Song)," "Only the Good Die Young," "She's Always a Woman," and the epic "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant."

When some critics described his music as adult contemporary or middle-of-the-road pop, Joel responded with "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me." "You May Be Right," the first track on the album *Glass Houses*, begins with the sound of broken glass to represent the smashing of the glass house of the album's title. "Baby Grand," released as a duet with Ray Charles, celebrates the relationship between the piano and its players.

Elton John's flamboyant stage costumes and performances are a far cry from the banking career his father wanted for him. The Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony-winning phenom has more than 50 top 40 hits to his credit. "Your Song," his 1970 Top 10 hit, was first recorded by Three Dog Night but became a signature song for John. Three years later, "Bennie and the Jets," one of John's many collaborations with Bernie Taupin, is a fan's-eye view of what Taupin calls a "proto sci-fi-punk band." "Tiny Dancer" was intended to evoke the spirit of California women, while "Rocket Man" was inspired by Ray Bradbury's short story "The Rocket Man" from *The Illustrated Man*, about an astronaut whose work separates him from his family for months at a time.

Of "Crocodile Rock," John said, "I wanted it to be a record about all the things I grew up with." John and Taupin wrote "Philadelphia Freedom" as a favor to John's friend, tennis star Billie Jean King, who was part of the Philadelphia Freedoms tennis team. As for "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me," it could serve as an anthem for a night of hits by Billy Joel and Elton John at the season's first Concert on the Square.



JUNE 24, 2026

Joel & John: Piano Men Legends

Jeans 'n Classics



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

SET 1: BILLY JOEL

- "Movin' Out (Anthony's Song)"
- "Say Goodbye To Hollywood"
- "She's Always A Woman"
- "My Life"
- "It's Still Rock And Roll To Me"
- "Baby Grand"
- "Scenes From An Italian Restaurant"
- "Just The Way You Are"
- "You May Be Right"

INTERMISSION

SET 2: ELTON JOHN

- "Take Me To The Pilot"
- "Bennie And The Jets"
- "I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues"
- "Daniel" / "Rocket Man"
- "Philadelphia Freedom"
- "Your Song"
- "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me"

**Program subject to change*

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 40M



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United in Sound

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

What began as a drinking tune, by John Stafford Smith, picked up words by attorney Francis Scott Key as he watched the British bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. In 1931, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was officially designated the national anthem that brings Americans to their feet.

Composer Brittany J. Green says of the inspiration for her 2024 piece *Testify!*: "Many of my earliest musical memories are from the church: I remember watching Mama—a self-proclaimed 'non-musician'—work her way around a tambourine, making it dance and sing like magic.... *Testify!* is inspired by this feeling. Built on rhythmic patterns from Mama's tambourine playing and the hymn 'I'm So Glad,' this piece is a kaleidoscope of sounds I hold dear."

The first movement of Anthony Kelley's *Spirituals of Liberation* is called "Work Song (for a Post-Terrestrial Railroad)." It interweaves a main "work song" tune and a "free" labor theme, fortified by a hammered counterbeat on the anvil. It celebrates the progress of liberated souls through the Underground Railroad and beyond "our terrestrial realm." The third movement, "Never Forget," expresses the celebration that the newly freed Americans would have felt in 1866 and proclaims the importance of telling the complete story of our nation and its development.

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," often referred to as the Black national anthem, is a poem written by James Weldon Johnson and set to music by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, in 1900. It became a statement of "resilience, faith, and freedom," and was widely embraced during the Civil Rights Movement.

New Jersey composer Robert Lowden served as the lead arranger for the Philadelphia Pops and often took a bow at the Music Pier after the Ocean City Pops performed pieces such as his *Armed Forces Salute*.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky commemorated the 1812 defeat of Napoleon's army by Russia's forces—and even the weather—with a concert overture that includes cannon firing 16 times during the action-packed finale of his *1812 Overture*.

JULY 1, 2026

United in Sound

Rob Dz, Madison hip-hop artist



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

SMITH | *The Star-Spangled Banner*

BRITTANY GREEN | *Testify!*

ANTHONY KELLEY | *Spirituals of Liberation*

I. Work Song

III. Never Forget

ROB DZ (arr. Leatha Stanley) | "Oooohhh"

ROB DZ (arr. Leatha Stanley) | "Freestyle Americana"

INTERMISSION

JOHNSON (arr. Leatha Stanley) | "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing"
Leatha Stanley & Friends

LOWDEN | *Armed Forces Salute*

TCHAIKOVSKY | *1812 Overture*

**Program subject to change*

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 35M



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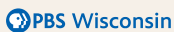
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Duo d'Amore with Strings

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

In the course of about thirty years, Domenico Cimarosa wrote 80 operas, most of which were comedies. *Il matrimonio segreto* (*The Secret Marriage*) of 1792 is based on the play *The Clandestine Marriage* by London theatrical superstars George Colman the Elder and David Garrick. During its 1937 Metropolitan Opera debut, it received its most memorable unintended laugh when soprano Natalie Bodanya pressed on with her aria even as her underskirt fell off.

Gaetano Donizetti's *Concertino in D Minor for Violin and Cello*, probably an early work from the 1820s, pairs the two solo instruments into a duet that foreshadows the dramatic scenes in some of his 70 operas.

In 1877, just before he became internationally famous via his *Slavonic Dances*, Antonin Dvořák adapted the slow movement of his *String Quartet No. 5 in F Minor* under the title *Romance in F Minor*.

If the scurrying "Arrival of the Queen of Sheba" from Handel's 1749 oratorio *Solomon* sounds too undignified to accompany a regal entrance, it's because the instrumental interlude represents the busy preparations for her arrival rather than the actual entrance of the queen.

For its first several minutes, Maurice Ravel's rhapsodic *Tzigane* of 1924 invites the question: when will the orchestra show up? Ravel begins with a long virtuosic cadenza for the solo violin, establishing the Gypsy style that gives the piece its name, arranging for the harp—when the orchestra does show up—to sound like a Hungarian cimbalom. The piece blends the passion of folk music with classical precision as Ravel flies through one variation after another.

When Prince Albert I of Monaco commissioned Gabriel Fauré to write music for a 1919 "choreographic diversion," the composer supplied *Masques et Bergamasques*, incorporating an overture and gavotte that he had written back in the 1860s. When he developed a four-movement suite from the diversion, he added to them two new pieces, a minuet and pastorale, and this blend of old and new became one of Fauré's most popular works.

JULY 8, 2026

Duo d'Amore with Strings

Suzanne Beia, violin &
Karl Lavine, cello



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

CIMAROSA | *Overture to the Secret Marriage*

DONIZETTI (arr. Wojciechowski) | *Concertino in D Minor for Violin and Cello*

DVOŘÁK | *Romance in F Minor for Violin, Op. 11*

INTERMISSION

HANDEL | Selections from *Solomon*

Sinfonia from Act III: Arrival of the Queen of Sheba

Winner of the Concerts & Cuisine Gala Conducting Auction: Jun Lee

RAVEL | *Tzigane*

FAURE | *Masques et Bergamasques Suite, Op. 112*

I. Overture

IV. Pastorale

*Program subject to change

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 35M



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Under Paris Skies

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

Considered one of the great pianists of his day, Moritz Moszkowski is not so well remembered in ours. In 1884, he wrote his six-movement dance suite *From Foreign Lands* for piano duet and orchestrated it the same year. It quickly became a favorite of orchestras worldwide. The first two movements are a wistful Russian dance and a contrasting lively Italian tarantella. The fourth is a fiery Spanish fandango.

During his 43 years, Belgian-Romani guitarist Django Reinhardt was a forerunner in bringing his instrument to the forefront of jazz. At the age of 18, a burned hand required him to adapt by using primarily the index and middle fingers of his left hand while reserving the two injured fingers for chord work. With French jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli, Reinhardt formed the Paris-based Quintette du Hot Club de France in 1934.

Reinhardt and Grappelli recorded "R-Vingt-Six" in 1947 in Paris. It's a quintessential gypsy jazz tune known for its catchy melody, often associated with the artistic salon R-26 in Montmartre. Reinhardt first recorded "Place de Brouckère" in April 1942. The tune is a testament to his swing and Gypsy jazz style and is named after the Place de Brouckère in central Brussels. One of Reinhardt's last recordings was the bebop-influenced jazz composition "Flèche d'Or," first recorded in 1952 in Paris. It typically features a septet with electric guitar, trumpet, alto sax, piano, bass, and drums.

Stéphane Grappelli's "Souvenir de Villingen" is firmly rooted in the Gypsy swing tradition.

Edvard Grieg's *Norwegian Dance No. 2 in A Major* is the second piece in his *Four Norwegian Dances*, composed in 1880 for piano four-hands. Known for its lyrical, folk-inspired melody, it is often performed in orchestral arrangements.

Rounding out our evening under Wisconsin skies are Tim Kliphuis's "Samba for Pey," reminiscent of Brazilian dance music, and "Under Paris Skies," Hubert Giraud and Jacques Dréjac's evocation of the City of Light.



JULY 15, 2026

Under Paris Skies

Tim Kliphuis Band



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

MOSZKOWSKI | *From Foreign Lands, Op. 23*

I. Russian: Allegretto

II. Italian: Presto

REINHARDT & GRAPPELLI* | "R-Vingt-Six"

GRIEG* | *Danse Norvégienne*

REINHARDT* | "Place de Brouckère"

TIM KLIPHUIS | Trio piece

REINHARDT* | "Flèche d'Or"

INTERMISSION

MOSZKOWSKI | *From Foreign Lands, Op. 23*

IV. Spanish: Molto vivace

TIM KLIPHUIS | "Samba for Pey"

REINHARDT & GRAPPELLI* | "Minor Swing"

GRAPPELLI* | "Souvenir de Villingen"

TIZOL & ELLINGTON* | "Caravan"

GIRAUD & DRÉJAC* | "Under Paris Skies"

LA ROCCA* | "Tiger Rag"

* Arrangement by Tim Kliphuis

** Program subject to change

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 40M



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Hollywood Hits

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

For the 1959 film *Ben-Hur*, composer Miklós Rózsa found little surviving information about ancient Roman music, so he approximated with its Greek counterpart. He produced two hours of music in 88 separate numbers that won him his third Academy Award.

When Michael Abels wrote the soundtrack for the 2022 neo-Western science fiction horror film *Nope*, he had to match the “threat level” described by producer-director Jordan Peele in the script and the ideas imposed by the film.

The 1977 George Lucas blockbuster *Star Wars* won six Academy Awards, one of which was for John Williams’ score, represented tonight in a medley that brings back vivid scenes from the groundbreaking cinematic science fantasy.

Known for his “steel fingers,” Sergei Prokofiev was the soloist at the premiere of his *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major* with the Chicago Symphony in 1921. Although the concerto didn’t gain traction in the United States right away, a sensational Paris performance in 1922 helped to make it one of the most popular concertos of the twentieth century.

Although *Casablanca* composer Max Steiner didn’t care for the 1931 Herman Hupfeld standard “As Time Goes By,” he made it the centerpiece of his score for the 1942 fable of resistance fighters, plotters, refugees, fascists, French patriots, and gamblers.

Canadian composer Howard Shore has written music for 80 films, including *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which is based on J. R. R. Tolkien’s 1954 Middle-earth fantasy, the first volume of the novel *The Lord of the Rings*.

Bring together one of the most popular franchises of recent decades and one of the most successful composers of film scores, and the result is unforgettable movie magic as exciting as a game of Quidditch. John Williams was a defining force in bringing *Harry Potter* to life on the silver screen.

Pirates of the Caribbean may be the most successful film based on a theme park ride. To come up with the music for the film, Klaus Badelt, working in collaboration with Hans Zimmer, supervised a team of eight composers, nine orchestrators, and three conductors, all to support the improbable exploits of Captain Jack Sparrow and his swashbuckling crew.

JULY 22, 2026

Hollywood Hits

Angelina Chang, piano



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

RÓZSA | *Overture from Ben-Hur*

MICHAEL ABELS | *Nope Suite*
I. Jupiter's Claim
VII. Nope

JOHN WILLIAMS (arr. Burden) | *Star Wars Medley*

PROKOFIEV | *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26*
I. Andante - Allegro
Angelina Chang, piano

INTERMISSION

STEINER | *Casablanca Suite*

HOWARD SHORE (arr. Whitney) | *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

JOHN WILLIAMS (arr. Brubaker) | *Harry Potter Symphonic Suite*

KLAUS BADELT (arr. Ricketts) | *Pirates of the Caribbean Suite*

**Program subject to change*

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 35M



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Rhapsody Squared

BY NORMAN GILLILAND

Canadian pianist and composer Stewart Goodyear may be best known for performing all 32 Beethoven sonatas in a single day. With his piano-and-orchestra suite *Callaloo*, he pays tribute to his Trinidadian background. It takes its name from a dish popular in Trinidad and Jamaica, a potpourri consisting of taro leaves and amaranth cooked with okra, aromatics, coconut milk, and crab or saltfish.

“Life, Life, Life,” Goodyear’s “heartfelt tribute to his mother, captures her joy, resilience, and vibrant spirit—a celebration of life in all its beauty.”

Sergei Rachmaninoff’s fourth piano concerto had recently received a cool reception from American audiences, but in 1934 his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* was an immediate hit. The theme comes from the last of Niccolò Paganini’s 24 Caprices for solo violin, a miniature that also inspired Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, and Witold Lutosławski to write variations. The most familiar among Rachmaninoff’s 24 variations is the 18th, a lush, romantic episode that achieved latter-day prominence as a recurring theme in the 1980 Christopher Reeve–Jane Seymour movie *Somewhere in Time*.

In a letter to Russian choreographer Michel Fokine, Rachmaninoff suggested that the *Rhapsody* represents Paganini’s bargain with an evil spirit, selling his soul for the perfection of his art and the love of a woman. In that scheme, the evil spirit is represented by the ominous recurring *Dies Irae* theme, and variations 11 through 18 are understood love scenes.

According to one account, George Gershwin was surprised when he read a newspaper report stating that he was working on a piano-and-orchestra piece which he would perform with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Another story suggests that Gershwin wrote the opening clarinet part as a scale, but hearing the clarinetist play it as a sultry glissando during a rehearsal, preferred it that way.

Gershwin did indeed perform his *Rhapsody in Blue* toward the end of the promised gala “jazz” concert at New York’s Aeolian Hall on February 12, 1924, electrifying what had become a rather tedious affair and, in the process, becoming world-famous at the age of 25.



JULY 29, 2026

Rhapsody Squared

Stewart Goodyear, piano



ANDREW SEWELL, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

STEWART GOODYEAR | *Callaloo*
I. Panarama
II. Afterglow
III. Soca

RACHMANINOFF | *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*

INTERMISSION

STEWART GOODYEAR | *Life, Life, Life*

GERSHWIN | *Rhapsody in Blue*

**Program subject to change*

RUN TIME APPROX. 1H 30M



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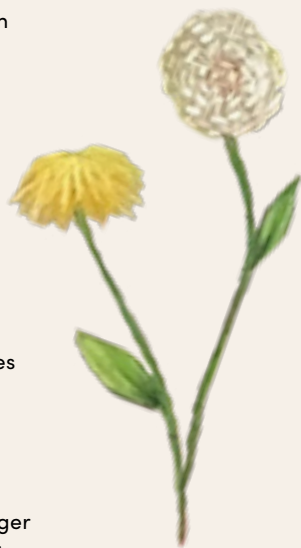
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Cap Times Idea Fest 2026 presents author and MS NOW journalist Jacob Soboroff in conversation with David Maraniss at a Celebration of Journalism on Sept. 24 at The Edgewater. Tickets for this special session includes cocktails and a buffet, as well as admission to all other Idea Fest sessions Sept. 18-27. Cap Times members receive discounted tickets.

Go to: captimesideafest.com



Join the discussion!



UWHealth





About the WCO

No other arts organization in Wisconsin performs free for more people each year.

Founded in 1960, the orchestra is built on a foundation of quality musicianship with top-tier musicians. As a smaller ensemble, we're able to showcase music at an intimate level, providing attendees with a unique experience. Under the direction of Maestro Andrew Sewell, we make classical music accessible to our community from concert halls to Madison's Capitol Square, reaching over 250,000 music lovers annually.

We are **driven in our mission** to strengthen communities through innovative, high-quality artistic experiences that entertain, inspire, and unite diverse audiences. And we're passionate about creating a sustainable future through our strategic plan.

Our core artistic programs include the **four-decade tradition of Concerts on the Square®**, the **Masterworks Series** at the Overture Center for the Arts, annual performances of **Handel's Messiah**, **educational programming and concerts** for families and children that serve over 2,500 youth each year, and performing with local arts groups like Madison Ballet. In 2023, the WCO launched the Composer Collective series with a five-year, five-album project titled Musical Landscapes in Color with the goal of expanding the orchestral canon to include new works by living composers of color.

We strive to create a vibrant and inclusive space where music creates a sense of togetherness and connection, and that's why we're relentless about finding new ways to collaborate and partner with local groups in our community.

As a member of the League of American Orchestras, we take our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion seriously. Working with Nehemiah, Inc. through the Catalyst Incubator Grant, our goal is to become a cultural ambassador to Madison while creating relationships that allow for authentic conversation, partnerships, and accessibility to musical experiences.

While headquartered in Madison, we believe in extending our mission to communities across Wisconsin when there are opportunities to do so.

Learn more: wcoconcerts.org



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YOUNG ARTIST CONCERTO COMPETITION

YACC is an annual competition in which Wisconsin’s young instrumentalists compete for scholarships and the opportunity to perform for thousands on The Capitol Square. Catch this year’s winner in concert on July 22, 2026.



SIDE BY SIDE

We partner with Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras to provide students with mentoring in professional musicianship, instrument sectionals, and to play a performance alongside the top tier musicians of the WCO led by Music Director Andrew Sewell.

YOUTH CONCERT

Bringing in students from all over Dane County, we perform a concert for ages K-12 providing a study guide to teachers that allows them to incorporate the art of orchestral music into their curriculum. They get to meet Wisconsin learning standards in their classroom while exposing students to music - it’s a win, win.



ARTS ADMINISTRATION INTERNSHIP

In partnership with the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras, this internship gives students hands-on experience in arts administration. Participants build professional skills while gaining behind-the-scenes insight into the planning and execution of Concerts on the Square.



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Through Their Eyes:

THE 2026 CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE® POSTER



Encore, Amanda, 15

For more than four decades, the Concerts on the Square poster has been more than a piece of art; it's a symbol of summer in Madison, a reflection of community, and a cherished tradition. Each year, we partner with an artist to create a poster that captures the spirit of the series. These posters live on long after the final note fades, framed in homes, lining the walls of local businesses, and collected year after year by devoted patrons.

In 2026, as our nation marks 250 years since its founding, we are looking not only to the past, but to the future—inviting the next generation to help us imagine this year's poster.

CREATED BY COMMUNITY

This year's Concerts on the Square poster was created in collaboration with local students, young artists whose creativity, perspective, and vision reflect the evolving story of our community. Open to elementary, middle, and high school students, the project invited participants to explore big ideas through art:

- What will Concerts on the Square look like in the next 250 years?
- How can music bring communities together across cultures and generations?
- As future leaders, how will you use your voice to strengthen community through the arts?
- How do we celebrate our shared culture and heritage through music?

Through this process, students not only designed a poster; they helped define what community, celebration, and music can look like in the years ahead.



Divided, Angela, 7th grade

ROOTED IN TRADITION, INSPIRED BY TOMORROW

Since our founding in 1960, the WCO has been dedicated to strengthening communities through innovative, high-quality artistic experiences that entertain, inspire, and unite diverse audiences.

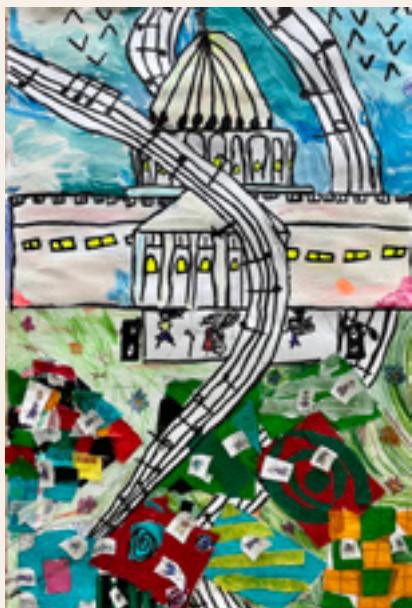
Nowhere is that mission more visible than at Concerts on the Square. Since 1984, more than six million people have gathered on the Capitol lawn to share in this uniquely Madison tradition. Each summer, over 200,000 attendees come together for six free concerts, making it the largest free concert series in the state and a cornerstone of our cultural life.



Garden Song, Maeve, 10

The poster has always captured that energy: the joy of gathering, the beauty of music, and the vibrancy of our community.

The 2026 poster continues that legacy while opening the door to new voices. Students were encouraged to interpret the theme creatively, incorporating elements like music and instruments, the Capitol Square, community gatherings,



Harmony in Community,
Dempsey, 9; Natalie, 10; Sophia, 10

and cultural diversity. Using bold colors and a wide range of artistic mediums, their designs reflect both the spirit of Concerts on the Square and the limitless possibilities of the future.

At its heart, this initiative is about more than a single image. It's about celebrating creativity, elevating young voices, and recognizing the important role that art plays in building strong, connected communities.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we prepare for this milestone year, we are reminded that the future of the arts—and of our community—belongs to the next generation. By inviting students to imagine, create, and share their vision, we honor not only where we've been, but where we're going.

The 2026 Concerts on the Square poster is a reflection of that journey: rooted in tradition, shaped by community, and inspired by the imagination of young people who will carry our legacy forward.

Cornerstone Society

Thank you to the extraordinary members of the WCO Cornerstone Society whose generosity during the 2025/26 season, **September 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026**, set the solid foundation for years of music ahead. By contributing \$1,000 or more, you've provided the essential foundation that allows the music of the WCO to entertain, inspire, and unite our community.

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In honor of Jane: Mom & Dad gave us the love of music - happy birthday - love Kathryn & Dave!

Happy birthday, Jodi - you are awesome! Love, Kathryn & Dave

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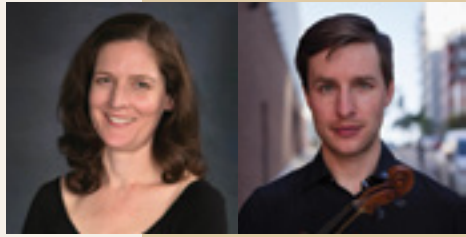
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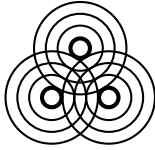
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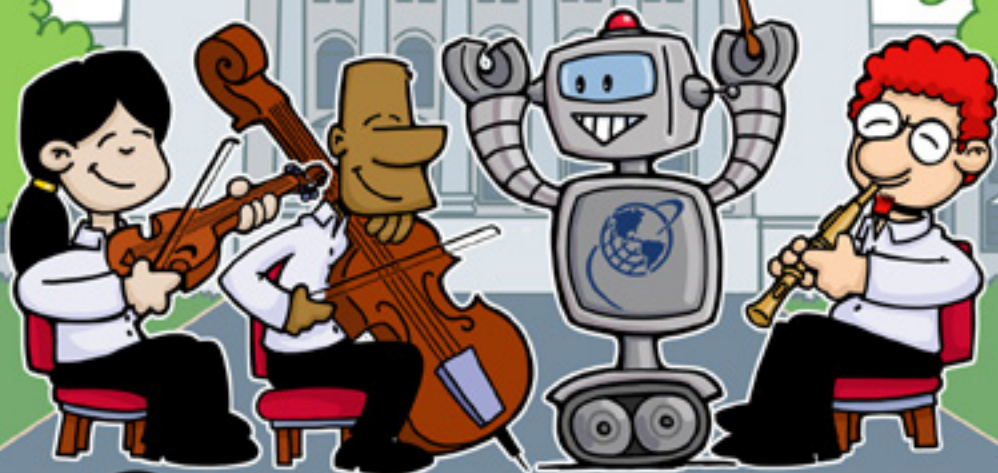
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