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www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org

Wisconsin Chamber Choir presents:

Snow Samba

Featuring the world premiere of *Samba da Neve* by Ann Millikan

Saturday, December 17th, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Luther Memorial Church, 1021 University Avenue, Madison

Join the Wisconsin Chamber Choir on December 17th for our unique holiday concert, “Snow Samba,” featuring the world premiere of *Samba da Neve* by Minnesota composer Ann Millikan. The program will include arrangements of favorite carols and music about winter, with works by Claude Debussy, Astor Piazzolla, Abbie Betinis, Stephen Chatman, and Giles Swayne. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$5 for students, available in advance from www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org and at the door.

Written from the perspective of a newcomer from Brazil who experiences snow for the first time in the northern US, Millikan’s *Samba da Neve* (“Snow Samba”) reflects the composer’s strong family ties to Brazil. The piece is suffused with the rhythms of Latin American popular music, including the baião and, of course, the samba. Madison guitarist Timothy Steis will lay down a groove to warm everyone’s hearts while the choir’s syncopated vocal lines sail overhead.

The premiere forms the capstone of a set of pieces about winter, both pro and con. The program opens with *A Winter Morning*, an energetic setting by Russian composer Georgy Sviridov of a poem by Alexander Pushkin. Madison native Stephen Chatman’s setting of Shakespeare’s text, *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind* is more ambiguous in tone, while Debussy’s *Yver, vous n’êtes qu’un villain* (Winter, You’re Nothing but a Villain) is decidedly hostile. With Piazzolla’s wordless tango, *Invierno Porteño* (Winter in Buenos Aires), it’s up to the listener to decide, followed by Millikan’s *Samba da Neve*, whose narrator finds a cure for the winter doldrums in her spontaneous creation of a new dance genre.

The middle of the concert highlights British composer Giles Swayne’s visionary *Magnificat II and Nunc dimittis II*, featuring the prodigious talents of organist Mark Brampton Smith and a quartet of vocal soloists drawn from the choir with the addition of mezzo soprano, Rachel Wood. A setting of Mary’s ecstatic song of praise upon learning that she is to bear Jesus, Swayne’s music harkens back to his popular, African-inspired setting of the *Magnificat* text from 1982, while expanding the harmonic style and the emotional range of the earlier work.

A set of familiar carol arrangements rounds out the program, including Wisconsin native Abbie Betinis’s moving setting of *In the Bleak Midwinter*, a lyrical version of the Mexican carol *El Rorro* by guitarist/composer Jeffrey Van, and an elaborate fantasia for choir and piano duet on the Ukrainian *Carol of the Bells* by Boston composer William Cutter.

Founded in 1998, the Wisconsin Chamber Choir has established a reputation for excellence in the performance of oratorios by Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Brahms; a cappella works from various centuries; and world premieres. WCC Artistic Director Robert Gehrenbeck, Director of Choral Activities at UW-Whitewater, has been hailed by critics for his vibrant and emotionally compelling interpretations of a wide variety of choral masterworks.

