



Dr. Robert Gehrenbeck ● Artistic Director

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PO Box 46353 • Madison, WI 53744-6353

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Registered Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

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[www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org](http://www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org)

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## J. S. Bach's Christmas Oratorio (Cantatas 1, 2, & 3)

With Sinfonia Sacra and soloists Rachel Wood, Wesley Dunnagan, Bill Rosholt, and Ann Baltes

**Saturday, December 16, 2023, 7:30 p.m.**

Luther Memorial Church

1021 University Avenue, Madison

**Sunday, December 17, 4:00 pm**

First United Methodist Church

145 S. Prairie St., Whitewater

Experience the wonder and excitement of the Christmas story through J. S. Bach's joyful Christmas Oratorio. A rich cast of characters comes to life in this musical tableau. Mezzo soprano Rachel Wood is the voice of Mary, while tenor Wesley Dunnagan narrates the story as the Evangelist. The choir sings the words of the angels and the shepherds. Some of Bach's most memorable four-part chorales interpret the meaning of the Christmas story for the faithful, including "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light." The work is framed by ebullient, dance-like choruses featuring virtuoso trumpets, timpani, flutes, oboes, and strings.

Sinfonia Sacra, the WCC's professional orchestra, includes members of the Madison Symphony, the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, the Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble, and other regional orchestras. Leanne Kelso leads the orchestra as concertmaster and violin soloist, with WCC Artistic Director Robert Gehrenbeck conducting. Additional soloists are drawn from the ranks of the talented choir members.

A unique feature of this performance is the bilingual nature of the libretto. The choruses, recitatives and arias will be sung in the original German, while the chorales—Bach's iconic arrangements of Lutheran hymn tunes—will be heard in English. In these movements, the choir speaks directly to the audience, replicating the role that the chorales played in Bach's own performances for his congregation in Leipzig, Germany, nearly 300 years ago. At the end of the WCC's concert, the audience will be invited to sing along with "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light."

Tickets are available in advance from [www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org](http://www.wisconsinchamberchoir.org), and at the door. Discounted tickets are available for children, students, and patrons experiencing financial hardship.

The WCC offers these concerts in memory of Marika Fischer Hoyt, a leader within Madison's classical music scene for over two decades. A violist with the Madison Symphony and in numerous early music ensembles, Marika founded or cofounded multiple Bach-focused organizations, including Bach Around the Clock, Just Bach, Sonata à Quattro, and others. She was also the WCC's orchestra contractor and is dearly missed by all who knew her.

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, who serves as 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 music. Under his leadership the WCC has presented major works with orchestra as well as innovative programs of rarely heard music by composers from a wide variety of eras, nationalities, and cultures.