

*Waukesha Choral Union Presents*

# In Verse and Voice

Choral Reflections on the  
Poetry of Waukesha County



Sunday, May 17 at 3:00 PM  
St. John's Lutheran Church in Brookfield  
20275 Davidson Rd.



## Welcome from the Director

Thank you for joining the Waukesha Choral Union for the final concert of our 2025-2026 season! This season has celebrated Waukesha County in many ways: we featured local nonprofits in our December holiday markets, performed a community-centered iteration of John Rutter's *Requiem* in March, and today's program is inspired by the work of local poets.

We often describe poetry in terms of its musicality, imagery, or ability to distill emotion and story into just a few lines. At its core, though, poetry is an act of connection—a means of reaching out to another person and asking: *Haven't you felt this, too? Aren't we human together?*

Today's concert celebrates both poetry as an art form and the poets in our community who, with a few carefully chosen words, create entire worlds in verse. In today's program, you will hear original poems conversing with similarly-themed choral works. From reflections on the night sky to celebrations of the magic of childhood, each poem and each song offers an invitation:

Haven't you felt this, too? Aren't we human together?

*Danner Buser*



## Thank You!

St. Luke's Lutheran and Michael Schaner  
St. Johns's Lutheran and Heidi Bischmann  
AllWriters' Workshop and Kathie Giorgio  
Waukesha State Bank  
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## Featured Poets



**Patty Schopp** has published poems, essays, and editorials in various periodicals throughout her life. A native of Wisconsin, Patty traveled throughout the US and lived for several years in the rural Ozark Mountains. Her first novel, *Promises in the Rough*, was recently published by All Things That Matter Press.

**Richard Hedderman** is a poet and writer whose work has been published in dozens of journals and anthologies both in the U.S. and abroad. Publications include *The Stockholm Review of Literature*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Pinyon*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Kestrel*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and several anthologies including *In a Fine Frenzy: Poets Respond to Shakespeare* (University of Iowa Press). A multiple Pushcart Prize nominee, he has been a Guest Poet at the Library of Congress, a U.S. State Department cultural liaison, and has performed his writing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He is formerly Writer-in-Residence at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and lives in Milwaukee where he teaches creative writing at Mount Mary University. His latest book of poems, *Still Life with Work Boots*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press in fall of 2026. More about him and his work can be found at [richardheddermanpoetry.com](http://richardheddermanpoetry.com)



**Barb Geiger** was raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where she spent summers around bikes and boats and winters cheering for the Green and Gold. After a teaching career surrounded by children and good books, she is pursuing her own writing dream. Barb's memoir, *Paddle for a Purpose* (eLectio Publishing, 2018), won a 2019 First Place PenCraft Award for Literary Excellence, and a 2024 First Place International Impact Award. Her poems have been published in various anthologies and in Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' annual calendars. Barb's most recent work is a poetry chapbook, *Mississippi Meanderings* (Finishing Line Press, 2024). When she's not out having biking, boating and traveling adventures with her husband, Gene, Barb keeps busy by volunteering, reading, and spending time with friends and family. She still enjoys attending games and cheering for the Pack. You can learn more at Barb's author website, [www.barbgeiger.com](http://www.barbgeiger.com).

**Kathie Giorgio** is the critically acclaimed author of a total of seventeen traditionally published books: eight novels, two short story collections, an essay collection, and five poetry collections. A new poetry collection, *The Birth Of A Widow*, was just released on February 26, 2026. A new novel, *Unique In All The World*, will be released in February of 2027. She's been nominated for the Pushcart Prize in fiction and poetry and awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association and the Eric Hoffer Award In Fiction, among many more. She is the director and founder of AllWriters' Workplace & Workshop LLC, an international creative writing studio. She lives in Waukesha, Wisconsin.



After earning Bachelor and Master's degrees, **Mary Ann Noe** spent 29 years in Waukesha classrooms, first teaching 7th grade language arts and social studies, followed by high school English and psychology. Upon retirement, she reinvented herself as an author. Mary Ann publishes novels, non-fiction and poetry. She spends time reading anything she can get her hands on, writing, and baking (and eating the results). Happily enjoying their grandchildren, she and her husband reside in Wisconsin, where she communes with friends and Mother Nature.



# Program

Danielle Bridges, artistic director  
Dr. Simone Gheller, collaborative pianist



Scan the QR code to explore the poems  
that inspired today's selections

## Poem: "Content" - Patty Schopp

### Abendlich schon rauscht der Wald

Abendlich schon rauscht der Wald,  
Aus den tiefen Gründen,  
Droben wird der Herr nun bald  
An die Sterne zünden.  
Wie so stille in den Schlünden,  
Abendlich nur rauscht der Wald,  
Aus den tiefen Gründen.

Alles geht zu seiner Ruh,  
Wie die Welt verbrause,  
Schauernd hört der Wanderer zu,  
Sehnt sich tief nach Hause.  
Hier in Waldes grüner Klause,  
Herz geh' endlich auch zur Ruh.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel  
Joseph von Eichendorff, poet  
Jakob Kellner, trans.

*Evening breezes rustle yet in the wood  
From the deepest grounds;  
Above the Lord will now soon  
Light the stars.  
How silent in the chasms!  
Just evening breezes in the wood,  
From the deepest grounds.*

*Everything goes to its rest  
As the world fades away;  
Shuddering, the wanderer listens,  
Yearning deeply for home.  
Here in the green hermitage of the forest,  
Heart, at last, you too go to rest.*

### The Peace of Wild Things

Tyler Walters, soloist

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Joan Szymko  
Wendell Berry, poet



# Program

## A Winter Ride

Joan Szymko  
Amy Lowell, poet

Who shall declare the joy of the running!  
Who shall tell of the pleasures of flight!  
Springing and spurning the tufts of wild heather,  
Sweeping, wide-winged, through the blue dome of light.  
Everything mortal has moments immortal,  
Swift and God-gifted, immeasurably bright.

So with the stretch of the white road before me,  
Shining snowcrystals rainbowed by the sun,  
Fields that are white, stained with long, cool, blue shadows,  
Strong with the strength of my horse as we run.  
Joy in the touch of the wind and the sunlight!  
Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one.

## Poem: "Reading Yourself to Sleep" - Richard Hedderman

### Grace Before Sleep

Susan LaBarr  
Sara Teasdale, poet

How can our minds and bodies be  
Grateful enough that we have spent  
Here in this generous room, [we three,]  
This evening of content?

Each one of us has walked through storm  
And fled the wolves along the road;  
But here the hearth is wide and warm,  
And for this shelter and this light  
Accept, O Lord, our thanks to-night.

### To Sit and Dream

Rosephanye Powell  
Langston Hughes, poet

To sit and dream, to sit and read,  
To sit and learn about the world  
Outside our world of here and now --  
our problem world --  
To dream of vast horizons of the soul  
Through dreams made whole,  
Unfettered free--help me!  
All you who are dreamers, too,  
Help me make our world anew.  
I reach out my hands to you.



# Program

## The Seal Lullaby

Eric Whitacre  
Rudyard Kipling, poet

Oh! hush thee, my baby, the night is behind us,  
And black are the waters that sparkled so green.  
The moon, o'er the combers, looks downward to find us  
At rest in the hollows that rustle between.  
Where billow meets billow, there soft be thy pillow;  
Ah, weary wee flipperling, curl at thy ease!  
The storm shall not wake thee, nor shark overtake thee,  
Asleep in the arms of the slow-swinging seas.

## Poem: "The Magic of a Box" - Barbara Geiger

### Imaginary Creatures

Andrea Ramsey

Lily and Salley Carter, readers

#### 1. Fairy

*Blythe & Ewan MacMullen, ages 5 and 8,  
poets*

They have fairy dust and fairy friends,  
and hair and arms and legs and little shoes:  
One week they wear the flats,  
one week they wear the high heels.  
They all eat at the fairy cafe,  
they eat lollipops,  
ice cream, and  
cupcakes—  
all sweet treats.  
They don't eat broccoli.

#### 2. Mermaid

*Coen Linscheid, age 8 and Eleanor  
McFarland, age 5, poets*

Half-human, half-fish.  
They live in the ocean,  
Or lakes.  
They wear a bra under the water.  
It's a seashell.  
And every night they spread magic across the  
land,  
And that night becomes a great night!

#### 3. Unicorn

*Jackson Fox, age 4, poet*

A unicorn has sparkly hair  
and goes NAY NAY!  
It has special powers  
for making sparkle parties.

#### 4. Imaginary Friend

*Ewan MacMullen, age 8, poet*

Some people can't see them, but others can.  
My imaginary friend is named Fred.  
He has tan-colored skin and he's very nice.  
He has golden hair.  
Fred can fly.

#### 5. Dragon

*Adam and Coen Linscheid, ages 9 and 8 and  
Avery and Jackson Fox, ages 7 and 4, poets*

Dragons can be good or bad.  
Either people ride it,  
or it is an evil dragon and it just destroys  
everything.  
It goes hhhhhhhhhah!  
And it breathes out fire.  
I would be friends with a dragon,  
if it was a nice one.  
If you're friends with a dragon,  
you're gonna have a great time!



# Program

## Intermission



### Poem: "Moon Series" - Kathie Giorgio

#### Bright Morning Stars

arr. Alice Parker  
Traditional Text

Liz Jacobson, soloist

Bright morning stars are rising, and day is a-breaking in my soul.

O where are our dear mothers?

They are sowing seeds of gladness, and day is a-breaking in my soul.

O where are our dear fathers?

They have crossed the river shouting, and day is a-breaking in my soul.

Bright morning stars are rising,

They are all by the streams a-dancing, and day is a-breaking in my soul.

#### The Wisdom of the Moon

Susan LaBarr  
Jan Richardson, poet

Shemagne O'Keefe Mullins, soloist

[God of the two lights,]

I love the sun,

its revealing brilliance,

its lingering warmth;

but in the dark of night,

let me learn

the wisdom of the moon,

how it waxes and wanes

but does not die,

how it gives itself

to shadow,

knowing it will emerge whole

once more.

#### The Music of Stillness

Elaine Hagenberg  
Sara Teasdale, poet

There will be rest, and sure stars shining

Over the roof-tops crowned with snow,

A reign of rest, serene forgetting,

The music of stillness holy and low.

I will make this world of my devising

Out of a dream in my lonely mind.

I shall find the crystal of peace, - above me

Stars I shall find.



# Program

## Poem: "Civil Engineers" - Mary Ann Noe

### I'm Building Me a Home

arr. Anthony Trecek-King  
Traditional Spiritual

WCU Chamber Ensemble

I'm building me a home.  
This earthly house is gonna soon decay,  
an' my soul gotta have somewhere to stay.

When you hear me moanin', I'm building me a home.  
When you hear me prayin', I'm building me a home.  
This earthly house is gonna soon decay,  
an' my soul gotta have somewhere to stay.

When you hear me shoutin', I'm building me a home.  
This earthly house is gonna soon decay,  
an' my soul gotta have somewhere to stay.

### Sogno di Volare

Christopher Tin  
Leonardo Da Vinci and Chiara Cortez, text

Una volta che avrai  
Spiccato il volo, deciderai  
Sguardo verso il ciel saprai:  
Lì a casa il cuore sentirai.

Prenderà il primo volo verso il sole il  
grande uccello  
Sorvolando il grande Monte Ceceri  
Riempendo l'universo di stupore e gloria.

L'uomo verrà portato dalla sua creazione  
Come gli uccelli, verso il cielo...  
Riempendo l'universo di stupore e gloria.

Gloria!

*Once you have taken flight,  
You'll decide  
Gaze toward the sky, you'll know that  
That is where your heart will feel at home.*

*The first great bird will take flight  
towards the sun,  
Sweeping over the great Mount Ceceri,  
Filling the universe with wonder and glory.*

*Man will be lifted by his own creation,  
Just like the birds, towards the sky,  
Filling the universe with wonder and glory.*

*Glory!*



# The Waukesha Choral Union

Vaughn Ausman  
 Jake Bergman +  
 Ed Beringer  
 Richard Berner  
 Nancy Bertram  
 Karen Bieszak +  
 Diane Bleke +  
 Chris Budish  
 Alice Byrne  
 Catherine Callahan +  
 Tina Congdon +  
 Tom Connor  
 Abby Coppock  
 Phyllis Cramer  
 Karen Cumblad  
 Tonya Drifka  
 Laura Feghali  
 Maureen Hair

Melissa Herrick +  
 Alex Hummel +  
 Charlie Hummel \* +  
 Patricia Hummel \* +  
 Liz Jacobson +  
 Bekah Jaspersen +  
 Ida Kempen  
 Dwayne Krager  
 Kelly Kramer  
 Pamela Kramer  
 Jolene Lawrence  
 Mary Lindberg  
 Carren Loreda  
 Kristina Magsig +  
 Ricki May  
 Paul McCoy +  
 Barbara Miller +

Shemagne O'Keefe  
 Mullins  
 Dorothy Murphy \*  
 Allison Nastoff  
 Jim Olson +  
 Cathy Raspanti  
 Peggy Laz Recknagel  
 Michele Rinka  
 Tom Schneider  
 Wendy Stippich  
 Susan Till  
 Sue Wallenslager +  
 Tyler Walters +  
 Maddi Weinstock +  
 Maria Wichman  
 Nancy Ziebell

\* Section leader  
 + Chamber ensemble



## WCU Artistic Staff



**Danielle Bridges is the Artistic Director of the Waukesha Choral Union.** She received her B.M. in Vocal Music Education from the University of Central Arkansas and her M.A. in Choral Conducting and Pedagogy from the University of Iowa. During her studies, Ms. Bridges discovered a particular interest in developing creative, communal textual analysis and nonverbal communication methods for use during choral rehearsals. She is a proponent for music by women composers and founded the Iowa Women's Music Collective to advocate for the research and performance of music by women. Ms. Bridges has been selected to share her research at conferences

including the International Voice Foundation Symposium and the inaugural Theorizing African-American Music conference. In addition to her experience teaching choral music in contexts ranging from middle school to community choirs for singers in retirement communities, Ms. Bridges has served as a choral consultant for public and private schools. She is the current Director of Music at Community United Methodist Church in Elm Grove, WI, where she conducts the Chancel, Festival, and Children's Choirs, Clarion Bells, and Jubilate Chimes.



## WCU Artistic Staff

Collaborative pianist **Simone Gheller** received master's degrees in Piano (1999), Organ Performance & Organ Composition (1999), Music Education (2003), and Choral Music & Choral Conducting (2004). He also received a doctorate in Organ Performance and Organ Composition, magna cum laude (2006). He studied at the University of Vienna, and he received two "Medaille d'Or en Superieur d'Interpretation" at the Conservatoire Superior des Music de Paris. Gheller also studied at Oberlin College, where he completed the Artist Diploma—a great distinction in music. Currently, he is Music Director and Organist at St. Jerome Church in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. He is also the accompanist of Bel Canto Chorus and the Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy.



Gheller has an extensive international performing history spanning the last 35 years, with concerts in prestigious locations. He has garnered many awards, including first prizes at several national and international organ competitions.



## About Us

The Waukesha Choral Union has been musically active in the community for over 60 years. Originally a combination of the Carroll College student chorus and community singers named the Waukesha Choral Society in 1949, the group became the Town and Gown in 1961 and the Waukesha Choral Union in 1974, taking its present form as an auditioned choir in 1978. Over the years, the Waukesha Choral Union has developed a reputation for excellent choral music performances in southeast Wisconsin.

The Waukesha Choral Union pursues artistic excellence through a variety of musical programming. The WCU challenges, enriches and educates its members, audiences and community. The Chorus also impacts the community through collaboration with area schools, youth choral groups, and local arts organizations in Waukesha County.



**Sing with the Waukesha Choral Union!**  
Interested in singing with the WCU? Scan the QR code for information on auditions.  
*We offer scholarships for singers joining the WCU after graduation!*



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Makenzie Kojis\*  
Wendy Stippich  
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### Ex-Officio

Danielle Bridges - Artistic Director

\* Denotes non-singing community member



## Thank You to Our Donors

The Waukesha Choral Union acknowledges the individuals, corporations, and foundations who have supported us in the last 12 months. Thank you!

If you would like to join these generous donors in supporting local music, scan the QR code to make an individual, tax-deductible contribution. If you are interested in corporate partnership, please email [fundraising@choralunion.org](mailto:fundraising@choralunion.org).



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# Waukesha Choral Union

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season!