TOP STORY

SPOTLIGHT

MAKE MUSIC MADISON

Make Music Madison adds Global Choir Project for 12th-annual celebration

Anna Hansen

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A concertgoer gets a chance to drum with members of Beni Daiko, a Japanese taiko drumming group, at Willy Street Park during last year's Make Music Madison.

AMBER ARNOLD, STATE JOURNAL ARCHIVES

ummer officially arrives this weekend and with it some sweet sounds.

Make Music Madison will return to the city's parks, porches and patios Saturday, with hundreds of artists slated to entertain the masses. The harmonious revelry is part of a global Make Music Day, which is observed by more than 2,000 other cities internationally. The festival, celebrating the summer solstice, has its origins in early-80s France, but Madison has been partaking since 2013.

This will be the third year in a row that there will be more than 600 performances, and according to Make Music Madison managing director Mary Rose Ekberg, the demand matches the supply. Madison's live music landscape is complex, Ekberg said. On one hand, you have a wealth of incredible talent, on the other, a number of spacious, well-equipped venues that draw enough foot traffic to level a mountain. But it can be difficult for newer artists to find gigs and build their confidence. Make Music Madison sets out to change that.

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"This is really important for that building up our music ecosystem in Madison," she said.

The first year, founding director Mike Rothschild and other organizers set out with a goal of 50 concerts; they ended up exceeding that goal by about 200.

"It really reaches every neighborhood in the city and anybody can join something," Madison Arts and Culture Administrator Karin Wolf said. "It's just, like, a celebration of the human expression in that form."

The needle will drop at 8 a.m., with the final choruses fading out around 9 p.m., 13 hours of opportunities to dance in the street. Wolf lists Make Music Madison among her favorite things the commission has done in her 19 years there.

One thing that organizers are particularly looking forward to is the Global Choir Project, a new addition to Madison's festival programming, but one that other cities have been participating in. Strangers from throughout the community will come together to learn two songs, one they'd chosen themselves and one selected for similar choirs cropping up throughout the international Make Music Day programming. This year's music theme was "taking flight," Ekberg said, so the song Madison's choir chose for themselves was "Birds of a Feather" by Billie Eilish. The international selection was "Three Little Birds" by Bob Marley.

"The excitement is high," Ekberg said.

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The relationship between venue and artist is symbiotic: Artists get the chance to perform before crowds and get a proverbial foot in the door, and venue owners can test the waters of branching out into different types of entertainment for their guests. The owners of less business-oriented venues, like porches and lawns, also reap the benefits: They get concerts in their yards.

"It just gives a lot of opportunities for us to play with music in ways that normally we don't get to," Wolf said.

Many venues will be offering hot dogs, popcorn and other refreshments, hopefully alongside plenty of fluids, as meteorologists at the National Weather Service are projecting a sunny, 90-degree day Saturday. There is no shame in enjoying a day of music in a wide brim sun hat.

Last year's event included 194 venues, 602 concerts and more than 1,500 individual musicians, the highest participation level in North America, according to the city of Madison.

As usual, this year's performers are bringing variety and diversity, with everything from classical cello to funky dance-oriented beats. Set lists, venue information and more for planning purposes are available at the event **website**.

Those who want to get involved but can't carry a tune or host a show can find plenty of opportunities in volunteering, helping with venue coordination and donating money, also available on the event website. But most of all, Ekberg said, please engage with the performers. Tip them if you can, thank them, show appreciation for their work.

Photos: Make Music Madison 2024

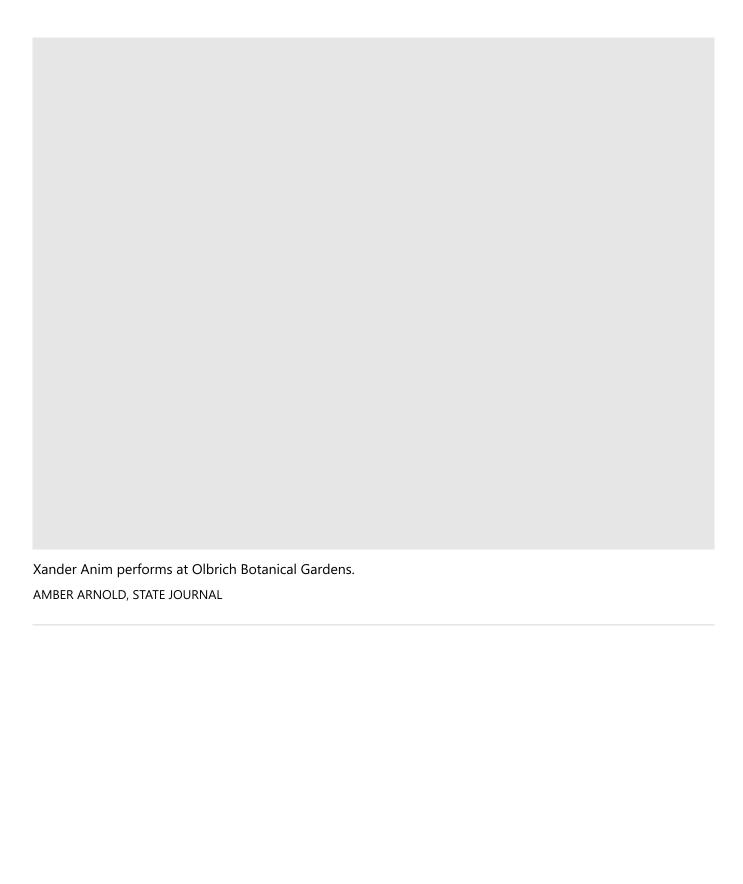


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Music of Quebec performs at the Hilldale Shopping Center plaza Friday during Make Music Madison.	
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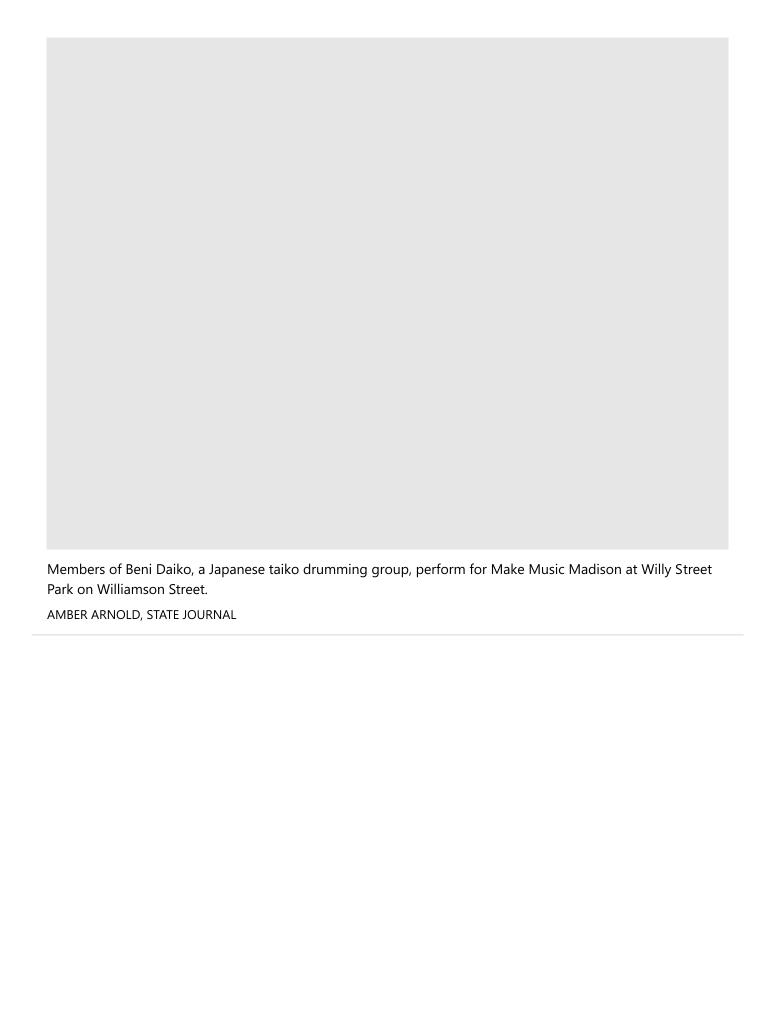
Tite2Nite performs Friday at the Sequoya Library during Make Music Madison. SAMANTHA MADAR, STATE JOURNAL	







Alberto Kanost, known as "Bear In the Forest," performs outside of Mother Fool's Coffee House on Williamson Street during Make Music Madison in Madison, Wis., Friday, June 21, 2024. AMBER ARNOLD, STATE JOURNAL AMBER ARNOLD STATE JOURNAL



By Anna Hansen

Reporter