



NEWS RELEASE

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Singing in Scandinavia: UW-Stout's Chamber Choir tours Sweden

Students gain 'confidence to go global' to join international community

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Photos attached

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Menomonie, Wis. – Thirteen members of University of Wisconsin-Stout's Chamber Choir braved the Scandinavian winter in performances with international university singers to warm audiences' hearts.

They partnered with choirs from Stockholm's [KTH Royal Institute of Technology](#), Sweden's largest technical university, and [Linköping University](#). They also held informal community performances.

Choral Director Jerry Hui hopes his students gain the confidence to go global and imagine themselves being part of the international community.

"Multiple performances of the same program for different audiences are an invaluable experience as singers. There are so many beautiful venues with wonderful acoustics which can easily be the highlight of our students' time as a choral singer," he said.

Their first joint performance entitled "Come and Stay Awhile," with the Royal Institute of Technology's Kongl. Teknologkören choir, was held at St. Johannes Kyrka, in Stockholm.

The spectacular church's steeple towers above neighboring buildings. Within, its Gothic Revival style displays ornamental arches and carving, high vaulted ceilings, lattice work and enormous stained-glass windows.

But where most expansive, stone structures create echoes during choral performance, St. Johannes produced a much clearer, dry sound. Among their songs, Chamber Choir sang two in traditional Swedish: “Limu, Limu, Lima,” arranged by Sofia Söderberg, and “Helan går,” arranged by Hui.

“I love the selection of music we sing and the people I sing with. We have built such a community within Chamber Choir that it makes coming together and singing so much more than a class to me,” said Denajah Smith, a human development and family studies senior from Minneapolis.

“Music is a form of expression. It helps us to navigate the world around us as well as share our history and culture with those who want to learn more about the world. Music has always provided me with a way to express myself that words alone never seemed to do justice.”

The choir was given a tour of RIT and passed the chemistry building – the spelling of chemistry in Swedish is with a “k,” meaning “kemi.”

Deep underground, Stockholm’s metro system is called the world’s longest art gallery. It’s vibrant and alive with vast mosaics and murals, sculptures and art gardens. Commuters are given a bit of unexpected beauty in what could otherwise be a mundane venue.

The choir also visited the Vasa Museum, exhibiting the 17th-century Swedish warship. Built to defend the Baltic coast during the Thirty Years’ War, the Vasa sank on its maiden voyage in 1628, due to a major engineering failure, just two miles out of harbor. More than 300 years later, it was recovered in the 1950s and sits preserved in the museum.

In Linköping, the choir performed at St. Lars Kyrka. They also held a short concert for the municipal councilor and former mayor, Lars Vikinge, at City Hall.

The Chamber Choir attended a rehearsal of the Linköping University Male Voice Choir, a large tenor-bass ensemble, who performed the traditional drinking song “Down Among the Dead Men.”

“It was powerful to hear the combination of their voices. Most of the songs were not in English, so it was fun to finally understand one of the pieces they sang. Music is found everywhere and in everything. It has a way of bringing us all together, regardless of language barriers,” said Helen Wilson, a food science and technology sophomore from Hartford.

“Music holds power. Not only does music act as a way for us to express our emotions more deeply, but it also delivers that emotion to others. You have to feel the music in order to make the audience feel it too. There are no other feelings quite like the ones that can be felt from music,” she added.

A nearby coffee shop doubled as a greenhouse. Students sipped their warm drinks among the sprawling foliage. Large windows made it a great spot to people-watch those in the park.

The choir stopped at Babette’s Kafferi for award-winning cinnamon rolls topped with crunchy sugar, and pain au chocolat – chocolate croissants.

Despite the winter wind, green ivy clings to a city building and above a bustling market. Many of the city fountains were empty because of the freezing temperatures, but on a warmer, sunny day, one small fountain flowed in a quiet park.

The choir held a joint performance at Campus Valla, the university center. After their performance, the choirs dined together at Ölstugan Tullen restaurant. They exchanged stories over a classic meal of Swedish meatballs with a creamy lingonberry sauce and buttery potatoes.

“When in Sweden, you have to try the Swedish meatballs at least once. I have never had lingonberries before. The tart and sweet lingonberries added a nice contrast to cut through the savory meatballs. The entire thing was very delicious,” Wilson said.

Wilson finds a deep connection between her major and participating in choir. “There is cultural diversity in both,” she said. “Every single culture around the world has their own food and their own music. I find that fascinating.”

The choir took nearly every kind of public transportation: a train, a tram, a bus, the metro, a taxi, and, most notably, a ferry in Stockholm, Wilson said.

“Since Stockholm comprises a few islands and is surrounded by water, part of their public transportation system includes a ferry. Despite the chilly day before, the wind and weather was not too bad on the boat, and it was super cool to get to see the edges of Stockholm from the water. It is astonishing how photogenic much of Sweden can be,” she added.

Smith encourages everyone to join a study abroad trip. “This is a life experience like no other that I have ever had, and I am grateful for the opportunity to go on such an amazing journey,” she said.

UW-Stout, a member of the [Universities of Wisconsin](#), is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.

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Photos

UW-Stout Chamber Choir with members of the Linköping University choir. Photo by Jerry Hui.

St. Johannes Kyrka in Stockholm, Sweden. Photo by Denajah Smith.

St. Johannes Kyrka interior. Photo by Helen Wilson.

An art installation in the Stockholm metro. Photo by Denajah Smith.

Ferry ride in Stockholm. Photo by Helen Wilson.