

Wisconsin Public Radio: Norman Gilliland announces retirement after 42 years on Wisconsin Public Radio

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Legacy will continue with ongoing locally programmed and hosted classical music program

MADISON, Wis. (Jan. 9) — An important and beloved voice in Wisconsin classical music, Norman Gilliland has announced that he will retire from Wisconsin Public Radio. His last broadcast of “Midday Classics” will be June 19 on the WPR Music service, closing more than four decades of connection with listeners across the state.

Gilliland has been a classical music host on WPR since 1984, championing the cultural power of classical music, spotlighting local and international performers and engaging audience members with his insightful midday quiz each day on his program.

In addition to his music hosting, Gilliland also co-hosted “University of the Air,” a program that featured and interviewed academics and researchers from the University of Wisconsin. He also created and hosted “Old Time Radio Drama” on the statewide network, preserving and recreating the earliest days of radio entertainment. He is also a reader and editor for “Chapter A Day.”

On PBS Wisconsin, Gilliland serves as host of “University Place Presents.”

Off the air and outside of his work for WPR, Gilliland serves as the narrator and presenter for the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra’s annual Concerts on the Square series and is a published author and music commentator.

“As Norman retires, we celebrate and honor a great career in public radio,” WPR Director Sarah Ashworth said. “It has been a personal pleasure to get to work alongside Norman and learn so much about classical music, its performers and its creators each day on his program. As WPR has expanded our classical music programming to serve the entire state, Norman’s engaging personality and relationships with Wisconsin classical musicians have been an important part of growing the audience for this service.”

“I’ve had the honor of bringing great music and stimulating ideas to listeners throughout Wisconsin and beyond,” Gilliland said, announcing his retirement. “During ‘Midday Classics’ I’ve shared conversations and performances with promising young musicians and world-renowned soloists. During its 30 years, ‘University of the Air’ gave us all front-row seats for an array of fascinating topics taught by insightful UW professors. ‘Chapter A Day’ has taught me a lot about the art of reading and writing for the ear. ‘Old-Time Radio Drama’ provided a window on America’s past, and the stage plays my colleagues and I produced were great fun! That’s a rich variety of experiences. Thanks to the dedicated staff and supportive listeners of Wisconsin Public Radio.”

Ahead of Gilliland’s retirement on June 30, 2026, WPR will celebrate his career with a series of events across Wisconsin, including a May 15 celebration in Milwaukee. Full details will be shared for this and other events around the state at wpr.org.

Gilliland has been an important part of the new WPR Music network, which launched in 2024, and now has 185,000 weekly listeners. Gilliland’s legacy will continue on WPR as his mid-day show’s timeslot will be filled by a new locally produced, programmed and hosted classical music program. Details will be announced later this spring.

“Midday Classics” airs weekdays 10 a.m.-1 p.m. on the WPR Music network across Wisconsin and streaming online at wpr.org and on the WPR app.

Editor’s note: A royalty-free hi-res photo of Norman Gilliland is attached. Please credit T. Krueger/WPR

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