John McCutcheon Embodies Great Labor Activist Joe Hill

Go back in time to 1910 and experience the life of one of America’s most famous activists. Joe Hill’s Last Will Starring John McCutcheon will be coming to the Wisconsin Union Theater on Sunday, November 22, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fredric March Play Circle. Tickets are available at the box office in the Wisconsin Union Theater, by calling 608-265-ARTS and online here. Tickets are $25 for the general public, $20 for Wisconsin Union Members and Non UW-Madison Students, $10 for UW-Madison Students (with ID), and $23 for UW-Madison Faculty/Staff.

Swedish-American labor activist, songwriter, itinerant laborer and union organizer Joe Hill is remembered for bringing the harsh lives of wayfaring workers to the stage. Being an immigrant worker frequently battling unemployment, Hill joined the Industrial Workers of the World, also known as the “Wobblies.” Hill became the songwriter and cartoonist for the union. Some of his most popular songs include “The Preacher and the Slave,” “The Rebel Girl” and “Casey Jones---the
Union Scab.” All of his songs had messages relating to a wide range of union topics, including working conditions he experienced.

Hill was accused of a murder in 1914, leading to an extremely controversial trial where he was found guilty. He was executed in November 1915. His songs remain influential and he has inspired many books and poems.

One person particularly inspired by Joe Hill is John McCutcheon, an American folk singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. He is a master of the hammered dulcimer, and also plays guitar, banjo, autoharp, mountain dulcimer, fiddle, and jawharp. He has been creating music since the 1970s and has produced 35 albums.

John McCutcheon honors Joe Hill through a performance embodying both the personality and songs of the folk singer. With the act occurring in the Utah State Prison on November 19, 1915 at 4:00 a.m., just hours before his execution, McCutcheon tells Hill’s unforgettable story.

This performance is sponsored by the Wisconsin Union Directorate’s Performing Arts Committee, with media support from Wisconsin Public Radio and WORT 89.9 FM.