

Guests can hear hits on horns at BC3's Succop Theater

River City Brass Band Octet to play Survivor, Neil Diamond, Santana selections at BC3

Jan. 29, 2020



The River City Brass Band Octet, featuring conductor James Gourlay and musicians playing rock, Broadway and jazz selections on trumpets, a flugelhorn, a French horn, a euphonium, trombone and tuba, will make its debut at Butler County Community College's Succop Theater on Feb. 28.

(Butler, PA) Between the high notes of trumpets and the low tones of a tuba, pitches exhaled through instruments by musicians trained to avoid tapping their shined black shoes in accompaniment, the River City Brass Band Octet will infuse a moderating flugelhorn, French horn, euphonium and trombone in playing rock, Broadway and jazz selections Feb. 28 at Butler County Community College.

The River City Brass Band Octet's debut at Succop Theater features 20 songs during a two-hour "Brasstacular" concert that begins at 8 p.m. and includes a 20-minute intermission.

Tickets to the show, which follows River City Brass Band Octet spring concerts in Panama City, Fla., and Boynton Beach, Fla., are \$20 for general admission, \$18 for those age 65 and older and

\$10 for students. Tickets can be purchased by calling 724-284-8505 or by visiting bc3.edu/theater.

Formed in 2017 and showcasing section leaders culled from a 28-member Pittsburgh-based River City Brass Band that has appeared at BC3 three times, the octet will play hits such as “Eye of the Tiger” by Survivor, “Coming to America” by Neil Diamond, “Some Enchanted Evening,” composed by Rodgers and Hammerstein and “The American Patrol,” composed by Glenn Miller.

“If you think of brass as being spectacular, then you have Brasstacular,” said James Gourlay, executive and artistic director of a River City Brass Band created in 1981 and the only year-round professional group of its kind in North America.



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The Scottish-born Gourlay, 63, also serves as the octet’s conductor and, as a 50-year tuba player, has recorded five solo CDs. He holds a doctorate degree in musical arts from the University of Salford and a master’s degree in musicology from Leeds University, both in England.

Balancing the soprano and b-flat trumpets’ heights at Succop Theater and his tuba’s depth will the flugelhorn – “with its beautiful, warm sound,” Gourlay said. And the French horn – producing “a heroic sound” found in films, particularly those whose scores were composed by John Williams; the euphonium, a tenor instrument with a “rich” tone one octave lower than the flugelhorn; and the trombone, with a “brittle sound that can also sound very lyrical and delicious.”

“They mix this all together to come up with the most pleasing and exciting sounds,” said Larry Stock, director of BC3’s Cultural Center. “There are just so many wonderful ways they can entertain the audience. It’ll be just a wonderful, magical evening.”

The octet will also play the theme to “Captain America,” arranged by Glenn Livett; “Oye Como Va,” from Santana; and “Marching with Sousa,” composed by John Philip Sousa, said Gourlay, who will conduct while playing the tuba, and at times from within the crowd at Succop Theater.

“I go into the audience so that they feel they are a part of the show rather than just consuming the music,” Gourlay said.

“I go right into the audience and play.”

Behind him, on the Succop Theater stage, will be the seven other dark-suited members of the octet. None should be tapping his shined black shoes to a playlist that also will include “The Big Mancini,” composed by Henry Mancini, a 20-time Grammy Award winner raised in West Aliquippa; “Old Time Rock and Roll,” arranged by Livett; and “When the Saints Go Marching In,” arranged by Mark Freeh.

“You’re not supposed to tap,” Gourlay said, “if you are a professional. The audience for sure will be toe-tapping to us.”

BC3’s Succop Theater will also host in its spring 2020 Performing Arts season Semi-Toned on April 8; and the Pittsburgh Philharmonic on March 21 and May 16.



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