



Big Horn Brass will perform its annual holiday concert Saturday in Vancouver.

Singer, brass ensemble to collaborate for concert

By James Bash for The Columbian
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If you go

What: Big Horn Brass Holiday Concert featuring jazz vocalist Karla Harris.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday.

Where: LifePoint Church, 305 N.E. 192nd Ave., Vancouver.

Cost: \$15, \$10 students.

Information: 360-735-7278; [Big Horn Brass](#) or [Vancouver Symphony](#).

If you love the colorful and warm sounds of brass music during wintertime, then the Big Horn Brass' annual holiday concert will be the right medicine for you.

The Big Horn Brass is a 15-member ensemble that features some of the best professional musicians from the Northwest. Many of the members play with orchestras such as the Vancouver Symphony and the Oregon Symphony. Others have backgrounds working with studio musicians in Los Angeles. It all adds up to very experienced professionals who can handle everything from traditional Christmas tunes to jazzy arrangements of popular holiday pieces.

“We’ve got great arrangements of classical, brass pieces like ‘Deck the Halls,’ ‘It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,’ ‘Silent Night,’ and ‘Lo, How a Rose,’” said Andrew Harris, who plays euphonium and handles the group’s library of scores. “We will also play pieces by Hollywood composer Jerry Fielding and a beautiful arrangement by Leroy Anderson of ‘We Three Kings.’” The concert will also feature the unique arrangements of Phil Neuman, a composer who lives in Oregon City, Ore. Neuman is well-known for his work with Oregon’s Trail Band, the Pioneer Brass, De Organographia, and many other groups. For the Big Horn Brass ensemble, Neuman has written new arrangements of “Ding Dong Merrily on High” and “Jingle Bells.” The group will also do Neuman’s melancholic arrangement of “I Wonder as I Wander,” with Larry Johnson playing a 12-foot alpenhorn.

Spokane-based composer William Berry will have a couple of pieces on the Big Horn Brass program. His arrangement of “Reindeer Games” includes several quotes from the music of famed Hollywood composer John Williams, such as a snippet from his score for “Raiders of the Lost Ark.” Another Berry number is the humorous take on “You’re a Mean One Mr. Grinch,” which will feature Vancouver Symphony’s Mark Vehrencamp on the tuba.

To change things up even more, the Big Horn Brass will get their licks on some jazz and big band numbers. The ensemble will do two selections by Ralph Carmichael, who was the arranger for the Stan Kenton orchestra.

“We can create a big-band, swing sound,” said conductor David Bryan, “with French horns instead of saxophones. That makes it really tricky for the French horns, because they have to be extra nimble.”

Portland vocalist

The jazzy portion of the program will include vocalist Karla Harris, who moved to Portland from St. Louis seven years ago when her husband’s job was relocated. Harris has been a regular at a number of Portland establishments, including Wilfs, the Heathman and Benson hotels, and has worked with the Bobby Torres Ensemble at Jimmy Mak’s. Along with Tom Kennedy, she recorded the CD “Twice as Nice,” and her show “Wine, Woman & Song” has received acclaim. “I’ll do a couple of well-known traditional Christmas songs and some Christmas pops numbers,” Harris said. “I’ll sing Irving Berlin’s ‘White Christmas,’ plus ‘Winter Wonderland’ and ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.’ I’ll also do ‘Someday at Christmas,’ which is a song that Stevie Wonder wrote. It’s more of a Motown style. It’s great to sing with such a wonderful group. The arrangements are incredible. A couple of them were written by Lars Campbell, who worked a lot with Nu Shooz.”

One of the splashiest pieces that the Big Horn Brass will do is a rock ‘n’ roll version of the tune “Big Daddy’s Sleigh Ride,” which the band also recorded for its Christmas album, which will be on sale at the concert.

The concert is a benefit for the Vancouver Symphony.

“Several members of the group have positions with the orchestra, and a number of them live or work in Vancouver,” said Bryan, the conductor.

Besides Vehrencamp, the Vancouver Symphony members in the ensemble are trumpeters Bruce Dunn and Scott Winks, and bass trombonist Doug Peebles. Dunn and Winks teach in the Evergreen school district and percussionist Jennifer Rittenburgh teaches at Hockinson Middle School.

Last year’s concert at Union High School sold out, so this year Bryan and the Big Horn Brass have moved to a larger venue at the LightPoint Church, which can seat up to a thousand people.

“The collective artistry of all of the members is tremendous,” Bryan said. “They are so versatile on many levels, and we love to play. It’s in our blood. We are addicted to making music.”