

## Concert gets down to brass tacks



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BLOOMINGTON – Talk about your polished brass.

The Brass Band of Central Illinois has been in well-buffed form for more than a decade now, packing around 30 horns of plenty.

Wielding them: a roster of volunteer musicians from the Twin Cities and beyond, comprised of

retired and current band directors, students and grads from both ISU and IWU, and players from other, perhaps less likely walks of life.

"We have one man who works for the railroad in Monticello, a retired math professor and an instrument repairman," Sharon Huff, the BBCI's euphonium-playing director since 2007 and herself a retired music professor (a Bloomington-Normal native, she taught in Unit 5 schools and at ISU before joining the Millikin University music faculty in Decatur until her retirement a year ago).

Among the players well-known to local music buffs are trombonist Steve Parsons, trumpeter Amy Gilreath, tuba player Andy Rummel and trombonist Tim Pitchford.

This weekend, Huff and the BBCI are going all out, with their biggest indoor concert to date, at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts.

Dubbed "Chicago Style," the title reflects the participation of special guest star, the Chicago Brass Band, the BBCI's award-winning 30-piece counterpart from up north, conducted by Colin Holman.

Before the concert is finished, the two bands are scheduled to share the BCPA stage in tandem, resulting in a massed super-band of around 60 horns going to town on several pieces, including Respighi's majestic "March" from "The Pines of Rome."

The tradition being celebrated is that of the British brass band, which differs from its Yankee counterpart in that all of the instruments are of the conical variety, as opposed to the cylindrical.

Without going into technical details, the main difference, says Huff, is that the conical instruments result in "a more mellow-sounding timbre, with darker, richer tones, and more vibrato."

Not as bright and perky, as, say, an American military band, but one with subtler textures. "It's all about tone and color," Huff says. "The result is a more cohesive sound."

The secret to that sound involves a recipe involving one e-flat soprano cornet, 10 b-flat cornets, one flugelhorn, four e-flat alto horns, two b-flat baritones, two euphoniums, four trombones, two or three e-flat tubas and as many b-flat tubas.

Plus percussion.

The BBCI was founded in 2004 by cornet player Josh Myers and trombonist Stan Cain (currently the BBCI's board president) as an all-volunteer organization that has thrived through donations and grants.

Since then, the band has performed two indoor concerts annually, at Christmas and in the spring, as well as at various outdoor venues through the summer.

For 2015, the latter includes Aug. 11 on the Miller Park Bandstand in Bloomington and Aug. 13 at the Connie Link Amphitheater in Normal.

Making Sunday's BCPA performance with the Chicago Brass Band possible, says Huff, is a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

Over the band's decade of celebrating the British brass band, "we've garnered a rather ardent group of brass band followers," says Huff, "and we really do appreciate that enthusiasm."

## **At a glance**

**What:** "Chicago Style," Brass Band of Central Illinois Spring Concert, with guests the Chicago Brass Band

**When:** 2 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, 600 N. East St.

**Tickets:** Free, with donations welcome

**Information:** [www.bbcil.org](http://www.bbcil.org)