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Nebraska Brass to spike classic carols with bounce

BY JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

Christmas carols are like cups of eggnog. They're great for awhile, but sometimes a little rum is needed to spice things up.

Luckily for music fans, the Nebraska Brass seems to adhere to that same philosophy.

The Nebraska Brass has gained a reputation because of its penchant for fun, especially during the holidays. This year, the group plans to jazz up a lot of classic carols with bouncier beats.

The group has been performing a Christmas show every year for the past nine years and has done just about every song imaginable.

By embracing different arrangers and composers, the experimental brass ensemble continually offers audiences a new twist to the old holiday shtick.

Jason Keagy, assistant director of Arts Incorporated, the company that manages Nebraska Brass, said the group offered a wide variety of music to make the annual Christmas concert enjoyable for everyone.

"Each year the Christmas program is the most popular of the entire season," Keagy said. "It seems to attract a wider audience, so they try to get music that will appeal to a lot of different ages, likes and musical styles."

He said the group generally stuck to the classics, but each year different arrangements put a new twist or mood on the old classics.

"You can always count on people

“With a typical Christmas carol, you have a certain way you're used to hearing it, but some of these have a more upbeat or a funk beat to them.”

JASON KEAGY
assistant director of Arts Incorporated

wanting to hear a lot of the traditional carols," Keagy said. "This year, they're doing some unusual arrangements to take a traditional carol and make it different.

"With a typical Christmas carol, you have a certain way you're used to hearing it, but some of these have a more upbeat or a funk beat to them."

Brad Obbink, a trumpet player for the Nebraska Brass, said one example of the group's experimental approaches this year will be a new rendition of "Silent Night."

"It isn't necessarily the beautiful rendition of 'Silent Night' that we all know; it's more of a reflection of how Christmas really is," Obbink said.

"The particular arranger of that piece of music has expressed his feelings about the carol and the season, and those feelings aren't exactly the same feelings that we traditionally associate with Christmas."

He said different arrangers always give the songs different moods. Nebraska Brass, he said, usually tries to incorporate a number of arrangers into each show, although it is hard to limit their coverage.

"We have a hard time playing all the new Christmas arrangements that come out every year and still playing all the things we like," Obbink said. "We'd like to play it all,

but there isn't time."

Keagy said another exciting aspect of this year's concert is the venue. Usually the group performs at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, and the church has just relocated to 8550 Pioneers Blvd.

"It's a brand-new sanctuary, and they've really increased the audience capacity. And acoustically, it's supposed to be much better, so we're really excited about it," Keagy said.

"Any time you get to perform in a modern facility like that, it's always a good experience."

He said the program would consist of two sets, each 30 minutes long, and that fans should expect a good show.

"I think people can anticipate hearing some of their favorite Christmas carols but with a new fresh approach," Keagy said.

"They'll also get a chance to hear some that aren't as traditional."

The concert starts at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 and costs \$5 for students, \$7 for senior citizens and \$10 for adults.

The group will perform the same show in Omaha on Dec. 11 at Dundee Presbyterian Church, 5312 Underwood St.

Ticket prices are the same for both shows.

For more information, call (402) 477-7899.

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