

The WSB had a great story in the International Musician reprinted below:

"Not Your Average Brass Ensemble"

Phil Snedecor of Locals 40-543 (Baltimore, MD), 161-710 (Washington, DC), and 269 (Harrisburg, PA) likes to think outside the box. He is the manager of the Washington Symphonic Brass (WSB), a group of 17 brass and percussion players led and co-founded by himself and Milton Stevens, also a member of Local 161-710. This not-for-profit ensemble is putting a twist on the type of music traditionally played by brass ensembles.

In 2002, the WSB started its own self-promoted concert series in the D.C. area during which it presents nine concerts a year. This year's concerts include "WSB in the 50s" (that's the 1750s, 1850s, and 1950s), "WSB at the Movies," and "Brass at the Ballet." Yes, brass at the ballet.

"We try to give our audiences things they wouldn't normally expect from brass players," Snedecor says. As for the "Brass at the Ballet" concert, he says that, although people do not generally associate the two, there is great brass music in ballet.

As the arranger, Snedecor uses these brass sections and also arranges the string portions for the brass. "I want audiences to say, 'Wow, I didn't think brass could do that'," he says.

Snedecor boasts that the members of the WSB are some of the best brass players ever assembled, and he believes they can play anything. "Playing is so much more than playing with your own individual instrument," he says, adding that the thrill for him is performing with a group of such talented musicians.

The ensemble was formed in 1993. Back then, the WSB would perform free concerts and as guest artists with the National Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and The Philadelphia Orchestra. But the WSB has come a long way, thanks to the inception of the concert series, as well as the release of four albums. The WSB's latest release--Voices of Brass--features songs from Carmina Burana. Selections from all its albums can be heard at www.wsbrass.com.

Snedecor has been a member of the Federation since he was a freshman at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and has, over the years, been a member of six locals. He says that he works very hard to pay union wages and AFM pension on their concert series, which he has done since the beginning. The AFM pension plan is something he feels very strongly about. "Some musicians don't think about their future," he says. "Even if they don't care, I do."

Funding the brass ensemble is not without its challenges, admits Snedecor. Currently, he pays his musicians scale, but would like to pay them more. "I think the musicians are worth a lot. I want to pay them what they're worth," he says.

One of the ways Snedecor plans to increase revenue is by expanding to larger venues and widening his audience. Currently, the WSB plays in churches and similar venues, but he's set his sights on The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. "We want to give the audience something so unusual that they want us to keep coming back," Snedecor says. "This kind of music making is the wave of the future."