

FOUNTAIN CITY SUCC

by Michael Boo



On 7 November, one week prior to Britain's own Brass in Concert Championship, its sister event, the US Open Brass Band Championship, was held in St. Charles, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago. Like Brass in Concert, this event is an entertainment contest, unlike the majority of brass band events, which are based on the traditional test-piece format. After winning the US Open in 2008, Fountain City accepted the invitation to perform at the 2009 edition of Brass in Concert (the winner of Brass in Concert is similarly invited to perform at the following year's US Open). Upon returning home from the 2009 US Open, Musical Director, Joe Parisi, and the band finalised its preparations for an 18-day tour of Britain, which includes performances at the Gala Concert and contests at both Brass in Concert and the Scottish Open, as well as a recording session. During the tour, the members of Fountain City will be performing 25 separate works and, for the third year in a row, Fountain City Brass Band of Kansas City,

Missouri, will also be able to boast the title of US Open champion. Also in keeping with the UK's Brass in Concert, Frank Renton, host of the BBC Radio 2 programme, *Listen to the Band*, introduced each band and offered commentary and facts about the music. Band members and the audience also had opportunities to visit several displays by various mouthpiece and brass instrument manufacturers, as well as perusing an immense display of brass band recordings for sale. In between the performances of the bands, soloists and ensemble buskers entertained the audience and appealed for the cash prize, which is collected in a top hat throughout the day from the audience. An anonymous judge, sitting somewhere in the audience, determined the winning busking performance and those performers were awarded the cash. Audience members were also able to give money to a specific busker or group by presenting an envelope with the name of the performer(s) to the front desk.

As an entertainment contest, the bands are free to move about the stage, use props and costumes, tell a story line, insert humour and do whatever they think is necessary to make their performance unique. This often involves the bands setting up different seating formations in between selections, or moving the chairs to the side and using the stage for various configurations or even dance steps.

Despite the addition of the 'entertainment'

aspect, the music is still four times more important in the overall judgement. While each of the three adjudicators has a total of 125 points to work with, 100 of these are assigned to music and 25 are allowed for entertainment. Still, in a close contest, the entertainment element can make the difference, so bands continuously try to figure out what the judges consider to be entertaining. For example, the Weston Silver Band came to the USA from Toronto, Canada and, for the first time ever, encountered the entertainment format. Director, Larry Shields, stated that the next time the band came back to the festival, it will "prepare more movement and different set-ups of the ensemble." Michael J. Garasi of the second placed Brass Band of Central Florida added: "Since this is an entertainment contest, we're trying to figure out what's entertaining; is it visual or aurally entertaining?"

Ultimately, what is 'entertaining' may very well be whatever the judges decide is entertaining on any particular day, depending on what side of the bed they wake up on. As Frank Renton said, "Entertainment can only be what it means to you. That's the responsibility of each adjudicator to figure that out."

The striving of each band to be entertaining is what gives this contest such a unique flavour and makes it so interesting for the audience. Next year's US Open Brass Band Championships will be held on 6 November. Check out www.usopenbrass.org for further information.



Clockwise from top right: Kim Dekay receives the Best Cornet award, Fountain City gives the winning performance, Motor City's busking group, Fountain City in motion, Prairie Brass Band, Brass Band of Central Florida in characteristic pose, Joe Parisi and Michael J. Garasi receive their respective prizes and Dee MacAfee, Central Florida's soprano cornet soloist.



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The full results were:

1. Fountain City Brass (J. Parisi) 297 (music) + 71 (entertainment) = 368
 2. Brass Band of Central Florida (M. Garasi) 294 + 67 = 361
 3. Weston Silver (L. Shields) 287 + 58 = 345
 4. Ohio Brass Band (T. Zilincik) 273 + 67 = 340
 5. Eastern Iowa (C. Thomas) 278 + 59 = 337
 6. Motor City (C. Strain) 266 + 58 = 324
 7. Prairie Brass Band (D. Niermeyer) 260 + 57 = 317
 8. Madison Brass Band (C. Mason) 262 + 50 - 2.5 penalty = 309.5
 9. Milwaukee Festival Brass (P. Backhaus) 237 + 48 = 285
- Most Entertaining Band: Fountain City
 Best Featured Soloist: Theo Musick, xylophone, Fountain City
 Best Percussion Section: Brass Band of Central Florida
 Best Performance of a March: Brass Band of Central Florida
 Best Cornet: Kim Dekay (soprano), Ohio Brass Band
 Best New Arrangement/Composition: *Foggy Day*, Lee Harrelson, Fountain City



The music performed at the US Open Championship

Fountain City Brass Band

The Gael (Trevor Jones), *Ave Maria* (Franz Biebl arr. Charles Anderson), *Foggy Day* (Gershwin arr. Lee Harrelson), *Xylophonia* (Joe Green arr. Howard Snell), 3rd movement from *Year of the Dragon* (Philip Sparke)

Brass Band of Central Florida

Old Man River (Jerome Kern arr. Mark Freeh), *Oblivion* (Astor Piazzola arr. Rick Mitzell), *The Padstow Lifeboat* (Malcolm Arnold), *Hunting Wabbits* (Gordon Goodwin arr. Rick Mizell), *Pines of the Appian Way* from *Pines of Rome* (Respighi arr. Howard Snell).

Weston Silver Band

The Thin Red Line (Kenneth Alford), *The Bells of Peover* (Philip Doe), *All Through the Night* (arr. Kevin Norbury), *'Neath the Dublin Skies* (Paul Lovatt-Cooper), *Birdland* (Joe Zawinul arr. Philip Sparke).

Ohio Brass Band

The Muppet Show Theme (Henson and Potter arr. Philip Harper), *Temptation* (arr. Tubb), *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini arr. Wilkinson), *Rubber Duckie*, *It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing* (Ellington and Mills arr. Bennett), *Manamena*, *Sesame Street* (arr. Herak).

Eastern Iowa Brass Band

The Waltonian (J.J. Richards arr. Thomas Wyss), *Barnacle Bill* (arr. Bob Driggs), *Hoedown from Rodeo* (Aaron Copland arr. Howard Snell), *Minuano* (Pat Metheny and Lyle May arr. Ray Farr), *Intrada* (*Ein Fest Burge*) (arr. Ray Farr).

Motor City Brass Band

Horizons (Paul Lovatt-Cooper), *Concertpiece for Cornet* (James Curnow), *The Purple Twilight* (Robert Longfield arr. Craig Strain), *Rolling Thunder* (Henry Fillmore arr. Keith Wilkinson).

Prairie Brass Band

Go! (Lucy Pankhurst), *Largo al Factorum* (Rossini arr. Gordon Langford), *Lezghinka* (Khachaturian arr. Howard Snell), *Johnny One Note* (Rodgers arr. Dallas Niermeyer), *Fanfare-March* (Rodger Nixon arr. Dallas Niermeyer), *The Gael* (Trevor Jones arr. Andrew Duncan).

Madison Brass Band

On the Waterfront (Leonard Bernstein arr. Craig Mason), *The Cossack* (William Rimmer), *Concerto for Trombone* (Rimsky-Korsakov arr. John Glenesk Mortimer), *Inspiration* (Jan de Haan), *Pas Redouble* (Camille Saint-Saëns arr. Craig Mason).

Milwaukee Festival Brass

North by Northwest (Bernard Herrman/arr. Rodney Newton), *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity* (Holst arr. Stephen Roberts), *Lost in the Night* (Valerie A. Floeter arr. Patricia Backhaus), *Death or Glory* (R.B. Hall), *Star Wars* (John Williams arr. John Mortimer).

