



OCTOBER 25, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FROM CALEB DEGROOTE, PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR

**LAKE HOPATCONG, NJ** – Fusion Drum & Bugle "Core" would like to announce a new Brass Team to lead the Core Brass in 2016. The 2016 Educational Team will be a mix of returning and new staff, all under the direction of our new caption head Brian Wilkie.

Fusion has put together a team that will facilitate growth and development in each individual player. The staff is dedicated to focusing on refining member skills while nurturing the Fusion philosophy of entertainment and achievement.

The 2016 brass staff has various backgrounds consisting of DCA, DCI, scholastic band programs, and formal education. We are confident that these will all culminate in one amazing summer of instruction, education and growth for our members and our Core. Please join us in welcoming returning staff as well as some new music educators to the team!

**Chris Bernotas** | Brass Arranger and Composer

Chris is an active composer and arranger of concert band music. Mr. Bernotas is published with Alfred Music Publishing, Daehn Publications, TRN Music Publishing, Northeastern Music Publications and Bandworks Publications. His music has been performed at the Midwest Clinic and has appeared on J.W.Pepper's Editor's Choice list and numerous state lists. Mr. Bernotas is co-author of the third book in Alfred's revolutionary method Sound Innovations series, called Sound Innovations: Ensemble Development, along with Peter Boonshaft.

Mr. Bernotas holds a BM from William Paterson University and an MAT from Marygrove College. As an instrumental music teacher at Mountain Lakes High School in New Jersey, he conducts the wind ensemble, concert band, pep band, jazz band, and pit orchestra. Mr. Bernotas has served the North Jersey Area Band as President, and Symphonic Band conductor. He has also served on the executive board for the New Jersey School Music Association, Region I, and has worked with the NJ All-State Band as a manager. His accomplishments include writing and arranging music for many drum corps and marching bands throughout the United States. He also adjudicates for marching band competitions and festivals nationwide. His professional affiliations include MENC, ASCAP, NBA, and NJMEA. Mr. Bernotas resides in New Jersey with his wife Cristina and three children. Specifically, for drum corps, in addition to Fusion Core, Chris has written for the Caballeros, Crusaders, Hurricanes, Sunrisers, Carolina Gold, Phoenix, and Magic of Orlando.

Fusion brass members have loved playing Chris' charts over the last few years and we are very excited to have Chris return to The Core for a fifth season.

**Brian Wilkie** | Brass Caption Head

Brian has been involved in the marching arts for over 35 years. His marching career began in 1976 as soprano player with the C.W. Townsmen of Wood-Ridge, NJ. Afterwards, he became a soprano soloist with the newly formed DCI corps Royal Brigade from the Meadowlands, NJ. Following four increasingly successful seasons, Brian marched with the Garfield Cadets from 1981 to 1984 as a soprano player and soloist. He enjoyed being part of the corps' ground-breaking and influential climb to ultimately winning ten DCI World Championships, winning back-to-back titles in 1983 and 1984.

After aging-out, Brian was brought aboard the brass staff of the Cadets and served under the mentorship of James Prime, Jr. and Don Van Doren as the corps completed DCI's first-ever "three-peat." In 1991, Brian joined the Jersey Surf Drum and Bugle Corps as the organization's first Brass Caption Head and served in that capacity through 1993, helping the corps gain a solid footing in DCI Open Class competition.

Brian has also designed and taught both brass and visual programs for numerous award-winning marching bands, indoor color guards and percussion ensembles including Northern Highlands Regional HS (NJ), Pennsauken HS (NJ), Westwood HS (NJ), Rutherford HS (NJ), Lacey HS (NJ), and Parkland HS (PA). From 2000-2006 Brian was Music Caption Head and Assistant Band Director at Southern Regional HS (NJ), where the band rose from finalist in Tournament of Bands (TOB) competition in 1999 to winning 3 consecutive Group IV TOB Atlantic Coast Championships from 2003-2005, achieving Best Music and High Brass awards each time.

Brian served as the senior brass technician for the World Champion Hawthorne Caballeros Drum and Bugle Corps from 2004-2008. In 2009, Brian returned to the Jersey Surf as Brass Caption Head for the corps' highly successful inaugural season in DCI World Class competition. From 2010-2011, while completing post-graduate studies at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Brian worked with Dr. Daniel Neuwenschwander as brass and visual instructor for the Kutztown Marching Band.

As a performer, Brian has been both a guest soloist and principal trumpet with the South Jersey Area Wind Ensemble and was a co-founder, musical director, soloist and conductor for the nationally known Brass Tacks Big Band from 1990-2000. He has continued to perform with The Bluez Brothers, various community bands in NJ and PA, the Whitehouse Wind Symphony, the Cadets and Friends Big Band, the Ocean Pops of Ocean County, NJ, and many groups in the NYC metropolitan and tri-state area.

While pursuing his Bachelors of Music Education degree at New Jersey City University, Brian studied classical performance and music pedagogy with John Eckert of the NY Philharmonic and The Eastman School of Music and jazz performance and theory with Dick Lowenthal of Julliard and The Manhattan School of Music. Brian continued his educational pursuits at Kutztown University of PA from 2009-2011, completing a post-baccalaureate music education program and graduating Summa Cum Laude.

After relocating to the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania in 2008, Brian expanded his private teaching practice through his company, The Brass Studio, to maintain a full complement of students ranging from new elementary school students through advanced adults, each of which consistently perform in lead roles in their respective groups. Brian also continues to serve the marching arts community as a brass and music clinician and adjudicator for USBands.

Among many others, Brian has been fortunate to have been influenced throughout his career by the following exceptional teachers: Brass: Dr. Kevin Kjos (University of Indiana, Bloomington), Dr. John Murphy, John Eckert, Richard Lowenthal, Don Van Doren, Jim Prime, Jr., John Simpson, Lloyd Pesola, Michael Klesch, Tim Bartholomew, Larry Kerchner, Frank Pisillo, and Al DiCroce. Visual: George Zingali, Marc Sylvester, Michael Cesario, John DiLeo, John Oppedisano, and Tony Hall.

Brian is excited to be working with Fusion Core as the Brass Caption Head, and looks forward to helping the horn line continue to impress crowds and judges as the corps celebrates its 10th anniversary.

#### **Jeremy Gaddy** | Assistant Brass Caption Head

Jeremy started playing trombone at the age of nine. Originally from Reston, VA, he is currently completing his Music Degree at the University of Delaware. Through the years, Jeremy has studied with Dr. Hal Reynolds, Dr. Bruce Tychinski and more recently with Nitzan Haroz. He is the principal trombonist with both the Chesapeake Brass Band and the Atlantic Brass Band. He is also currently the Principal Trombonist with the Philadelphia Wind Symphony, a member of Al Chez and The Brothers of Funk Big Band and has his own brass quintet, "Brass Act of Delmarva." As a freelance musician on the east coast, Jeremy has played at The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia as well as The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Jeremy's drum corps career includes marching three years with DCA's Empire Statesmen. Jeremy's scholastic experience includes serving as the Assistant Band Director of the Cab Calloway High School Marching Band. Most recently, Cab Calloway won the 2014 TOB Chapter IX Group 4 Open Championship and placed 2nd in 2014 TOB Group 4 Open Class Atlantic Coast Championships. He has also been the Assistant Band Director with the Lake Forest High School Band for a number of years and serves as a consultant with several other marching bands along the East Coast.

Moving into the 2016, Jeremy is eager to share his passions and experience with the Fusion Core Horn Line, and help the ensemble continue to reach new levels of achievement.

#### **Bo Park** | Euphonium Technician

Bo Park will return to the Fusion Core Brass Staff as the Baritone and Euphonium Technician for the 2016 season. Bo is currently the Brass and Visual Caption Head for Fort Lee High School Marching Band and is a popular guest clinician for neighboring scholastic music

programs. Bo currently operates a martial arts school as the co-owner and lead instructor, and also maintains a full low brass private lesson studio.

Bo graduated from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University in 2011, earning a Bachelors Degree in Music Education. While at Rutgers, Bo studied with Michael Powell and Nitzan Haroz, and has played in various ensembles. Before college, Bo had the privilege of attending the Juilliard Pre-College program, where he studied trombone with James Markey and chamber music with Kevin Cobb. Bo has also studied conducting with Julien Benichou, Darryl J. Bott, and David Gilbert.

### **David Durham** | Mellophone Technician

David's drum corps career began in 2011 marching in the mellophone section of the Empire Statesmen. He marched there for three seasons, from 2011 through 2013. For the 2014 and 2015 seasons, David marched mellophone with Fusion Core, and is making the transition to staff for the 2016 season.

As an instructor, David has taught both brass and visual with several high school marching bands in the Chesapeake Bay region. He is currently working with Queen Anne's High School in Maryland. With his assistance, Queen Anne's won back-to-back TOB Chapter IX Group I Championships in 2011 and 2012. David was also the Band Director of Lake Forest High School from 2012-2015. In his time in that role, the program went from a non-competitive group to winning the 2012 TOB Chapter IX Group II Championship and placing in the Top 5 at the 2013 TOB Atlantic Coast Championships.

David is a graduate of Frostburg State University where he majored in Music Education and Horn Performance, under the instruction of Dr. Philip Klickman.

Outside of drum corps, David is an elementary music teacher in the Lake Forest School District and performs solo tenor horn with the Chesapeake Brass Band.

He is looking forward to working with the Fusion Core's 2016 mellophone line and helping to make this season a memorable one for the membership and fans alike.

### **Lara Miller** | Tuba Technician

Lara Miller started her drum corps career marching with the Hawthorne Caballeros from 2008 through 2010. After spending several successful years in DCA, she became a member of The Cadets where she marched from 2011 through 2013. In 2012, she was featured as a tuba soloist and in 2013 was appointed the tuba section leader.

She has also taught several highly successful high school programs throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, most notably Bridgewater-Raritan High School and Rustin High School, for which she is presently both the Visual Coordinator and Low Brass Instructor. Lara has also taught at the DCA level with Cadets2.

She is a graduate of West Chester University in Pennsylvania with a degree in Music Education, where she also resides. The 2016 season will be her first at Fusion Core, and she is excited to contribute her experiences and enthusiasm as part of the educational team.

Fusion's Design Team has been hard at work designing a show that will not only entertain our fans but one that our members will enjoy playing. We are dedicated to constantly challenging our members and providing them with a top-notch education year after year.

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