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Winston Byrd return to alma mater Gateway for Bonsal Blues concert

Updated: Apr. 19, 2012, 6:33 a.m. | Published: Apr. 19, 2012, 5:33 a.m.

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Photo provided

Winston Byrd, a Gateway

Regional High grad, will perform Saturday as a guest soloist with the Bonsal Blues Band.

Winston Byrd makes a triumphant return to his alma mater Saturday night as guest soloist with the Bonsal Blues' dance band as a highlight of the organization's 64th annual show-concert at Gateway Regional High School.

Byrd, a 1991 Gateway graduate and Bonsal Blues musician during his high school years, will perform two dance band numbers, Woody Herman's "Woodchopper's Ball" and Sy Oliver's arrangement of "T'Aint What Ya Do." A gifted trumpet player, the world-traveled Byrd has performed with the likes of Lionel Hampton, The Dells, The Grateful Dead, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Natalie Cole, Michael Bolton, The Stylistics, Aretha Franklin and the Temptations.

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Byrd credits Tony Pinardo, the Blues' lead trumpeter, with part of his success in pursuing his career ambitions.

"Winston, as an up-and-coming trumpeter, once remarked he felt he couldn't perform to Tony's standards," says long-time band member and Blues' publicist Lorrie Gall. "But Winston's success and ability speak for itself." The 64th annual show-concert begins at 7:30 with the theme "A Tribute to Our Veterans, Past and Present," showcasing marches, ballads and novelty arrangements written for and dedicated to the men and women who serve our country.

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Several of the marches were written and arranged by the legendary John Philip Sousa. Broadway show scores include "Phantom Of the Opera" and "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." Other numbers are dedicated to God and country. O. Stephen White returns to direct the concert band.

The dance band will perform six numbers under the direction of saxophonist Scott Johnson, a member of the Blues since 1975 and winner of the coveted Sousa award in 1978. Johnson has been Blues' president, band manager and finance officer and for the last 14 years has been drum major for the award-winning marching band.

Long-time vocalists Carolyn Reistle and Bill Pollanger are still in the fold. Pinardo and Gall share billing as soloists for “Woodchopper’s Ball.”

The band will recognize four 40-year members for their service to the band: Pinardo, fellow trumpet player George Wiese Jr., and twin brothers and color guard members Jim and Tom Haas.

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Former police officer and sponsoring American Legion Post 133 member George “Spike” Abrams will sing the National Anthem.

Returning for his second year as master of ceremonies is West Deptford’s Dan Baker, gifted public address voice of both the Phillies and Eagles.

Tickets can be purchased in advance by calling **845-1465** or **848-6999** or they can be purchased at the door. Cost is \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors, veterans and children.

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