



STUDY GUIDE
Brass under the Big Top

**Featuring the Giannini Brass and
Richard Ellis ("Dikki" the clown)**



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Supported by the Arts-in-Education program of the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Arts Council

Brass under the Big Top



Brass Under the Big Top is a unique collaborative program that introduces young audience to musical concepts and classical music through the magic of the circus.

Performances are 45 minutes in length, targeted to grades K-6, preferably in an assembly style format. The program consists of two components:

1. Exploration of the instruments and sound. What are the instruments? How do they create a sound? What types of music do they play? In addition to brass instrument demos, we introduce students to the percussion family of instruments.
2. Musical selections interwoven with a variety of circus routines, juggling, and magic.

Performers

The Giannini Brass Big Top Band is a five-piece brass ensemble with percussion. The Giannini Brass will perform music to accompany the different acts. They will also play selections that feature the group, and will give demo on the different instruments.

Technical Information for Schools

Brass under the Big Top runs approximately 45 minutes.

Recording: Pictures, video, or sound recording is allowed.

Set up Time: 45-60 minutes

Space Requirements

Gymnasium, multipurpose space or auditorium:

Minimum requirements are as follows: 30ft X 16ft performance space – cleaned, swept, and mopped. 15+ foot ceiling.

Sound System : Brass Under the Big Top requires a sound system with one lavalier microphone and one standard voice microphone. We prefer schools to provide the sound, but we can provide a system if necessary.

Audience Size: If space permits, we can accommodate up to approx. 600 in a gymnasium-style setting or the capacity of an auditorium.

Questions? Contact: Joe Mount 336 770 3339 Email: mountj@uncsa.edu www.gianninibrass.com

Giannini Brass



The **Giannini Brass** was formed in 1989 and named after composer and educator Vittorio Giannini, the founder of the North Carolina School of the Arts. Currently, members of the Giannini Brass perform in nearly all of the professional orchestras in the Carolinas, and have toured and performed with orchestras and chamber music ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. The ensemble has been the recipient of grants from the Winston-Salem Arts Council for developing innovative community and educational programs and has performed in a variety of unusual and interesting performance settings, including multi- media planetarium concerts, with symphony orchestras, and on radio and television programs. Giannini Brass is the brass ensemble-in-residence for the North Carolina School of the Arts summer music program, *Musica Piccola*. The Winston-Salem, NC Convention & Visitors Bureau features the Giannini Brass in their Cultural Corridors Drive narratives (www.culturalcorridors.com)

Instruments of the Giannini Brass



Trumpet



As old as humans? The trumpet has been around for a very long time. People have been playing trumpet-like instruments made of conch-shell, horn, wood or metal, for thousands of years.

A standard modern trumpet is a long slender metal tube with three valves. It is bent into a paper clip shape, but if you stretched it out, it would be 6 1/2 feet long.

The trumpet plays the highest pitches of the brass family. Its sound is bright, brilliant, and exciting.

There are two trumpet players in the Giannini Brass.

You play the trumpet by holding it horizontally, buzzing into the mouthpiece, and pressing the three valves in various combinations to block or divert air down the tubes.

French horn



Yes, you guessed it. This is a horn and it came from France. The French horn is descended from a hunting horn that came into existence in France during the second half of the 17th century.

The French horn is easy to spot because of its circular shape. It's a long slender metal tube, about 17 feet long, curved around and around, with a large bell at the end.

You play the French horn by holding it with the bell curving downward and buzzing into the mouthpiece. Your left hand plays the three valves and your right hand moves in and out of the bell to change the sound. For a louder effect, you play with the bell up, instead of down.

Trombone



Hear it slide! The trombone is a powerful and unique instrument. Instead of having valves, the trombone uses its sliding shape to change sounds.

A standard trombone is made of long slender metal tubes. Two U-shaped tubes are linked at opposite ends to form an "S." One tube slides into the other so the overall length of tube can be extended or shortened at will. If you add up all the tubing, the trombone is around 9 feet long.

To play it, you hold the trombone horizontally and buzz into the mouthpiece. With your right hand, you push and pull the sliding piece to change the length of the tube, which changes the pitch of the sounds. In the 20th Century to the present day, trombones are used in popular music, including big band style jazz, pop, and rock.

The Giannini Brass features the trombone on a circus-style piece, "Shouting Liza Trombone". Listen to the effects that the trombone player makes with his slide.

Tuba



This is the big one! The tuba is the largest brass instrument and has the lowest pitch. The tuba is a long metal tube, curved around and around, with a huge bell at the end. There are many sizes of tubas ranging from 9 to 18 feet of tubing. The longer the tubing, the lower the pitch. Standard tubas have about 16 feet of tubing.

The tuba makes very deep, low, and rich sounds.

Percussion



Drums are among the most significant instruments in the history of music, used in religious rituals, tribal dances, military and court ceremonies, and as signaling devices. Cymbals, large metal plates that are played by being struck together or with a mallet, may have originated in China or in Turkey. They are mentioned in historical accounts as early as 1200 B.C., and they are often brought up in the Bible, especially in the Psalms.



Brass under the Big Top Music Selections

These are some of the pieces you will hear performed in the program

Entrance of the Gladiators

Also known by the title “Thunder and Blazes”, this is the most famous circus march of all time. It was written by Julius Fucik in 1897. This type of march is also known as a “screamer” because it would be played very fast. It was performed by the circus band to accompany the entrance of the clowns.

Ta-daa

A circus band would accompany the acts, as well as giving a B-flat chord at the end (also known as a “ta-daa”) to signify a successful trick. Giannini Brass plays the ta-daa chord after Dikki the Clown finishes a trick.

Can-Can

A dance piece from the opera “Orpheus in the Underworld” by the French composer Jacques Offenbach. The **can can** is regarded primarily as a physically demanding dance, performed by a chorus line of female dancers who wear costumes with long skirts, petticoats, and black stockings, harking back to the fashions of the 1890s. **Did you know?:** In *Super Mario Land* for **Game Boy**, the tune that plays for Mario’s invincibility is primarily the *Can-Can*.

Big Shot Brass

This is a piece that was written by Russell Peck, a composer who lived in Greensboro, NC. The Giannini Brass performs this piece with a rock beat, and it features solos by all the instruments.

Sunflower Slow Drag

This piece was composed by the famous African-American composer Scott Joplin. It is an example of the type of jazz that Scott Joplin made famous, called ragtime. This piece was originally written for the piano and arranged for brass instruments.

Miss Liberty & Voice of America

These are two circus marches composed by American circus march composer Karl King.

Shoutin’ Liza Trombone

This piece is a circus novelty piece composed by a famous composer of circus music and marches, Henry Fillmore. You will hear the trombonist bending notes and making a sound with his slide called a **glissando** and making comical effects on his instrument.

William Tell Overture This is a portion of a famous piece from the opera “William Tell”, composed by Italian composer Rossini. It was the theme for an old television show, *The Lone Ranger*. It is still used in many commercials and cartoons.

Brass under the Big Top Activities



Juggling Facts

Did you know . . . ?

- The world's record for the greatest number of objects ever juggled at one time is ten, which has been done with both balls and rings. A very few people have “flashed” 12 objects, which means thrown them up once and caught them, but no one has ever sustained 12 objects in a juggle.
- Juggling is depicted in ancient art from Egypt, Greece, and Rome; in ancient texts from China and Ireland; in Norse mythology; and in the Talmud.
- On the Pacific Island of Tonga, juggling is a common pastime for young girls, who typically juggle fruit and nuts.

Research ideas:

- Find five more facts about jugglers.
- Research one famous juggler and write a biography of him or her.

Brass under the Big Top Activities

- Draw a picture of the Brass Under the Big Top
- Write a letter to the Giannini Brass and Dikki Ellis
- Learn How to Juggle
- Learn a Magic Trick
- Color the instruments on the following pages

Resources

- Circus: www.circusweb.com
- Brass: www.gianninibrass.com
- Dikki Ellis and Juggling: www.dikkiellis.com
- Magic: <http://www.learnmagictricks.org/>