

# Mendel Center lineup has events for everyone

*2015-16 highlights include 'Whose Line' performers, The Hit Men and 'Saturday Night Fever'*

By **JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO**  
HP Features Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Colin Mochrie and Brad Sherwood from “Whose Line Is It Anyway?” will be here. So will the music of The Hit Men, featuring former members of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. There’s the Broadway musical “Saturday Night Fever,” based on the iconic 1977 movie, and the return of a holiday favorite, “Mannheim Steamroller Christmas,” also on tap.

But perhaps the most exciting act on Lake Michigan College’s 2015-16 Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre season, which was released late Wednesday, is the concert that has yet to be announced. In February 2016, the Mendel Center Mainstage will have a nationally touring country performer, who will be announced once details are finalized.

“It’s been a really, really long time since the mainstage has hosted a contemporary country act,” says Mike Nadolski, executive director of the Mendel Center. “We set out with a goal to do that. We’re trying to get somebody who is on the rise. We’re getting close, but we don’t want to mention a name until the details are finalized. One of our goals going into this year was to be spry enough to grab some of these bigger acts and contemporary acts as they are routing through our area. So there may be a couple of surprises this year.”

The season will open on Aug. 8 when The Hit Men, led by former Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons members Lee Shapiro and Gerry Polci, performs a mix of favorite songs from the 1970s. The musicians in the group, which also includes Jimmy Ryan, Larry Gates and Russ Velazquez, has recorded and toured with everyone from Tommy James & The Shondells to Carly Simon.

Known by TV audiences for their work on “Whose Line Is It Anyway?” Colin Mochrie and Brad Sherwood will



Photo provided

**Colin Mochrie, left, and Brad Sherwood from “Whose Line Is It Anyway?” will perform Nov. 7 at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre. The 2015-16 season was announced late Wednesday.**

bring their sharp improv comedy wit to the mainstage on Nov. 7 in a two-man version of the hit show.

“As an improv guy I was so happy when ‘Whose Line Is It Anyway?’ first came around, so when I tried to explain what I did I could say, ‘Have you ever seen “Whose Line Is It Anyway?”’” Nadolski says. “I don’t think you have to explain it anymore because ‘Whose Line Is It Anyway?’ was one of those benchmark shows. They are at the pinnacle of the art form, and we’re happy to welcome them to our stage.”

“Mannheim Steamroller Christmas” by Chip Davis, which sold out two years ago, returns to The Mendel Center on Dec. 16. Davis’s show features the Christmas music of Mannheim Steamroller along with multimedia effects performed in an intimate setting.

The new musical “Saturday Night Fever,” based on the 1977 John Travolta movie, will be performed on Feb. 5, 2016, featuring Bee Gees hits such as “Stayin’ Alive,” “Night Fever,” “Jive Talking,” “You Should Be Dancing” and “How Deep is Your Love,” in addition to new songs written especially for this production.

Among other season highlights are the lighting and dance effects of “iLuminate” on Sept. 19; the virtuoso vaudevillian show “Tomáš Kubínek: Certified Lunatic and Master of the Impossible” on Oct. 3; “Rhythmic Circus: Feet Don’t Fail Me Now” on Oct. 17; the one-man show “Men Are From Mars – Women Are From Venus Live!” on Jan. 15, 2016; “Stomp” on Feb. 28, 2016; “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood Live!” on March 12, 2016; the Comic Opera

Guild presents a new English version of Rossini’s “The Barber of Seville” on March 19, 2016; and Theatreworks USA returns with its production of “Charlotte’s Web” on April 16, 2016.

Series ticket packages, which start with three or more shows, are on sale now. Individual tickets, which range from \$14-\$72 depending on the show, go on sale at 10 a.m. June 15.

“We ended last season about as well as you could with the most popular and well-attended kids show (“Wild Kratts Live”) in the history of the mainstage,” Nadolski says. “It just drove home that all-ages shows, family shows and kids shows do exceptionally well in our venue. This season has more of those experiences that everyone can really enjoy.”

Contact: [jbonfiglio@TheHP.com](mailto:jbonfiglio@TheHP.com), 932-0364, Twitter: @HPBonfiglio