

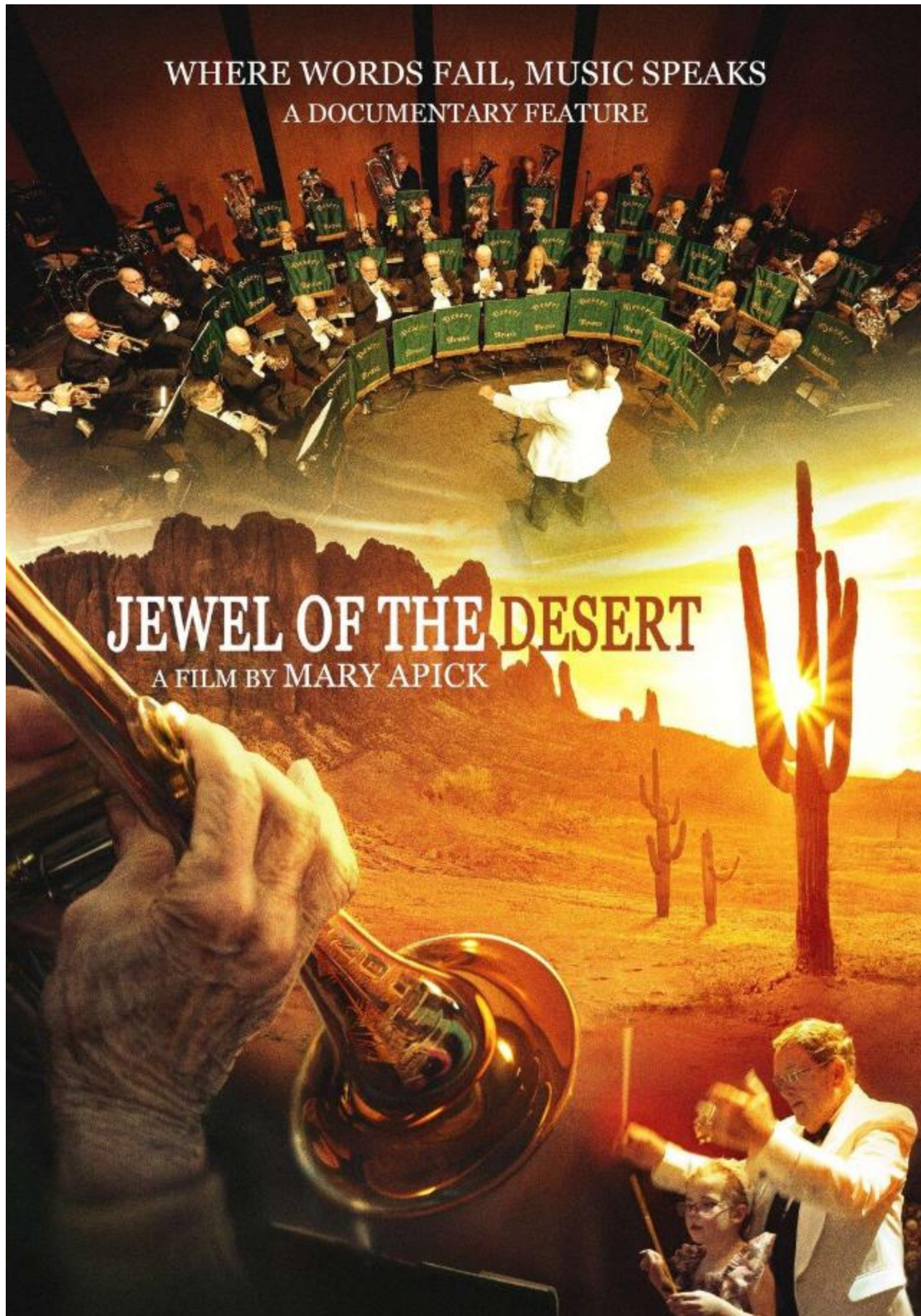
Former Alton Resident to be Featured in Documentary about Senior Citizen Band

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
January 4 2024 9:31 AM

WHERE WORDS FAIL, MUSIC SPEAKS
A DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

JEWEL OF THE DESERT

A FILM BY MARY APICK



ALTON - Alton High alum Charles Musgrave has made an impressive life for himself that will be documented in a new film titled “Jewel of the Desert.”

Musgrave, who attended Alton High in the 1940s, never forgot his roots even as he planted new ones in Sun City, Arizona, as the director of the Desert Brass Band, a band of 30 senior citizens ages 58–91. Director and producer Mary Apick was so moved by the band’s story that she decided to create a documentary about the Desert Brass Band, set to premiere on Jan 19, 2024, in Sun City.

The documentary follows Musgrave and a few of his instrumentalists as they share how they became musicians, their lives as performers, and their experience in the Desert Brass Band. The band started in 1998, and Musgrave took over as the conductor and music director in 2000.

After graduating from Alton High in 1950, Musgrave received a bachelor’s degree in music education from the Conservatory of Music at Shurtleff College, then went on to receive his master’s degree at the University of Illinois. He returned to Alton, where he served as the assistant director of the Marching 100 and the director of Alton’s orchestra. He was also the first director of the high school’s musicals and played the French horn with the St. Louis Philharmonic.

Like Musgrave, most of the Desert Brass Band members have played music their whole lives. The documentary touches on the benefits of starting music education at a young age and the joy of continuing to perform throughout one’s life.

Apick attended a Desert Brass Band concert in 2022 and realized the potential for a documentary as they performed. She recorded the first shots of the movie with her iPhone. Over the following year, she traveled back and forth between Hollywood and Sun City to meet with Musgrave and his musicians, according to an article by the “Sun City Independent.”

Apick’s previous films have won several international awards. “Jewel of the Desert” will be entered in over 30 international film competitions, including the Oscars.

“Mary has had several winners in the various competitions in the past and she is confident that she has produced another winner,” Musgrave told the “Sun City Independent.”

More information will be shared soon about how Riverbend residents can view “Jewel of the Desert.”