

Political Satire Group “The Capitol Steps” brings their hilarious brand of comedy to the Zeiterion on October 19

By Sean McCarthy

While the charades and shenanigans of the 2016 presidential race may be a thorny mess for voters, it’s a gold mine for the Capitol Steps.

In their 30th year, the Capitol Steps are a group of political satirists whose musical skills and lyrical wit wield clever and cutting parodies of Washington’s popular and powerful. This six-piece troupe turns headlines into punch lines, delivering equal opportunity barbs to both sides of the political aisle. No ego is too big and no subject taboo.

Politics is a “blood sport” but laughter is the best medicine.

The Capitol Steps will bring their current edition of political lampooning to the stage of the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center on Wednesday, October 19 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$29, \$35 and \$39 and can be purchased at www.zeiterion.org, at the Zeiterion box office at 684 Purchase St. or by calling (508)994-2900.

“People love mocking politicians,” says Steps’ songwriter Mark Eaton. “With every presidential election people say it can’t be more fun, but it always is. In the 80’s we had Reagan and people thought it couldn’t get better, but then we had Dan Quayle who couldn’t spell potato. Bill Clinton followed that by giving us an incredible amount of material, and then we had ‘W’ Bush who gave us just as much.”

All of the songs that are selected for parodies are deliberately recognizable, ranging from pop songs to Broadway standards.

When Hillary Clinton was absolved in her recent e-mail scandal Eaton took The Pointer Sisters' song "I'm So Excited," and reworked it with "I'm Not Indicted." Eaton then morphed "Leader of the Pack" into "Deleter of the Facts."

The recently popular song "Shut Up and Dance With Me" was changed into "Shut Up and Vote For Me," being sung by Donald Trump. And both candidates get ribbed when "I Want A Brand New Pair of Roller Skates" becomes "I Want A Brand New Pair of Candidates."

"If you're upset because we're making fun of Hillary don't worry – Trump will be next," Eaton says.

The show will include 30 songs over a span of 90 minutes. The group consists of five singers and one piano player. Eaton describes the show as "fast paced."

"Song ideas can come from anywhere, there's no specific formula or approach to writing," Eaton says.

The 54-year old Eaton started with the Steps as a part-time performer in 1993 and became a full-time member in 1999. He claims that his main sources of news are the "Washington Post" and the "Wall Street Journal."

And the Steps know what they're talking about – many of the performers have experience working for politicians on Capitol Hill. Eaton's experience includes working for Virginia Senator Paul Tribel and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms.

"We want people in this group who can carry a tune, but we also look for the people who were the Class Clown in high school or the wise guy in the office," Eaton says.

Throughout history satirists have used humor as their primary tool, not only to criticize politicians but people in the

public spotlight as well. Some of America's more prominent satirists have included the writers Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain. Modern satirists use the "fake news" approach including Jon Stewart and his television show "The Daily Show." "Saturday Night Live" has been using the "fake news" skit "Weekend Update" since 1975. Current satire can be found on the Internet, including "The Onion," "Whitehouse.org," and "The Borowitz Report."

"It's always a good time to make fun of politicians," Eaton says. "People in power would rather be attacked than laughed at. This year we have two candidates that everybody knows and everybody has a strong opinion about," Eaton says.

"People need a laugh, and we're happy to take the funny side of things."