

CONTEMPORARY MARCHING BAND SHOW DESIGN & TECHNIQUES

The Do's & Don'ts

PRESENTED BY:

MARK LORTZ

DIRECTOR OF BANDS STEVENSON UNIVERSITY
STEVENSON, MARYLAND

Contemporary Show Design Criteria

- Create educational opportunities for all performers-Will students be challenged and engaged throughout the entire season?
- High level of artistic/ aesthetic value
- Integrate all units; all performers become the focal point at various times throughout the show
- Sculpt seamless transitions
- Create a performance that is interesting and engaging for both performers and the audience.

Purpose of Show

- Appeal to Friday night football crowd
- Attend only local competitions or festivals
- Attend prelims/finals type of State or multi-state competitions
- Attend National level competitions
- **It is possible to create a hybrid show that can appeal on two or more levels

Current Trends

- Effect drives most programs
- Music often lacks melody and is once again, effect driven
- Visual and/or Overall Effect often drives the program – BE CAREFUL

MUSIC FIRST!!!

- Music and Effect are the majority of the total score for the majority of competitive circuits
- Panel discussion in 2007 with Michael Gaines, “Despite rumors to the contrary, I can’t write drill without music. Everything I do visually is based on what I hear.”

Designing a Show-Indoor vs. Outdoor

Where to begin?


■ Choose your competitive circuit

- Bands of America (BOA) www.bands.org
 - National circuit with regional competitions culminating in a dome Indianapolis, Indiana
 - Pros - National adjudication and competition
 - Cons - Higher participation fees and much more travel. There are fewer competitions because BOA is a regional, not a weekly circuit.
- Tournament of Bands (TOB) nja.tob.org
 - Regional Mid-Atlantic circuit culminating in Scranton, Pennsylvania
 - Pros - Numerous local competitions every weekend in the fall
 - Cons - Some judging tends to be not as contemporary as others
- US Bands www.yea.org
 - Regional Mid-Atlantic circuit culminating in numerous championships on several weekends
 - Pros - Several championships allowing multiple champions. Two different competitive classes
 - Cons - Can be expensive with travel

Determine show requirements based upon the circuit where you are going to compete

- What is the circuit's adjudication criteria?
 - Criteria Reference: A system of boxes or criteria developed to be used by the judge and band director to further understand the rationale used in assigning a numeric value to a Performance.
(Bands of America, (2002, Fall), BOA Rulebook 2002, Retrieved February 18, 2003, from <http://www.bands.org/public/resourceroom/adjudication/>)
- Specific time limits (entry, show length, exit, etc.)
- Penalties - What are the specifics?
- Determination of your group's size
- Read each organization's rule book

Bands of America Sample Judging Sheet

 <p>BANDS OF AMERICA A NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION</p>		Band _____ Date _____ Prelims Finals
MUSIC GENERAL EFFECT		
<p>Music General Effect is the utilization of all elements to bring about maximum effectiveness of the musical performance. Evaluate each caption below based on the criteria reference. Understand that we evaluate what is being performed at the same time we are evaluating how it is being performed. Since we judge achievement, we must understand that the construction and content of a program, in combination with the performance level which is being demonstrated, will determine the achievement level. It is impossible to consider one of these elements without considering the other.</p>		
	Effectiveness of the Musical Repertoire (100) Creativity/Imagination Coordination/Staging Appropriate Range of Expressions Use of Time/Pacing Continuity/Unity Contribution for Enrichment/Enhancement of All Elements	
	Performance (100) Coordination/Staging Appropriate Range of Expressions Use of Time/Pacing Continuity/Unity Contribution for Enrichment/Enhancement of All Elements	
© Bands of America, Inc.		TOTAL SCORE (possible 200)
Signature _____		

(Bands of America, (2002, Fall), BOA Rulebook 2002, Retrieved February 18, 2003, from <http://www.bands.org/public/resourceroom/adjudication/>)

Bands of America Criteria Explanation

Music General Effect				
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100				
0-10		11-30		31-70
Effectiveness of the Musical Repertoire	Box 1-A general lack of readability exists throughout the program. A lack of understanding of the most basic elements of musical repertoire effectiveness makes evaluation extremely difficult. Musical effect concepts lack interest and audience involvement is often absent. The performers are unable to convey the program's intent and message. Unified effort in program productions is obviously lacking. Elements most often fail to complement one another and can often appear to be in conflict. The overall product does not work together and rarely communicates a coordinated effort.	Box 2-Musical repertoire occasionally displays awareness of the fundamentals of creating effect. Concepts of musical repertoire, while often weak still generate some recognized effect. Occasional periods of aesthetic appeal exist. The performers inconsistently attempt to convey the program's intent and message. Some basic awareness of a unified effort is seen, but the results are highly inconsistent. One or two elements may show efforts to produce a blend of effects, but success may be impaired by the absence of effort on the part of another element. However, some team effort and coordinated effect is still communicated.		Box 3-Musical repertoire displays an average level of substance and depth. Musical repertoire concepts are defined, but are displayed with an average level of success. Concepts, while not consistently developed or sophisticated, successfully generate moderate levels of audience intrigue and aesthetic appeal. Moments of unique musical repertoire may be present and effective. The performers display an average effort conveying the musical program's intent and message. The blending of elements is generally successful. A correct understanding of blend, staging, continuity and climax achieves a moderate, though inconsistent level of effectiveness. Some moments of a higher level of effort are seen, but are several breaks in the continuity of the climaxes of the program. The overall product is strong, unified.
				Box 4-Musical Repertoire often displays quality substance and depth. Concepts are clearly defined and are displayed with an above average level of success. The performers display a high level of effort conveying the musical program's intent and message. The blending of elements is generally successful. A correct understanding of blend, staging, continuity and climax achieves a moderate, though inconsistent level of effectiveness. Some moments of a higher level of effort are seen, but are several breaks in the continuity of the climaxes of the program. The overall product is strong, unified.
71-90				
91-100				
Box 5-Musical repertoire consistently displays quality substance and depth. Concepts are always understood and are successfully developed. Maximum intrigue and aesthetic appeal are always maintained. The complexity of the repertoire is a natural outgrowth of the musical program presented and consistently produces optimum effect. Imagination and creativity are constantly woven into the program and the performers exhibit a clear understanding of the musical intent and deliver its message. There is superlative blending of all elements and effects. Maximum effectiveness and emotional reaction are maintained throughout the program by the absolute command of the principles of staging, continuity and climax. New concepts are often explored.				
Effectiveness of the Musical Performance				
Box 1-Inexperience and/or improper understanding of basics exists allowing the performers to only communicate very infrequent periods of low-level concentration, emotion and energy.				
Box 2-There is a lack of consistency in the performance. The performers occasionally display some awareness of the fundamentals of creating effect. Concepts of musical repertoire, while often weak still generate some recognized effect. Occasional periods of aesthetic appeal exist. The performers inconsistently attempt to convey the program's intent and message. Some basic awareness of a unified effort is seen, but the results are highly inconsistent. One or two elements may show efforts to produce a blend of effects, but success may be impaired by the absence of effort on the part of another element. However, some team effort and coordinated effect is still communicated.				
Box 3-Performers display an average level of effort conveying the musical program's intent and message. The blending of elements is generally successful. A correct understanding of blend, staging, continuity and climax achieves a moderate, though inconsistent level of effectiveness. Some moments of a higher level of effort are seen, but are several breaks in the continuity of the climaxes of the program. The overall product is strong, unified.				
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Box 5-Performers display superior achievement in the communication of musical artistry and emotion. The audience is constantly entertained and absorbed by the demonstration of professionalism and the brilliant display of the intensities of emotion. The highest standards in communication are established and maintained throughout the musical program.				

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(Bands of America, (2002, Fall), BOA Rulebook 2002, Retrieved February 18, 2003, from <http://www.bands.org/public/resourceroom/adjudication/>)

DESIGNING THE SHOW...



The Sections

3 Elements of the "Team"

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graph TD; A[3 Elements of the "Team"] --> B[The Wind Section-Offense<br/>Woodwinds<br/>Brass]; A --> C[The Percussion Section-Defense<br/>Battery<br/>Pit]; A --> D[The Colorguard-Special Teams<br/>Flags<br/>Weapons];
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The Wind Section-Offense

Woodwinds

Brass

The Percussion Section-Defense

Battery

Pit

The Colorguard-Special Teams

Flags

Weapons

Music & Visual

■ MUSIC

- Instrumentation
- Style that you and the students are most comfortable with
- Potential members
- Tessitura-Range
- Ability level

■ VISUAL

- Have technique program (Basics) established
- Have a physical training/conditioning program (cardio) planned and intact
- Potential members
- Ability level

The Staff Hierarchy

- Create a hierarchy/chain of command
- Select someone will make the final decisions...Who?
 - Band Director??
 - Program Coordinator???
- Inform the staff of the hierarchy

Suggested Hierarchy



Types of Shows

- Conceptual shows
 - Shows designed with a concept first and making the music fit around a specific concept or idea
- Musical shows
 - Shows designed with fitting an idea / theme / concept around chosen music
- Combination shows
 - A little of both from above
- Crowd Pleasing shows (Football or Show Band)
 - No specific theme or concept. Entertaining the “football” audience to applaud and cheer is the main focus

The Design Process Checklist....

- Should you a design show around a concept or design music to fit a concept?
- What music?
- What concept?
- Should we use electronics?
- Should we use props?
- **OBTAIN COPYRIGHT PERMISSION TO USE PUBLISHED MUSIC**
 - This can be achieved by contacting the publisher of the work, requesting permission and paying a fee
 - Do this early. Some publishers take 6 months or more to grant copyright permission

Show Design:

THE DO'S AND THE DON'TS

THE DO's



- Competent and communicative designers
- Appropriate music difficulty
- More standing / less moving
- Write for and feature your strong sections

THE DON'Ts



- Packaged shows?
- Staff attendance
- Don't choose music that your top band could not play sitting down
- Don't write drill and music that is too hard
- Don't wait to get the paperwork and administrative duties / work completed

Now what?

- Proper planning is a must!
 - Set deadlines for when parts of the show will be designed
 - Create benchmarks and standards that should be met throughout the season
 - Create a list of items that you would like to teach throughout the season
- Set up staff meetings and map out the show
- Discuss concept/theme of the show and ask yourself throughout the season: “Are you selling the concept?”
- Choose your high and low moments within the show- Determine your High Have a definitive rehearsal schedule set prior to the end of school

Show Criteria

- The show must have a variety of tempos, textures, dynamic levels and style to make it interesting (tension and release)
- Each piece of music must have some kind of “audience response” built in

What should be written first?

- Choose how many parts will be in the show
- Write the show in the following order per part of the show:
 - Wind Score, Battery / Pit Score, Visual Package
- Start planning early (January of the prior season)
- Begin playing the music prior to the end of school to find the following:
 - Any notation mistakes
 - Reading the music will give you an idea of how the music fits with your group - Just like concert band
 - It will give you a head start on the learning process

Storyboarding

- Write down as many visual and musical ideas that support one another as you possibly can think of.
- See what ideas or music needs the most attention and then repeat step A.
- Fill each moment in your program with as many ideas and options you can give yourself.

Design Considerations

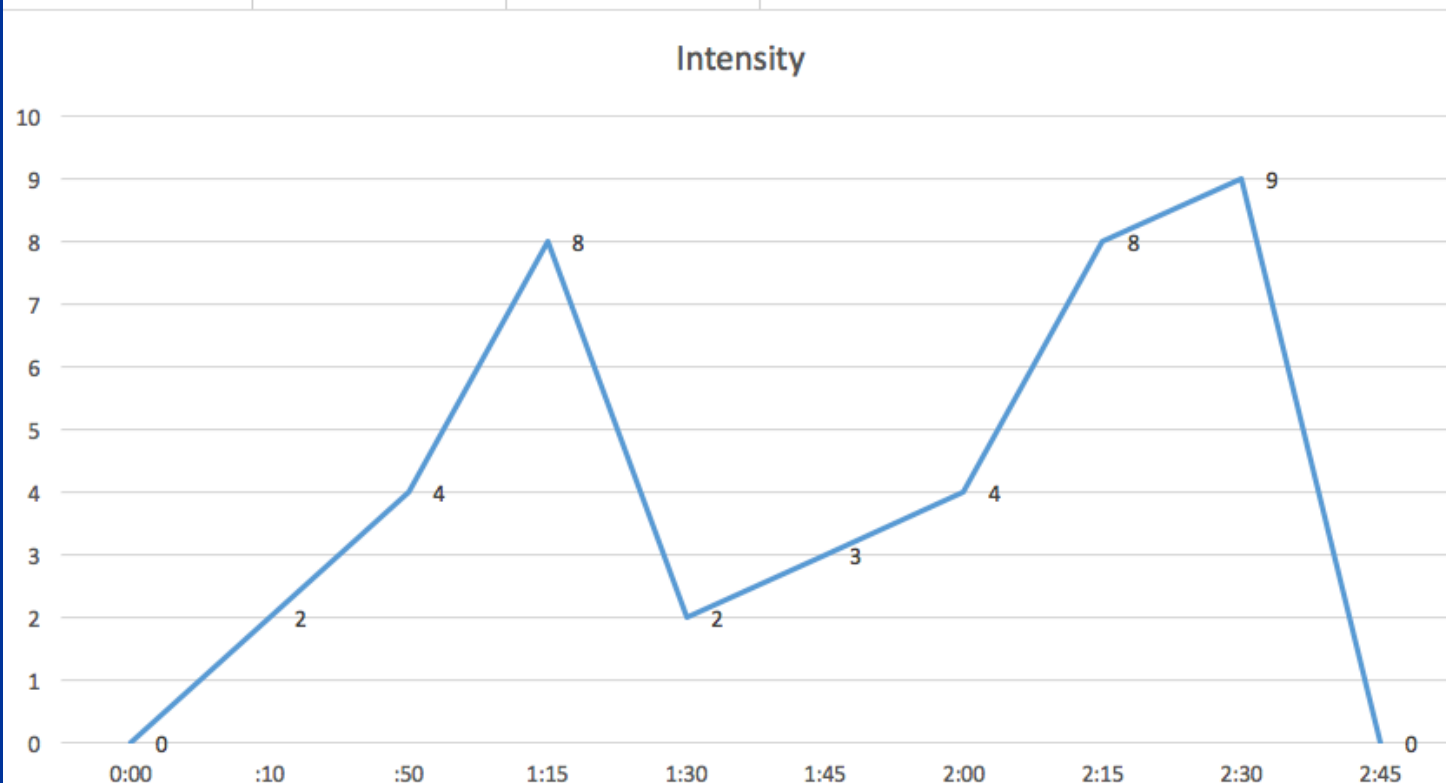
- Physical Pacing
- Overwriting
- Variety (scoring, tempi, moods, emotions, etc.)
- You need to create a program that is unique and different

Flow Chart and Plan

- Graph Each Movement
 - Duration in seconds
 - Musical events, effects, etc.
 - Focal point
 - Climax
 - 30 second rule
 - Opener, Production Number, Ballad, Closer

Sample Flow Chart

Part 1 Flow Chart			
Time	Intensity	Event	Detail
0:00	0	Opening	Band scattered on field
:10	2	Transition	Tutti body, percussion transition to soloist
:50	4	Small impact	Guard and Trumpet solo, band transition to impact
1:15	8	Impact 1	First impact-Staged front of field
1:30	2	Transition	Transition to 1st melody
1:45	3	Melody 1	1st melodic statement (woodwinds, flags and snares)
2:00	4	Melody 2	2nd melodic statement (low brass, rifles, bass drums)
2:15	8	Impact 2	Unison impact, hold with body
2:30	9	Transition	Fast transition to end of movement
2:45	0	End of movement	End of movement



Drill Flow Chart Sample

PART 1						
Intro - Quarter Note = 92 BPM						
Set #	Meas #	# of Counts	Winds	Guard	Dance Line	Battery
1	1-9	36 (hold)	Hold large form in front of pit	Large flags behind band	Hold	Straight line behind band
2	10-12	12(move)	Hold	Push forward or out to the sidelines to drop off large flags	Hold	Hold
3	13-14	8(hold)	Hold	Transitioning to small flags	Hold	Hold
Upbeat Tempo - Quarter Note = 138 BPM						
4	15-18	16 (move)	Transition, can take large step size - not playing	Transition to small flags	Hold	Normal movement to area of pulse
5	19-22	16 (move)	Transition, can take large step size - not playing	Transition flags on field	Move 16	Battery hold in good pulse area or light movement
6	23-26	16 (move)	Transition, can take large step size - not playing	Transition flags on field	Move 16	Battery hold in good pulse area or light movement
7	27-35	32 (Hold)	All hold and rock out			
8	35-38	16 (move)	A. Sax, T. Sax, Melli and Low brass transition to melody front and center	1/3flags with T. Sax and Low brass	Move 16	Battery hold for pulse?
9	39-43	16 (move)	A. Sax, T. Sax, Melli and Low brass on melody hold front and center all others move	Rest of flags transition to next set to hold	Hold	Hold for pulse
10	43-53	40 (hold)	Loud form	All flags hold	Hold	Hold for pulse
11	53-55	12 (move)	Unison move forward		Move 12	
12	56-end	9 (Hold)	Unison Hold			
PART 2 - Bang, Bang						
Quarter Note = 152 BPM						
Set #	Meas #	# of Counts	Winds	Guard	Dance Line	Battery
2	1-9	1	Move to unified form side 2	Transition 5 flags to guns to focus and feature	Transition to focus 8 behind the pit on the 50 and feature	Move to unified form behind dance. Can be straight line
15	10-17	32 (move)	Move to unified form side 2	Transition to focus and feature, guns in front of pit	Transition to focus 8 behind the pit on the 50 and feature	Move to unified form behind dance. Can be straight line
16	18-25	Hold (32)	Hold	Hold	Hold	Hold
17	26-33	32 counts winds and guard hold	Hold	Hold	Dance moves to form a circle around the drumline. Dance and drums interact??	Battery moves into the dance line circle. Dance and drums interact??
18	34-41	32 (hold)	Hold and dance	Hold	Hold	Hold
17	42-50	36 (battery and dance move)	Ripples or dosie dos and transition to a wail set formation	choreography with dance	Transition to straight kick line	Moves behind Dance kick line
18	51-69	72 (hold to end)	Wail to the end	perform to the end	KICK Line to the end	Wail to the end

Plan EVERYTHING

- Drill movements
- Effect points
- Story line
- Costumes/ Costume Changes
- Guard Equipment Changes
- All musical phrases must support to visual phrases and vice versa
- Create samples in notation and drill design software

Staging

- General Rule...
 - Whenever there is a melody, there needs to be visual representation and/or color guard support
- Who is playing the primary line and can they be seen and heard?
- Percussion – Keep them in the pulse area for support and rhythmic clarity

Is It OK to Stand Still?

■ Smart Staging

- Not every element of the band has to move or stand still on every count.
- *Judicious use of motion/non-motion* can be very effective.
- Body can enhance the total musical performance and sometimes offer more effect

When to revise and/or change the show

THE DO'S AND THE DON'TS

THE DO's



- Change parts of the show because you believe that there is a design flaw or it is just not working.
- Let the Band Director and staff assess and decide what needs to be changed, not the judges
- “Water” a musical or visual passage when you are confident that it is well beyond the student’s achievement level
- Change things (including rehearsal routine) just to make things different
- Make a list of changes and decide when you will implement them (Off weeks are perfect for inserting changes)

THE DON'Ts



- Don't change the show because one judge or adjudicator does not like it. The judges are not the rule!
- Don't put all of your changes in one day
- Don't change things the day of a performance
- Don't rehearse your change once or twice only (remember the students have been performing this most likely for several weeks or months - HABITS ARE HARD TO BREAK!)

When is the show finished?

- This depends on the deadlines and benchmarks that you have set throughout the season
- Consult your educational checklist to see if you have taught what you intended on teaching
- The “Sliding Scale” - The concept that states that as your band improves the standard is constantly raised
- Have a Mid-Season staff meeting when you feel as if the show is learned

Review the show with a video and watch with a critical eye, stopping and starting the video to discuss controversial moments of the show and then create a “Hit List” of items to work on

Helpful Hints for the Season

Rehearsal Planning & Logistical Concerns

- Rehearse over the summer (Weekly rehearsals, or monthly) it will keep the kids playing and interested
- Be organized and insist on your staff and students to be as well
- Require all staff and students to have binders with sheet protectors (for music & drill pages) and dot books
- Give your students numerous opportunities to perform prior to their 1st competition

Rehearsal Issues

- Always work on physical conditioning (cardio) and breathing
- Keep rehearsals moving with little down time
- Keep on field talking to a minimum-Develop a system for when the students can talk
- Stay on schedule as much as possible
- Divide rehearsals into 1 / 3's
 - Sectionals • Visual • Musical / Full Ensemble

Top 5 Design Tips

1. Know your ensemble and it's goals
2. Identify your "A" team performers and design around them
3. Plan and create a blueprint
4. Integrate
5. Communicate

Frequently Asked Questions

- How much should you rehearse?
 - 10-12 hours per week
- How much money should you spend on marching band?
 - Approximately - \$250-\$375 per student for a competitive marching band – not including travel, lodging, meals, etc.
 - \$200-300 per student for designers and staff
 - \$50-75 per student for equipment
- Where do you find staff?
 - Local universities, former students, drum corps, put a search on the marching band/drum corps newsgroup on the internet
- When should you begin?
 - Prior to the end of school with summer rehearsals and band camp
- Our show is very difficult. Why are we not receiving the credit that we deserve?
 - Achievement is the product of two elements that occur simultaneously:
 - **Content**, which is what is being performed, and **Performance**, which is how well it is being performed (What + How = Achievement). Since neither content nor performance exists in isolation, the evaluation of achievement must contain a simultaneous examination of both elements. Content is recognizable at almost every level of performance and should be numerically rewarded to the degree that it is performed.

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Final Questions to Ask Yourself

1. What is the show's concept/objective?
2. What will the audience feel when the show is performed?
3. Field test the program....ask students, colleagues, staff, designers, their opinion and thoughts....

Roundtable Discussion & Questions



MARCHING BAND

GOOD LUCK & THANK YOU!!!

Contact Information:

Mark Lortz, Director of Bands

Stevenson University

mlortz@stevenson.edu