

MUSIC

General effect per Ward Durrett is communication. You must give your students the tools to be able to communicate with audience.

You determine what communication is – not always eye to eye –

Marion Catholic this year – no faces – Avon 2009 – masks

Select music that your students can play and play well. Continue to teach them to play.

If purchased – buy music arranging program used by your vendor so you can make changes

eg. chord inversions, rhythms, reduce thickness in low voices, etc

Music should provide impact every 45 to 60 seconds

or an extended atmosphere (intrigue, joy, tension) leading up to an impact

Drum books are overwritten

Melodic percussion is underwritten

This is a watching activity, not a listening activity

there is too much distance between performers

there are too many variables – wind, temperature, traffic, planes, trains, warm-up bleed thru

if students are accustomed to not watching they will not watch during percussion tacit moments

never listen forward!!! Pit does not exist.

If students are not watching they are not engaged with (communicating) to an entity at the front of the stage (toward the audience)

Bells front or center – no band in CO really brings the sound – most use a bells front concept

center focuses the sound (communication) on the center where most of the audience sits

center allows students to watch Drum Major

center allows students to show faces (communication) to audience

center forces students in back and sides to be more engaged in process

center keeps winds from blowing into the back of other performers (like a mute)

The big boys almost always use center focus even indoors where the sound will always reach you

Bands are not big enough to face backfield and create enough sound and there is nothing to bounce the sound off of (until state contest – will you qualify?)

VISUAL

No split focus – with rare and careful exceptions of two focus points (foci)

What causes focus – sound, movement, color

movement – velocity, distance, density, and quantity

Try to match all three elements

Guard controls a lot of focus and must be placed according to desired focus with two special words in mind at all times (these words are on the judges sheets)

INTEGRATED COMPLIMENTARY

Most CO guards are small (probably even too small) and must be staged and used carefully

do not split guard – makes a guard of 12 look like a guard of 6 and splits focus (movement and color)

do not stack guard – makes a guard look ½ the size (unless they are close to front and a feature or on a side)

do attempt to place guard where sound is as much as possible – general area

full ensemble, soli, brass, WW, etc

guards should be able to travel 10 yards in 8 counts – they do not even need to be in step at all times

this helps with placement to support focus of sound – they can move through winds (not always around)

GUARD EQUIPMENT

Do not use sabers

they are not visible enough and tough technique – takes a large group to make an impact

Write to your strengths

if your guard is less than about 15 members do not use weapons unless all can do weapons very well

you just cannot leave 10 flags or less and expect to create any focus or impact (if you have options)

if you can't put out at least 5 very good rifles, don't use any (using less tells us the guard is not trained yet)

(if they are not good tells us they are not trained well – continue training in winter & summer program)

if you use rifles try using small rifles (35" or less – make your own?)

try using shorter poles and maybe even smaller flags

bands are small so the visual will be fine

GUARD BOOK

Sole purpose of guard is to support the musical book – nothing more – difficulty is not rewarded!!

support of the musical and visual book is rewarded

Guard should not try to fill every count

hide the color at times

hide the guard during movement transitions

make the transitions as short as possible

make arrival points just in time – not several counts in advance

make use of solo performers when the opportunity is correct and the performer is quality

Work should reflect the music

size, velocity, & quantity reflect volume, intensity, impact, climax, etc

find accents that might be interpreted – use the feeling of weight (heavy flags) for emphasis

soft phrases should be reflected by reduced size and velocity or quantity of performers

legato phrases should not have staccato movements

Attempt to add body work to book

DEMAND communication from your guard – practice the communication aspect of performance with them

EQUIPMENT CHANGES

REMEMBER – MOVEMENT CREATES FOCUS

Unless the band is large do not make changes on sides

If shields have to be used to hide changes they are not planned well enough and will still cause focus problems

If band is small it is extremely hard to hide equipment changes

so.... is it worth it?

With small bands and small guards a change usually leaves the end of a production with no visual support from guard but it does create bad movement (focus) – and the end of most productions is an impact (conclusion of a thought)

so.... is it worth it?

Why even try

Broken Arrow Aqua 1 equipment change 1st

several changes? Broken Arrow Destiny 1 equipment change 1st

L.D. Bell Ascension I & III 1 equipment change 2nd & 1st

make it worth it if you make an equipment change

DRILL

Start with thoughts for guard first – not last

Write drill around guard knowing the impact moments, the quiet times for guard, the feature moments, the integrated moments, the complimentary moments, and any possible equipment changes

Drill can create paths for guard to move from one form to another for musical support especially when you need them to move from front to back or integrated, etc

Drill should never create dual focus

If you are buying your drill purchase a copy of PyWare so you can make changes and get accurate coordinates to you students

Learn to use it – maybe next year you can write your own drill

Richard Hinshaw at Avon

WHAT CAN YOU CONTROL

You must be the Program Coordinator

It's your money -- you are paying the creative team

Do your study and lay out a plan for your music writer with specific impact points

make sure they know your students' strengths and weaknesses so they can write for the strengths and hide the weaknesses – just enough challenge to make learning continue – Steve Vento and Union

Do your study and create a plan for your drill writer with specific instructions for your vision – guard placement first, percussion priorities (if they exist), possible equipment changes, impacts, pathways to move guard, integrated or complimentary moments, do not accept split focus or plan to rewrite yourself and start looking for a new drill writer

You may not be able to implement the guard work but you should have a vision of what you want to happen

Tell your guard person and guide them through the count structure with specific desires (including movement, body work, tacits, possible equipment changes, impacts, guard feature times, etc)

Be sure your guard person knows why the guard exists – try to get them to see the whole picture

Communicate to your percussion tech what you want. Create the book like you will be indoors. Less is more!!

create more support and impact from pit – try to make it larger and more important

use suspended cymbals to create musical effect – crescendos, impacts, etc

many groups are not using timpani any more

Do not hesitate to hose music, percussion, or guard parts that are too demanding, thick, loud, or just plain not achievable

DRUM MAJOR

Choose and train your drum major carefully

This is a watching activity and the drum major must be in charge with a great posture, bearing, pattern, and internal pulse (even if they are following the feet of the center snare)

Study great field conductors from BOA bands and find a style you want to use

Little to no cost is needed to implement these thoughts and considerations

I made notes after each show I saw last fall and this is generally what I came up with. It is all over the map and I apologize for that. Send me an email if you have questions.

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