Process Improvement in the Scholastic Pageantry Arts

Kent Philip Baker
Dumfries, VA

These thoughts are in response to a request for input concerning the state of teaching, design, programming and performance in today's realm of the pageantry arts in Virginia. This is an important discussion. We are all accountable to the level of education within our Commonwealth, level of programming that elevates our collective activity, and the process by which we all move forward. I thank the committee for including more voices in the discussion. The chapters in this paper are as follows:

Chapter 1:

The Modern Student:
Our Role in Adapting to Students Behavior and Response

I encourage everyone to surround yourself with the best and brightest people you know. I have colleagues with whom I talk often about the process of writing, training, and motivating, including author David Knowlton, professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Austin Greene, former visual caption head for The Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps; and Keith Baker, DCI/WGI judge. We often talk about how students learn and our ability to communicate information to them while also motivating them. We find that classroom teachers are particularly at risk for process stagnation. This can be because our methods, teaching tools, or freedom of curriculum have become limited by budget, time, or administration.

Concerns of the Modern Student

- Attention span is sporadic and frequently shorter in duration
- Retention and comprehension of verbal instruction has declined
- Application of direction is inconsistent requiring greater repetition
- Retention from rehearsal to rehearsal is down some, and requires greater repetition
- Greater complexity and skill differential exists for today's students and technicians

It is true that contemporary students are different than students in previous generations. Their learning styles and preferences are influenced by factors that include: instructional culture, technology impact, peer relationships, quantity/quality of competing activities, and quality of instruction.

We should not, however, perceive the students to be "deficient" in any way because they differ from previous generations; they are simply different. The onus of response lies in the instructional methods of the staff rather than in a remediation of students.

Some issues to consider before addressing the primary points are:

- What kind of attention do students bring to rehearsal and performance?
- What kind of commitment do the students have?
- What is the context of communication between the instructor and student?
- What cultural factors have an effect on instructional effectiveness?

These concerns are focused on student engagement; do the students come to rehearsal ready to learn with a commitment to sustain receptive attention?

Instructional Culture

You should read a book titled *From Entitlement to Engagement: Affirming Millennial Student's Egos in the Higher Education Classroom*[1]. This has been a fantastic experience in reconsidering my classroom/rehearsal methods in light of both a changing educational culture and a changing culture of the students we serve. The context in which I have developed new teaching goals is predicated on developing student engagement. My brother and I, somewhat comically, refer to ourselves as "edutainers," by which we mean that we recognize that this current generation of student requires both information and entertainment in varying quantities. Their attention and commitment to a process or discussion is in direct proportion to their ability to be either (or both) entertained and informed. They will not likely learn as we learned, by rote absorption of information.

This may be best explained in the following cha

[1] Kevin Hagopian and David S. Knowlton, *From Entitlement to Engagement: Affirming Millennial Student's Egos in the Higher Education Classroom*, (Jossey-Bass, 2013).

Attention/ Commitment	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	Explanation
High Attention/ High Commitment	ENGAGEMENT	The student associates the task with a result or product that has meaning and value for the student. The student will persist in the face of difficulty and will learn at high/profound levels.
High Attention/ Low Commitment	STRATEGIC COMPLIANCE	The task has little inherent or direct value to the student, but the student associates it with outcomes or results that do have value to the student (such as grades). Students will abandon work if extrinsic goals are not realized and will not retain what is learned.
Low Attention/ Low Commitment	RITUAL COMPLIANCE	The student is willing to expend whatever effort if needed to avoid negative consequences. The emphasis is on meeting the minimum requirements. The student will learn at low/superficial levels.
No Attention/ Low Commitment	RETREATISM RETRENCHMENT	The student is disengaged from the task and does not attempt to comply with its demands, but does not try to disrupt the work or substitute other activities for it. The student does not participate and learns little/nothing from the task.
Diverted Attention/ No Commitment	REBELLION	The student refuses to do the work and acts in ways to disrupt others or substitutes tasks and activities to which he or she is committed. Student develops poor work and sometimes negative attitudes toward formal education and intellectual tasks. I should note that a student who has a High attention and No commitment will fall into the category Abandonment. That student will leave the activity.
High Attention/ No Commitment	ABANDONMENT	The student will leave the activity.

I am tempted to recast the above categories as Realizing, Reacting, Resignation, Retrenchment, and Resentment.

The kind of thinking that is embodied in the chart leads me to see that through much of my formal teaching career (from classroom, to private lessons, to pageantry rehearsals) students have accepted the Ritual Compliance model, in which a teacher and students engage in a social contract in which the

teacher is allowed to "get through the material" while the students "behave." The behavioral norms contained in this social contract are passive; therefore, the education is also passive; receptive rather than active or discovered. There is a very academic article on the internet called *When Is a Good Day Teaching a Bad Thing* [2], describing the social contract between instructor and student suggesting that a perfectly quiet receptive class is NOT what you want as a teacher. Yes, we want students quiet in rehearsals, but we NEED for them to be engaged as well.

Technology Impact

Students today can be engaged, but technology allows them to engage material of their choosing. The challenge for instructors is creating an environment in which the students choose to be engaged. It's the concept of choice that is often missing from the paradigm. If my show choice is unappealing and inaccessible to the students, then they will fail to develop meaningful connections to the show itself. Does this mean that instructors must pander to student preferences? Not necessarily, but an awareness of the partnership involving both staff and students is necessary. They have more options today than they did twenty years ago. Make your option as appealing as internet cats, video games, and community activism.

Technology also allows students to be responsive. From Snapchat to Facebook to simple texting, the primary method of interaction is the "reply." It should come as no surprise that students learn best and accept the most from an environment in which they have the opportunity to respond and a staff that convinces them that their responses are meaningful. This is an instructor problem, not a student problem. The recognition of contemporary culture gives the staff members the choice to:

1. Use students' incorrect assumptions to stimulate discussions that resemble an organic dialogue rather than a "right answer" conclusion.
2. Use students' assumptions to stimulate discussions that invoke an orientation reflex in which students self-discover new ways of thinking and tear down their own walls of predetermined thought.[3]
3. Encourage self-revelation through a narrative pedagogy that allows students to synthesize their own experiences in to the show content; to create context and meaning for them in the instructional process.
4. Accept unique understandings of social theory that may deviate from our own norms.
5. Promote depth in student thought.
6. Craft relational context through external encounters; develop relationships in which I am "significant in a student's life."
7. Rely on Pedagogical Authority rather than Formal Authority.
8. Fact check the lessons.
9. Reduce overregulation in formal moments, documentary interaction, group rules, and personal encounters.
10. Remove and reduce rituals of institutional order that stifle engagement while retaining values of civility; this one is huge…it also helps establish trust.
11. Be comfortable with criticism.
12. Be comfortable with not knowing everything related to my discipline.
13. Treat students with respect that befits their status as both consumer and customer.

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[2] Slater, Timothy, *When is Good Teaching a Bad Thing*, sites.utexas.edu http://sites.utexas.edu/utes_educatorresources/files/2012/12/When-is-Good-Teaching-a-Bad-Thing2.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

[3] Kevin Hagopian and David S. Knowlton, *From Entitlement to Engagement: Affirming Millennial Student's Egos in the Higher Education Classroom*, (Jossey-Bass, 2013), 45.

14. Recognize the ensemble as a microcosm of the campus social sphere; recognize that the students bring legitimate issues relating to their own social behavior into the classroom each day (see Spinoza).
15. Manage classroom discipline without the need for Administrative assistance; not give up on our staff-student relationships.
16. Inject humor into the momentary experience in an organic manner.
17. Allow space for student participation.
18. Allow students to have some measure of influence over their own experience.

Ultimately, we have to become better instructors, communicators, and treat the authority invested in us as a responsibility rather than a right.

Attention Span

Student retention is stronger when the students are attentive to instruction the first time. Research demonstrates that our attention span declines over time during the repeated application of the same task (a one-hour history class, let's run counts 8-32 again…). An instructor might alleviate this concern by switching focus and attention to a new skill or project every 10-20 minutes (other research says 20 minutes is optimum.) Previous generations solved this problem with threats of negative consequences or appeals from a position of formal authority.

This instructional response requires planning and preparation. Too often I have seen an instructor who knows what they want to teach (tonight we're going to learn the woodwind feature…) without a plan of implementation. The potential problem occurs when the instructional plan is not developed before rehearsal that allows different skills and materials to vary over time in a manner consistent with the attention span limitations of the performers.

In other words, we need to hit the reset button once in a while.

Confirmation Bias

The vast majority of our adjudication community has experience as performers and instructors. We have also seen an enviable amount of success. Those who fail do not often continue to pursue this path. As experienced, successful members of our community we have memories of the best instructional experiences against which to compare the standards we find in programs we visit and teach, and for whom we design.

Our best experiences loom large for us and prejudice our current experiences. We know we've seen this done better and have been a part of better experiences. Our inevitable conclusions are that these students are deficient compared to the students in our memory. Our ego is then safe, knowing that the problem lies in others rather than in us.

This is a self-destructive pattern of thought that ignores the reality that our current position as instructor, adjudicator, designer, or director is a product of that mountain top experience against which we measure the present. The mountain top experience is pursued so that we might relive the past, and failure to do so leads us to search for causes outside ourselves.

A better approach is to see each rehearsal and performance as a mountain top experience. Find the good in each hour and talk about it, recognize it, and share it with others. In this way we can craft the kind of mountain top experiences that make others stay in this activity for a lifetime.

Complexity/Skill Differential

My sister-in-law recently asked me to watch the WGI from 1980, suggesting that I needed to remind myself of what I once knew. Two major revelations occurred. The first is that in the past, accuracy in visual performance was exceptional. The second is that our activity incorporates a wider spectrum of complexity today than ever before.

There is a competitive class for every skill level from the local circuits' Novice/Cadet/Regional A Class to WGI's Independent World. The instructors of these units tend to be those who, as mentioned above, have experienced success in the past. They are skilled professional performers who have received excellent instruction and executed high-order evolutions with stunning accuracy. From this lofty point they teach a Scholastic Regional A guard or freshman band with a limited budget, limited departmental support, and limited student participation. The perception of "what this should be" does not match the reality of "what this is." The students these skilled professionals teach are beginners without balance, poise, skill, prior knowledge, and most importantly, experiance. The transition from "what was" to "what is" can create a cognitive dissonance in the instructors' perception.

The instructional community in the pageantry arts is trained to the highest degree of any community with which I have ever been involved. I am in awe each season by what is written, taught, and performed. The transition from performer to instructor, however, is problematic in that the skills of learning, listening, and performing are distinct and separate from the skills of rehearsal time management, differentiating formal and pedagogical authority, and instruction to large groups in a gym/on a field. Great performers are not necessarily great teachers.

We see this happen in college classrooms all too frequently when professional students receive their PhD and make the transition to their professorial role, where they find out that they lack the skills to communicate to students. The teacher has dealt only with peers and superiors for their entire academic career, never developing skills dealing with subordinate learners. We find that the same dynamic applies to all pageantry arts. A remedy lies in giving performers guidance and delegation in teaching others. Finalist performers could (and should) be engaged in helping Regional performers develop skills under the tutelage of a more seasoned instructor. Without teaching preparation, skill development does not complete the job of preparing future instructors.

Chapter 2:

The Seven Signifiers:
How to Create/Invent the Talented Student

Within the topic of student engagement, attitude, and attention span is the suggestion that the students themselves might be the problem that stand between the instructors' intent and group success. While that is inevitably true in some instances, the responsibility to craft a solution lies with the staff. It always has, and it always will.

How, then, can a unit's staff create an environment in which student success is more likely to occur? The end result, after all, is the development and demonstration of skill consistent with the criteria. I use the following philosophy of growth and ability in some schools' leadership development program that prepares student leaders for camp. Perhaps you have a similar system of motivation and maturation.

Our Western culture is, to some degree, bipolar when addressing the idea of talent and genius. Americans, as a society, believe that anyone, from anywhere, can rise to their highest potential. The possibility to earn riches, talent, ability, and fame are denied to none of us, if we work hard enough. But history tells us that there are a select few for whom greatness is a birthright, the story of hereditary kings (Carolingians, Roman Emperors, British Monarchs) and modern familial dynasties (Bush, Clinton, Kennedy). Greats such as Michael Jordan, Henry Ford, Ludwig von Beethoven and countless others achieved greatness that, to our hindsight, appears predestined. They had no equal in their time.

Which is true; talent and genius are a gift to a small few, or anyone can rise to greatness through effort? Is the path to greatness within us all? Let's examine the following seven signifiers for greatness:

IQ • Size • Talent • Effort • Time • Opportunity • Imagination

1. Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

We believe that the greater one's IQ, the greater their chances of success in life. It is a cultural assumption that the higher the IQ, the more likely that scientists will win Nobel Prizes, or business people go from rags to riches, or that authors write bestsellers. A tremendous amount of research has been done regarding the scientific correlation between IQ and real-life success, and a very different picture emerges.

IQ and success are related, to a point. Someone with an IQ of 150 (Genius) will do better in life than someone with an IQ of 80 (Idiot). Similarly, a person with an IQ of 130 (Near Genius) will have the upper hand when compared to a person with an IQ of 100 (Average). But here's the catch; the relationship between IQ and success follows the law of diminishing returns.

That is, when you compare two people of relatively high IQs, you can no longer predict success by IQ alone. A scientist with an IQ of 130 is just as likely to rise to the top of his discipline as one with an IQ of 180. You only have to be smart *enough* to fulfil the intellectual requirements for success. History's greatest achievers, while they stand alongside some true geniuses, were often just smart enough. The skills that are required for today's students to participate at a high level in the pageantry arts are easily managed. Every one of your students is smart enough. To find the real keys to success, other signifiers must be taken into account.

2. Size

Dr. Liam Hudson, a British psychologist that headed up Cambridge University's Research Unit of Intellectual Development in the 1960's, compared the IQ law of diminishing returns to basketball. If you're 5'5", your prospects of becoming an NBA bench-warmer are slim to none. The fact is, if you're less than 6' tall, you can pretty much forget about a hoops career. Statistical data shows that you have to be at least 6' tall to be allowed on the ride, and each inch you push over that increases the statistical rise on the bell curve towards greatness. However, there comes a point when height just doesn't matter anymore. Just because someone is 7' tall doesn't mean that they are a better player than someone who is 6'6" (Michael Jordan's height). Size, when considering the carriage of a marching bass drum or a sousaphone, does have a limit to success. But in this activity, we have positions where size is immaterial (front ensemble, drum major). The point is, you only have to be big *enough* to have a shot at greatness. And as designers and trainers, WE determine how height plays a role in the vocabulary.

3. Talent

In The Odyssey, it is said, "Call in the inspired bard, Demodocus. God has given the man the gift of song."[4] That is just one of the many "God-given" gifts represented by Homer in his prose. Since its writing, we have decoded human DNA and discovered our place in the universe, but we still marvel at the abilities of the talented in the same way as the ancient Greeks. Whether we listen to a sonata by Beethoven, or watch the great Ted Williams hit a baseball, we are amazed by their ability, consistent greatness, and innate talent. The word "talent" is a convenient label, but is it correct?

Behavioral scientists have studied the question through focused research on the talented of all types: business leaders, chess players, swimmers, surgeons, pilots, musicians, and writers. These findings defy the label in its entirety. They disprove, time and again, the notion that great performance stems primarily from a natural gift or "talent." While some people display an innate ability for certain activities early on, amazingly average people have become champions in all manner of endeavors. Many such top performers overcame their average, or below-average, intellects or non-existent aptitudes to develop outstanding abilities in all manner of disciplines. Historical examples include Henry Ford, who failed in business repeatedly, and who was destitute, literally penniless, five times before he created the Ford Motor Company's business model. In his youth, Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was "too stupid to learn anything." Beethoven was so awkward on the violin that his teachers believed him to be hopeless as a musician. Michael Jordan was cut from his sophomore basketball team, and deemed too short and average to play competitively. Stan Smith, who won 8 Davis Cups, the U.S. Open, and Wimbledon, was rejected for the position of ball boy because he was seen as too clumsy and uncoordinated.

Each of us has a story of those students who seemed beyond help at their first camp; whether through disabilities or disinterest, these students represent challenges, not obstacles, to personal, educational, and institutional success. It is my greatest joy that many of those students have BOA Class Champion medals, Finalist Patches, or videos of their performances on which they can reflect when a challenge is presented to them over the course of their lives.

While these findings seem unintuitive, there is a common thread through all their stories; each one studied/practiced/strived so hard, so intensely, that it hurt. Effort was the key.

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[4] Lennon, Mallory, *Homer: The Odyssey Overview, Books 8-10*, prezi.com. https://prezi.com/9ujud0n5y6vf/the-odyssey-overview (accessed September 18, 2016).

4. Effort

Ted Williams, the baseball legend considered the most "talented" hitter of his time, was believed to have natural gifts far beyond the ordinary professionals, including eagle-like vision, extraordinary hand-eye coordination, and uncanny hitter instincts. Williams later said that such stories were "a lot of bull." He had a more realistic explanation. At the age of 7, he dedicated his entire life to one task: hitting a round baseball with a round bat squarely, as perfectly as possible.

He spent every free minute at San Diego's old North Park field hitting balls, every day, year after year. His friends recall finding him on that field smashing balls with the outer shells completely beaten off, with a splintered bat in his blistered hands. He would spend his lunch money to hire other kids to shag balls so he could hit as many as possible every day. When the city turned off the field's lights, he would go home and swing with a rolled up newspaper in the mirror until bedtime. That obsession continued throughout his entire professional career, and it's no surprise that he excelled because of his effort. For "The Kid," as he was known, greatness was a grueling process, not a gift of nature, a claim he found insulting.

Today's students are time-splintered, with helicopter parents that shuttle them between band, soccer, piano lessons, and karate. While that is their right, it is a loss for the world that we might never know the next Hank Aaron or James Galway because a child simply cannot put the time into a single endeavor.

5. Time

Studies of people with extraordinary success like Ted Williams have given rise to what Swedish psychologist Dr. K. Anders Ericsson called the "10,000-hour rule." The exact number of hours is a source of contention, but for our purposes, we'll call it that. The premise is that, regardless of innate aptitude for an activity, mastery of it takes around 10,000 hours of focused, intentional practice. Analyzing the genius of people in a wide range of intellectual, artistic, and athletic pursuits confirms this concept. From Amadeus Mozart to Bobby Fischer to Bill Gates to the Beatles, their diverse journeys from nothing towards excellence in their respective fields shared a common denominator; the accumulation of 10,000 hours of unwavering "exercise" of their craft.

To put that into perspective, if you practiced an activity 4 hours per day, 7 days a week, it would take you about 7 years to reach 10,000 hours. That kind of dedication comes from the heart, with a true passion for that activity. Ted Williams almost certainly achieved his 10,000 hours before the age of 12. Middle schoolers who begin playing an instrument in 6th grade could achieve that goal by their senior year, and some do. North Texas' One O'clock Lab Band and the Tokyo Kosei Wind Ensemble are just some examples of ensembles full of students who have put in that much time, with that much effort, who are tall enough, smart enough, and we call it "talent."

What does this tell us? First, that, once again, America was right. The seeds of greatness exist in every human being. Whether it sprouts or not is our choice. Second, there is no such thing as natural-born overachievers. There are simply people living up to their full and true potential. What is generally recognized as "greatness" is nothing more than an outward manifestation of an unwavering dedication to a **process**.

Thus, the advice of working towards 10,000 hours of focused activity sounds reasonable. But there's a problem...there are millions of people who work incredibly hard for a lifetime with little to show for it. Is 10,000 hours too simplistic a prescription for greatness? Yes. It overlooks another aspect of greatness that can't be ignored: opportunity. Opportunity is a condition that often appears to be plain, old dumb luck.

6. Opportunity

As Malcolm Gladwell explains in "Outliers," opportunities that arise are just as important to success as one's own effort and time. For instance, if your dream is to become a professional athlete, it is quite possible you won't be able to overcome the most devious obstacle: your birthday.

Sports organizations for youth recognize cut-off dates that determine the age group in which you will play. If you were born in December, and the cut-off date is November, you will perpetually be playing with older (only by months, but it matters), and bigger players. If you were born in July and the cut-off date is June, you will perpetually be playing with younger and smaller players. Sociologists call this phenomenon an "accumulative advantage." The result is that the distribution of birthdays determines success, to a large part. This perpetual incremental advantage multiplies as the years go on. Success leads to play with better coaches and trainers, and leads to play against better teams, with more exposure to quality.

Whether we're talking about birthdays in sports, or the fact that Bill Gates just happened to attend a high school that housed one of the most advanced computers of his time (a computer that most colleges didn't have), we can easily see that being in the right place at the right time can influence our destinies as much as anything else.

That is not to say that our destinies are written in the stars, quite the opposite. When made aware of how birthdays or schools affect success, we can all manipulate these probabilities in our favor. Parents can live in districts with better schools. Enroll in activities with cut-off dates that strengthen your opportunities. And we still control our dedication to hours of study, training, and work. Most opportunities don't announce themselves with a fanfare. They can easily be mistaken or squandered. Opportunities are whispers, not shouts, and opportunity very often looks like hard work.

7. Imagination

But why do some people recognize, appreciate, and create opportunity while others don't? The answer leads us to the one aspect of greatness that can't be earned easily: **Imagination**.

Psychologist Dr. Alfred Barrios conducted research into the nature of genius in the 1970s. He set out to answer the question of what makes a genius...why do some people rise to greatness while other, equally average people, don't. To look for the answer, he analyzed the lives of history's greatest geniuses. He looked for patterns of circumstance, events, behaviors, attitudes, and ideas. First, he identified and categorized a long list of factors outside the geniuses' control; lineage, birthright, geography, genetics, education, upbringing, and familial ties. The more data he accumulated, the more he realized that there were no connections. He was undeterred, and continued to discern the nature of their character. The character-driven idea fascinated Barrios. It suggested that genius is more than IQ, size, talent, effort, time, and opportunity. The characteristic he arrived at that connected all these historical geniuses was imagination. They had the ability to imagine greater achievements that their predecessors, and accept no barrier to their imagined goal. Today, we might call them futurists. They can see a goal, or objective, and they create a path to that goal.

Today, we recognize that dynamic for what it is: pattern recognition. Some can see a baseball team play and recognize the shift, the pitch count, the left-right handed pitching strategy, and duality of speed and power in a line-up. Others just see men on grass. Insight into design must be presaged by purposeful study into design at the highest levels, and that study can only come through exposure.

Do band directors today expose themselves and their students to the best this activity has to offer? Do your students know who Tarpon Springs, Carmel, Avon, and Flower Mound are? Do they see the best

winter guards, drum lines and concert bands? Nothing is achieved in a vacuum. Exposure to quality is paramount to success and growth. Growth need not be over-night. It should be incremental.

We must see the world as we want, or need, it to be, not accept it as it is, and we should dream big.

A great modern example is the 2012 British Gold-Medalist Cycling Team [5]. **Incrementalism** is the idea if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by 1%, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together. And this increase is exponential if it continues. They improved miniscule parts of training, from the pillows they slept on to the quality of the cabbage they ate. They imagined a path to greatness that had not been there before, and acted on the opportunity through imagination.

To what degree do you as a designer/director/trainer change your process over time? Find the best, and examine their process. I am grateful for the opportunity to run the warm-up area at the Bands of America Grand National Championship for several years. The ability to watch the best of the best in their process over the course of three days was not just inspiring, it was truly educational. Exposure is a path to imagination.

Summation - The Seven Signifiers

IQ - Be smart "enough" for your endeavor, and your students *are* smart enough
Size - Be big "enough" for your endeavor, and your students *are* big enough
Talent - Is a product of Effort and Time, which the students and teachers control
Effort - Consistent, incremental improvements with passionate practice and rehearsal
Time - 10,000 hours over the course of years
Opportunity - Must be manipulated to appear, and recognized when it does appear
Imagination – Have a plan, a process, an idea, and a goal, and expose yourself and students to art

We all face a fundamental choice in our lives, every day. Do we take the path prescribed by our "now you're supposed to" society, or do we take our own path towards a life in which we imagine greater things, perform greater works, or create on a higher level? Do we choose our life's work based on the U.S. Department of Labor's list of the highest-paying jobs, or do we follow what makes us happy and what holds our interest? The mythologist Joseph Campbell once said, "People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive."[6] Our choices are between a life in which stability and security are paramount, and a life we invent with our own hands and our own minds. Risk in inherent in any system, but the path to greatness lies within our abilities, and within our imagination to achieve it.

Conclusion

While it is true that cultures change, students change, and the requirements of group instruction are, therefore, also in flux over time, the same responsibilities are present within the instructional process that have always been there. Students may be the same everywhere, but each individual student is changing; they are experiencing the greatest change of their lives in their own biology while under your care. You must be their fixed point; a point of stability, surety, and confidence. They must know that your plan is solid and profitable. Your forethought, planning, preparation, and a sufficient amount of staff and time are all essential to manage today's more complex design and skills. The adjudication process cannot (and should not) take into account the difficulties that are normative for this activity. These challenges are the same as they have always been, and they should be seen as growth opportunities for both staff and students.

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[5] Clear, James, *This Coach Improved Every Tiny Thing by 1 Percent and Here's What Happened*, jamesclear.com. http://jamesclear.com/marginal-gains (accessed September 14, 2016).
[6] Campbell, Joseph, *The Power of Myth*, with Bill Moyer (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 2011), 4-5.

Questions for teachers and students:

1. In what part of this process are instructors/directors involved?

2. What parts of rehearsal/process can be improved through incrementalism?

3. What part of the seven signifiers can you improve NOW?

4. How can we improve our use of TIME?

5. How are we, as a staff, manipulating OPPORTUNITY?

6. Who controls EFFORT? How can we improve THAT signifier through incrementalism?

7. How does money play a role in the signifiers' paradigm?

8. Should we keep doing what we've always done? Can we expect to improve if we do?

Chapter 3

Planning, Programming, and Process: How to Lay the Foundation for Success

The value of the following lies primarily in helping to plan future programs. It approaches the modern marching activity from a judge's and designer's perspectives.

There are consequences to every design and performance, whether they be a ranking or a rating. This activity is a comparative, competitive process which ranks and/or rates your band against others. Is our primary goal one of numeric success? No; we're here to educate. The numbers are merely a rough gauge of our educational success through programming, execution, and entertainment. Here are some simple ways you probably already know to improve the writing, training, and performance of your program.

In this chapter, we'll cover:

1. The Music Captions: Sonority, Venue, and Training
2. The Visual Captions: The Judge, The Criteria, The Performance, Visual Vocabulary
3. The Show: Preference vs. Opportunity

If any items on this list are not currently the way you do business, you don't have to make a wholesale change. Incorporate one or two simple changes (hopefully in the training program) at the moment, then review what processes can benefit your band next season. A single step forward is a step in the right direction. Incrementalism is the best approach.

Let's examine how the judges view the process, the composition, and the results of your choices. It is true that many band directors are unaware of the consequences of their choices, and those choices, made early on in the planning process, often have unintended results.

1. The Music Captions

When considering the music captions in today's marching outdoor activity, we need to remember three basic principles: Sonority, Venue, and Training.

1a. Sonority

The new Bands of America philosophy of **visual** adjudication is about 20 pages long...and here is the **music** philosophy in its entirety:

"The band should display ensemble sonority throughout the program."

That is about as succinct as it could be. Sound like a band. Not a "marching band," just a band. Some pitfalls of composition often reduce success. Let's look at eight different areas that affect sonority. I will keep these very simple. After all, the music component of a marching band is very personal to a band director.

Brass - The brass should not play all the time. Expose all choirs to opportunity: Brass, Woodwinds, Battery, Front Ensemble (including electronics), and the forgotten voice, silence (the negative space of the music captions) are all important. Sound like a band. Use band instruments. Do you march trombones (please don't march all baritones)? The sound of your band is your choice, by instrumentation, staging, and composition.

Battery - The battery should serve multiple functions; 1. Create stable time, 2, Create textural variety for the band as a whole, and 3, exist as a choir to be exposed. They should not play all the time (see above). 99% of the time, they are too loud. Volume does not equate to quality. And I guarantee you, your battery arranger wrote too many notes for the bass drums.

Woodwinds - Your woodwinds are not in unison inside, why write for them in unison outside? If they are unheard, then it is possible that they have less exposure than is necessary. Maybe your brass and percussion are too loud (we'll talk about volume in the "Venue" section). When your woodwinds are exposed, write in a choir. Sound like a band. Use band instruments. Do you march flutes (please don't march all piccolos)? Do you march bass clarinets or tenor/baritone saxes? Use band instruments. The sound of your band is your choice, by instrumentation, staging, and composition.

Range - The range of your students will be stretched throughout the season as you teach a wider practical range. The range of the composition should meet the students at the top of their practical range by the middle of the season. If not, you've written too high/low. Often, bands sound too treble outside, so try not to write choir that are too thinly scored in the upper register.

The Notes – Consider the qualities of difficulty, depth, opportunity, and range of expression. Your music should be hard enough to challenge the students, but not so hard that they can never achieve a quality performance. We should be teaching major and minor keys continuously, but Carolina Crown only plays in Bb and F for a reason...a competitive reason. The judges never see your notes, your score, your key signatures...make them the good ones in the show.

Difficulty – Not all students can play all notes. Just because it's in the score doesn't mean it will be played, or well-played. If you program *Candide*, make sure there is a part for everyone. Students achieving on a drone Bb are still achieving. It's a stepping stone to greater performance. Know what each student can play, and help them succeed at their individual level. Each student playing is one more brick in your band's tonality/density.

Placement – We don't judge volume. Loud only exists as a contrast to soft. Never stage for the sake of volume. Stage your ensemble just like a concert band; woodwinds up front, brass in the middle, tubas centrally located, percussion in back for time. More on that below.

Instrumentation - Do you want your ensemble to sound like a band? Consider using the closest "band" instrumentation you can. Sousaphones sound like tubas because they ARE tubas. Shoulder-mounted tubas are "bugle" equivalents only designed for volume. Consider using trombones (a band instrument) to cut the edge of your marching baritones. Mellophones are a necessary evil, but don't make the mistake of giving your students horn mouthpieces with an adapter...it lengthens the instrument, making it horribly flat. DEG makes a good mellophone mouthpiece that simulates a thick horn rim. Trumpets should use a mouthpiece larger than a 7C. Because it's high school, and 7C is a beginner mouthpiece. They've grown out of it. Saxes are a choir. March more than just altos. Bass clarinets complete the clarinet choir...our activity is too treble by far. And the big one...flutes sound like flutes. Please limit your use of piccolo to 1 or 2. Xylophone are to be used as an effect or an articulate doubler for marimba, not a melody instrument. Marimbas and vibraphones are warm, rich instruments.

1b. Venue and Volume

This is the dangerous one: Volume. Why do we play loud? Venue is a great answer.

Everything which follows is common sense. Bands on a stage produce sonority by reflecting sound off of a wooden, plastic, or brick surface, which warms the sound as harsh overtones are stripped by the time they reach the audience. Clarinets reflect sound from a wooden floor, horns reflect sound from a back wall, and tubas and euphoniums reflect sound from the rafters. Trumpets blow across the ensemble, not directly at the audience, often playing into the stands. Woodwinds are staged in like choirs in front of the brass, with low support from bass clarinets, bassoons, and baritone sax. Percussion are buried in the acoustic mix, behind all other instruments. Everyone can hear them for time. From bands on a field, there is no reflected sound. It's all bell sound, harsh and unrefined. To compensate, our activity has often played in the upper dynamic levels to homogenize the ensemble sound, reducing the woodwinds' presence...therefore writing for them in unison. The concept of a "top band," with the assumed quality that comes from an auditioned group, does not exist in marching band. We, undeservedly, value size and the accompanying volume. In America, we value strength...college bands are pretty strong, in both size and volume. They cannot be an example of what a competitive marching band looks like, sounds like, or programs like in this day and age. The ONLY REASON TO PLAY LOUD today is for CONTRAST in dynamics. It looks like I'm yelling. Well, let's repeat it. We only play loud to display a contrast from loud to soft, to perform with a wide dynamic range. Every volume, both soft and loud, can only be played with quality in mind. Any student can play so soft that the characteristic sound of their instrument is lost; the same is true with the louder dynamics.

This is not to say bands shouldn't play loud. A stadium is a large venue...we should be fill it up from time to time. But, as with all things, moderation and variety should exist at the top of the quality range when all instruments retain their characteristic sound and the ensemble retains balance.

To sum up: yes, we can play loud in marching band, but most bands do so by sacrificing quality, balance, and blend to do it. It has no value without those characteristics. The game is simple:

Balance •Blend • Pitch • Quality of Sound
Dynamic Contrast •Uniform Articulations

1c. Training

Because we play outside, and our volume levels reach extremes on both ends, we have to train for the venue. If your students have taken the summer off, they need to get into shape. With brass and percussion, this involves muscle memory and strength training.

Percussion play a variety of exercises that mimic the vocabulary of the show to train muscle memory into the process and the same is true with scalar patterns in the keyboards. Don't undervalue the training time, the warmup time, and the metronome work that drum lines do. It's necessary.

Brass need to lift weights. If they don't play purposely to fatigue each day of camp, with increasing workloads, they won't get stronger. The best way to play high is to play high, the best way to play loud is...well, with a better air stream. A solid, yet not overly tense, embouchure backed by a full, relaxed air stream will produce great results. Tension is the enemy of a musician. Posture always matters in training and performance, for the sake of the air stream.

Warm ups should be specific to woodwinds and brass. Brass need long tones and lip slurs. Woodwinds need differing techniques. Train each group separately.

I'm not going to explore the visual training program here...too much information, but please, stretch, do cardio, train for strength and flexibility, and start incorporating dance into your basics program. The visual sheets reward marching, movement, and staging in equal parts. If you're not layering body (dancing) under or into events, you're ignoring a third of the sheets.

Spend time wisely. A full band long tone sequence, a scale, and 10 minutes of marching will not train a band. Training time is far more valuable than another rep of material they don't have the stamina or strength to perform.

A word of advice: when you hire a marching or music tech that marched drum corps, make sure they know the qualitative, quantitative, and physical differences between band and drum corps. If you don't, they'll ask things of your band that are unrealistic. Those guys know a TON of information, but some of it doesn't apply to kids who don't train for months.

Some tips on rehearsal:

1. Use a metronome in the back of the band. We take time from the battery when they are playing, so use time from the battery's perspective.
2. Rep segments for quality, rep the show for stamina. Connect segments for continuity, connect movements for pacing.
3. Rehearse with a plan. The students don't necessarily need to know the details, but they should know why they are repeating a rep. Nothing deflates students more than, "One more time."
4. Include your staff in the daily, weekly, and monthly plan.
5. You don't have to finish your show at camp. It's simply too much information packed into the time you should be training. A season is a marathon. Pace it accordingly. Learning information badly adds "un-teaching" or "re-teaching" time to your already stretched schedule.
6. This is the big one: ask for help. A band director's job is too big. Ask other directors how they solved your current problem. They've probably already been there.

2. The Visual Captions

All sheets are broken up into two parts, generally, the written book and the performance. In covering the visual captions, we'll look at both independently. But first, let's consider the judges' viewpoint, starting with Composition.

2a. The Judge (and Process)

When considering the composition in light of the Visual Captions (Visual Performance, Visual Ensemble, and General Effect), the following statements as regards judging must be given weight by the design team:

- The judge must be aware of the Qualities/Dimensionality of the composition. Therefore, design with dimensionalities and artistic qualities.
- The judge must recognize and reward the Cumulative Aspects of design. Therefore, design with quality and variety throughout the entirety of the program.
- The judge must recognize, analyze, VALUE, and compare each composition. Therefore, design with artistic merit.
- The judge must recognize the triad of Body, Movement, and Staging. Therefore, consider the triad (Body; any motion or change of limb/posture/level/orientation/body line; Movement = marching or dance that incorporates travel; Staging = geography, relationship to others, and variety of form and negative space in design, to incorporate focus, primacy, tension, release, and impact.
- In assessing compositional quality, the judge measures the "whole," then measures the writing process within the whole. The judge adjudicates through time to experience the complete show.
- The judge should make commentary on the What (the Composition) and the How (it's Excellence through performance). The two are inseparable, and should be linked in commentary.
- Effect judges "react" to the composition and the performance and respond to pacing, impact, and the effect triad (aesthetic, adrenal, intellectual), as well as the impact of the performer.
- Analysis judges deconstruct the components of the show and assess the logic, artistry, and orchestration of the composition, as well as the excellence of the performer.

There is an explicit understanding that the commentary will contain positive and negative comments for both the What and the How. Let's examine the writing process and its adjudication:

2b. The Criteria (Buzzword Bingo)

The mere existence of design elements will not ensure quality. It is the *skill* of composing, arranging and orchestrating that will denote quality. The judge should measure and credit the presence of design quality and their depth and artistry. Conversely, the fact that there are no mathematical problems does not ensure quality of composition. Logic is the beginning of art.

In the composition, *form* should be evident. It is the structural outline and the conceptualization of planned events that occur through time. The choices of what, when, where, how, and why must not only be logical, but artistic and purposeful (without irrelevance). The form should be connected to the soundtrack.

In measuring the composing process (and its resultant performance), the judge should recognize the quality of design within the parts. A program with deficiency in the triad (see above) will be at risk,

even if composed well. Be aware of "presentational" compositions (events in a fixed position, dependent on flats/props for entrances and exits). Be aware of *motion* in the development and progression of design, both between, and inside of, events.

Elements of design should be recognized and valued: line, shape, symmetry (asymmetry), dimension, texture, density, direction, speed, plane, weight, contrast, space, flow, orientation and the relationships between them. Note: these all read differently in different viewing environments (close, short vs. distant tall stadiums).

Horizontal composing is the development of events through time, from the beginning of the show to the end. Vertical composing reflects the design of each event in isolation. Both are inseparable from the other. The judge considers when, where, how, and why events occur, and how they are linked logically and artistically. Motion to connected events drives intent and is evidence of planning and forethought.

The judge should recognize the characteristics for both equipment and movement. These characteristics might be important to the music, the role, identity, recurring motifs, or used to create expressive dynamics. They lend depth and interest to the program. They are part of the planned process and reflect layering, dimensionality, and thought. Existence, placement, and choice of detailing become an aspect of quality within the composing process. Choices will be based on the audio and depth of program intent.

The judge should be aware of the importance of how motion through path and speed impacts design. In staging, this is Transition and Development. That is not to say that motion is absent from vertical events, merely that we recognize its use and value its composition between kinetic events differently. Transition moves the performers between presentational ideas. Development is the use of motion to create longer phrase events...transitions can be linked to create development. The distinction between transition and development is where we see the evolution from spatial arrangements to spatial composition. In short equipment or body moments, it is called phrasing.

Characteristic (a single design element)
Phrase (a moment of equipment or movement)
Vertical Event (a sequence of phrases, traditionally at an arrival point)
Transition (a planned moment of design, characterized by motion)
Development (linked moments of design, often through-composed or overlapping)
Horizontal Composition (the whole of the design through time)

Props become a consideration when they are on the field or manipulated by performers. They contribute to design through dimensionality, density, weight, space (texture), shape, and line.

Shapes, colors, and patterns on the field or props can, and will, impact path, space, dimensionality, and weight.

In composition, the number of performers within a design is not an issue; the imaginative and varied use of design components is always the priority. Size is immaterial to quality and artistry. LET'S REPEAT THAT: a bigger band is not necessarily a better band, although there is a great deal of data in the VBODA archives to suggest otherwise. We have to do better to value the artistic composition of smaller bands, and deliberately de-value the lazy, clunky design of some larger bands. We must do better, for the sake of transparency and integrity.

All bands, of all shapes and sizes, with all types of instrumentation, have an equal chance of success. What we as designers do with our materials determine both artistry and outcome. Often, judges without years of experience fail to recognize this dictum. Size is often rewarded, as in music, volume is

often rewarded. We must continue to have a discussion within our activity to educate all parties to the fact that "varied and imaginative use" does not come with a size restriction.

The concepts of Emphasis, Hierarchy, and Intent should be recognized. They denote a planned priority and importance in design. A list of Emphasis options appears below.

Let's examine what actually gets judged when your students perform, the excellence of their performance.

2c. The Performance (Excellence)

In Excellence, the judge compares multiple performers and recognizes:

Ensemble Control - Accuracy, clarity, and control through simultaneous effort.

Timing - Precision in unison, sequence, solo. Random events (non-unison, geographically dissimilar composition) still require timing.

Orientation - Control of direction, relation, path and relationships.

Artistic/Expressive Skills - Role, nuance, and detail, also, the ability to change space, time, weight, and flow.

Recognize and understand the Triad - (Body, Movement, and Staging). They are equal partners in design. They may be presented singly or in combination. The fusion of all three offers the best opportunities to create the most complex and challenging design options. The triad can be composed at many levels of complexity, and can challenge students in every class. The triad is not a guarantee for high credit. Its value is important for variety and interest in composition, and heightened opportunities in achievement. It adds depth and value to design and performance. The primary emphasis on the triad is to reinforce the development of skills in all three areas, and we reward designers for incorporating all three into their composition.

The following is a list of visual terms and their definitions:

2d. Visual Vocabulary (The Tools)

1. *Design* - Grouping/arrangement of the elements of a composition, including, plan, function, time, and unity.
2. *Composition* - Arrangement of forms, lines, values, and other pictorial elements.
3. *Line* - A set of markings that lead the viewer's eye through a work of art. Line is used to define shape, and its diffusion can increase or decrease performer connection, and therefor linear intent. Line can also be read through the guard's equipment and movement in all shapes and body positions.
4. *Shape* - An area defined by an enclosed line; in three dimensions they are sphere, cone, cylinder, and cube. In two dimensions, they are circle, triangle, rectangle, and square. At body level, they are pin (vertical), wall (flat), ball (round), and twist (curve). Equipment can trace these patterns in space.
5. *Balance* - A visually favorable distribution of weight through symmetry (formal balance through horizontal, vertical, diagonally, or radial) or asymmetry (informal balance).
6. *Dimension* - Designed relief from stark line and unison effort.
7. *Space* - In staging, an area used for the presentation of a design. Positive space contains elements of design; negative space is absent of elements of design.
8. *Mass* - The feel of weight, heaviness, or visual volume. This is usually achieved through thickness of line, value of form/shape, or intervallic compression.
9. *Weight* - The distribution of elements within a design. This element will impact of balance as well as on the emphasis within the design whole.
10. *Motion* - Combines design elements from static art to moving design and vocabulary. Motion forces the consideration of time, and reflects space, flow and path.
11. *Artistic Efforts* - Qualities that make an aesthetic contribution; role, effort changes, nuance, detail, and dynamic qualities.
12. *Orchestration* - The logical progression of ideas as well as the layering or combination of design options to enhance the intent and unity of a composition. It includes the visual enhancement of the audio and is reflected both horizontally and vertically.
13. *Emphasis* - Planned organization of design that establishes priority.
14. *Color* - It can influence the look of weight, dynamic intensity, emphasis, clarity, readability, and perceptions of depth.
15. *Unity* - The purposeful agreement among design elements. It implies congruity and visual connection. The aim of unity is to make the design coherent and readable.
16. *Dynamics* - Essential efforts in space, time, weight and flow. "Expression" refers to performer communication on the GE sheet. "Dynamics" refers to those efforts as design elements in Visual Ensemble. Gradations refer to "Dynamic Range."

As you plan your program, consider the following:

- Create *opportunities* for greater achievement through clarification and unification of postural, gestural and non-durational efforts. Exposure to these efforts should be orchestrated in an individual, segmental, and ensemble manner, and must be related to the soundtrack. It has become traditional to explore gestural efforts on the periphery of the kinesphere without thought to the level, orientation, gradation, or shape to each effort. Usually, these efforts are used to cover transitions, travel, or under-orchestration. They can be more, and should be more fully orchestrated.

- Consider how EMPHASIS, PRIORITY, PRIMACY and FOCUS are used to manipulate the audience's attention.

    - Emphasis through isolation (geographic distance).
    - Emphasis through stylistic differentiation.
    - Emphasis through differences in speed (quick to slow).
    - Emphasis through differences in orientation (facing).
    - Emphasis through differences in gradation of effort (appearing difficult/easy).
    - Emphasis through differences in weight (heavy to light).
    - Emphasis through differences in textural change (filled form to line, curve to straight, and outline to filled form...).

- Does your composition allow the students the opportunity to display the skills required of the program? A single high-achieving soloist will generate little credit on the judges' sheets. The degree to which all students display gradations in dynamic efforts through layered moments can impact both visual sub-captions. Consider exposing single effort/high achievement moments between layered triad events to develop clarity, excellence, and uniformity of training. Glorification of the "busy" or thickly-composed show is a trend today. Let's start rewarding clarity and artistry in writing, and involving larger groups to excellence, not "writing to hide."

- Compositional tools are typically utilized ineffectively as young staffs orchestrate to a weak soundtrack. Dynamic efforts viewed through the student's performance are not reflective of the audio. A soundtrack that has little or no textural change, dynamic range, or instrumental variety can put your program at risk through limited opportunities to relate visual orchestration to the soundtrack. Weight, space, time, flow, shape, and all levels of the triad (body, movement, and staging) should relate to the theme/soundtrack/concept in some way...or you're just writing in a vacuum. Composition, orchestration, and depth are relational to the audio.

- Appropriate segmentation usually isolates the guard (flags/rifles/sabers) in a presentational manner. However, consider the logic in path, speed, and orientation into vertical events that provide greater opportunities for *artistic* vocabulary, not just *logical* vocabulary, which is related to the soundtrack. Isolation provides emphasis; geographical segmentation provides textural change; consider adding depth and dimensionality through level, layer, orientation, and nuance upon arrival and throughout the event. Gradations in shape, line, and texture should all lead to a logical end point of each event. Overlapping segmental events can also create depth if the audio can be constructed in a way to make it possible.

- Explore the dichotomy between bound and free as a means of creating interest through intellectual effect and intrigue. Consider designing moments of “into the ground.” The days of bands standing and marching have been long gone decades ago. Utilize level and layer. Be on the ground, in differing postural efforts while playing, or weight sharing with other students.

Some considerations on arrival points to vertical moments (often these are impacts):

- Does the soundtrack arrive with you (impact, agogic accent or double bar)?
- Is there shape leading into the entrance (musical and visual)?
- Do you explore each event in a different part of the field (variety)? With different textures?
- Does orientation remain constantly uniform within (and in each instance of) the new event?
- Does each segmented focal point have primacy and unity? Driven by soundtrack?
- Is each exit as fully (and artfully) composed as its entrance?
- Do you utilize motion within events, not just between events?
- Are the events uniformly anchored to props or flats in a presentation manner? Are transitions always to the flats? That can become monotonous and repetitive.
- Do you utilized differing textures (filled, linear, paired, peripheral, (a)symmetrical) in form, both ensemble and segmental?
- Do you explore different levels? Into the ground, postural efforts, weight-sharing?
- How does musical dynamic affect visual composition?

3. The Show

Much forethought, planning, storyboarding, coordination, communication, and a deliberate sense of arrangement are required for today's activity. Many of us remember the days when we would purchase stock charts and send them to our drill writer and wait for the result. Of course, that is still an option, but if you're reading this, you probably want to be more competitive, artistic, and mature in design.

Here's some advice:

Preference vs. Opportunity

Never program what you "like." Your preferences are immaterial to success. Everybody loves the Beatles and John Williams, but avoid being sued for copyright infringement. You can't get those rights. Everybody loves *Malegueña*, but unless you're the Madison Scouts, don't do it. Our preferences are often a stumbling block, as we single-handedly dictate our wishes to our writers, telling designers what to write. If you are writing everything yourself, then your name is Greg Bimm or Alan Johnson. For the rest of us, remember that we're part of a team of composers…in fact; band directors are generally the facilitators for the composers, often not involved in the compositional process. So, if you hire experts, let them be experts. If your first thought is, "Let's do *The Planets*," see what your designers' first impressions are. I'm guessing that they'll sigh, hang their heads and say, "Sure, boss." Because that's their job. Broaden their job description. Ask them, as a group, "What show would provide the greatest opportunity for success with the resources at hand?"

The watchword for both the initial design phase and the individual compositional processes is *opportunity*. The show should provide opportunity for audience engagement, adjudicator credit, musical growth, and artistic success.

If you plan moments to the strength of your program, you can't fail. If your clarinets are strong, program a clarinet feature. No one is required to march a battery or program a drum feature. If it's not your strength, avoid it. Many successful bands only have a front ensemble.

Consider that mature material is a sign of mature design. A show entitled *A Tribute to Michael Jackson* is not going to be received positively, on its face. That's just lazy. There's the Pacifica Indoor Drum Line formula, where your title is a single word, often a concept, and it is explored in many facets across different movements. For instance, "Contrast," where your pit plays on wood, then metal, to show contrast, then woodwinds, then brass. This should be the starting point for design…a show with an idea, not just a theme. There's a fine line between "pop" shows, and kitsch (which is cool). Consider a show called "Paradise," where you play the Robert Smith tune, *Paradiso*, then mix it with *Paradise by the Dashboard Lights*, complete with props that are the back seats from cars on which soloists could be stages and space for the guard to explore. That's kitsch…and cool.

Please consider providing structure to your design team early in the design process. If your plan contains a storyboard that everyone follows, all design elements are likely to contain unity. All voices contribute to the choir of design. Talk to your designers often. They should both fulfil your vision and recommend a better path…they are hired to be experts, so value their expert advice.

The questions above often have answers which cannot be implemented in the current season, as they are questions that are needed when planning a successful program. Keep these in mind in all future endeavors, and work to mold the current season's show towards a clear, focused, entertaining, and readable product.

At the end of the day, you are responsible not just for your product, but for your **process**. Be sure it is capable of getting you to the end of the season with the strength, stamina, flexibility, quality of sound,

balance, staging, and entertainment that you want. Marching band done right requires a ridiculous amount of time. Have a plan. Revise your plan. And ask for help. You can't do it alone.

The Multiple Functions of Marching Band vs. the Single Function of Concert Band:

Marching bands serve many masters; administrators, athletic directors, judges, the VBODA Assessment process, parents, and the local community. These competing interests can easily derail a band's design process. There are bands that compete without thought to assessment or high school sports teams. They focus solely on competition, and perform the competitive show at games. Conversely there are bands that are primarily concerned with community support and halftime shows, or solely focused on Assessment. It can be difficult to adjudicate a show when all the bands are geared for different venues, different functions, and different outcomes.

Concert bands in the Commonwealth (generally), however, serve a single master: VBODA Assessment. Unless you're taking your band to BOA Concert Band Festival, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, or some other event of that magnitude, your spring is dominated by Assessment. The performance at Assessment serves no other master; a single focus for a single goal.

The competing interests of a fall season can frustrate a director. My advice is to know what you want your outcome to be, and educate your administration, your parents, and your community in ways that make clear your goals, and make clear how their requirements impact your program's success.

If you had to include every student in your program for Concert Band Assessment (i.e.…every student in a single band), you would have a frustrating time. Yet, we do just that in the fall. This is not to say that some students shouldn't be involved. But choosing their level of involvement, choosing their role in your design, and choosing their vocabulary based on their ability is paramount. We have already concluded that size is immaterial to success (or should be), so consider that "marching" every student, without consideration as to ability, maturity, and development is foolish. All band directors consider ability, maturity, and development when choosing who is placed in their top band for assessment. You give each student a role to which they are suited.

The suitability of each student also requires an assessment of the institutional and organizational goals of your program in a given year.

Lastly, I would advise that the color guard plays a huge role in our activity, and is rarely given the resources, training, or money necessary to elevate those students to equal partners in our performances. Give your guard instructor the resources necessary to do his/her job.

Below are some links to videos of **what's current**:

Large Bands
Tarpon Springs, FL 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSUqm-NDq-g

Flower Mound, TX 2015
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5Z7b_p9-1o

Broken Arrow, OK 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mxLSLj3A8U

Small/Medium Bands
Adair County, KY 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CScqontLm4A

Deep Run, VA 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6Xc1qs5hK8

James Madison, VA 2015
http://www.jmhsband.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=559:2015-marching-ensemble-through-a-forest-darkly&catid=111&Itemid=457

And what's possible (with college kids):

Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFffhWkgu2U

Go watch videos, go watch local performances. If you live near enough, go watch an Atlantic Indoor Association competition this winter. See what the best guards in our Commonwealth look like, as well as the best drum lines. Search out art in all forms.

It is my intent, and always has been, to develop young directors, to motivate and encourage all teachers, and train all students to the best of my ability. However, I do see my ability as a limit, so I keep learning, I keep training, and I keep pushing myself to be the future educator that I need to be for our future students. The way I taught yesterday isn't good enough for tomorrow.

If you have any questions about anything here, please feel free to send me an email at warhmr@yahoo.com. I wish you all possible success this, and every, season.

Kent P. Baker

Biography

Kent Philip Baker (born 1964) is currently a Master Sergeant in The United States Air Force Band, Joint Bass Anacostia-Bolling, DC. For the last 21 years, he has been a Hornist, Assistant Drum Major, Drill Writer, Arranger, and Composer for the USAF's premiere musical ensemble. Kent has performed in 5 Presidential Inaugural Parades, 3 Flash Mobs, The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, 2 Papal Arrivals, 3 European Tattoos, and regularly performs for the President, Vice-President, the Chiefs of Staff, and visiting dignitaries.

He received his education at Illinois State University, Normal, IL, where he studied Horn with Dr. Joseph Neisler and Composition with Dr. Roque Cordero. He has also studied Horn with Meir Ramon, Philip Farkas, and Dale Clevenger. While at ISU, Kent won the Illinois State Concerto Competition with the Strauss Horn Concerto #1. Kent is a graduate of Basic Military Training from Lackland AFB, TX, and as an Honor Graduate from Non-Commissioned Officer Academy, Tyndall AFB, FL. He also has certificates from FEMA in Radiological Preparedness, Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness.

Kent is a native of Illinois and has performed with the Carbondale Civic Orchestra, Carbondale, IL, the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, Peoria, IL, the Prince George's Symphony Orchestra, MD, and The Arlington Players, Arlington, VA. He is a hornist/composer for The Quintessential Brass of Springfield, VA. He has also been a clinician for the Bands of America Summer Symposium from 1991-1996 as the Music Theory clinician for the Concert Band track.

He has performed with and instructed such historic drum corps as the Belleville Black Knights, Geneseo Knights, The Cavaliers, and The Cadets. Kent was a member of The Cavaliers brass staff in 1992 when they won their first DCI Championship. He most recently was a member of The Cadets visual staff from 2014 to 2016. He has judged for Midwest Color Guard Circuit, USBands, Atlantic Indoor Association, Winter Guard International, and VBODA. As a pageantry arts designer and instructor, Kent has written for many winter guards, indoor drum lines, and marching bands, including 2 BOA Semi-Finalists, 14 Regional Finalists, and 4 Regional Class Champions, including James Madison HS (VA), Chantilly HS (VA), Normal Community HS (IL), Normal West HS (IL), WGI 3X Semi-Finalist and 2004 Bronze Medalist (A Class) Normal Community HS (IL), and WGI Percussion Regional Champion Francis Howell Central HS (MO).

His music has been recorded on USAF Band CDs, including "Home of the Brave" and "Ceremonial Music." Kent's compositions have been performed live in The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, The Kennedy Center Honors, NBC's The Today Show, Fox & Friends, Missouri Music Educators' Conference, The USAF Orchestra Summer Concert Series, and for the USAF 75th Anniversary Concert. His newest work, "The Tannhauser Gate," for Brass Choir and Percussion, will be premiered in 2017 by The Dallas Winds.