

**What Do You Do When
You Realize That Your
Marching Band
is NOT
the “*Blue Devils*”?**

Presented by

**Mr. Steve Barnett
Director of Bands
Marshall University**

**The 61st Annual Midwest Clinic
Hilton Chicago
December 19, 2007
8:30 a.m.- Williford Room**

What Do You Do When You Realize That Your Marching Band is NOT the “Blue Devils”?

Presented by

Steve Barnett
Director of Bands
Marshall University

***Do not ask the students to do more than they are capable of doing well.*

I. A Program Based on Sound Playing Fundamentals

- A. Use a good warm-up daily
Correct breathing, proper embouchure and tone production, tonguing and scale exercises, ensemble flexibility using lip slur exercises, pitch matching exercises, long tone exercises for pitch stabilization and balance at all dynamic levels and chorale ensemble playing for pitch, blend and balance.
- B. Good posture and horn position while standing or sitting
- C. Emphasize intonation, balance, tone quality and blend just as you would in concert band.
- D. Good warm-ups available to purchase or make up your own

II. A Program Based on Sound Marching Fundamentals

- A. Fundamentals should be emphasized every rehearsal during the marching season, not just at the first day of band camp.
- B. Teach only the fundamentals that are going to be used in the show. Add more as needed.
- C. Individual demeanor, horn carriage and body carriage- both standing still and marching
- D. Work for a uniform “style”.
- E. Basic marching fundamentals that I teach first
 1. Attention- heels and toes together
 2. Parade Rest
 3. Mark Time- low
 4. 4 ct. and 8 ct. slow turn to the right and left
 5. “Glide” step- 8-to-5, half, adjusted
 6. Backward step- 8-to-5, half, adjusted
 7. Slides- left/right, backwards/forward, hip pivot

III. Selecting Your Music (Do not “over pick”!)

- A. Does the music fit your band?
 - 1. Instrumentation- (3 tpt. parts vs. 2 tpt. parts, etc....)
 - 2. Playing ability- grade level
 - 3. Strengths and weaknesses- individuals, sections
 - 4. Other factors- keys, endurance, range, scoring (thin, blocked, power)
- B. What to play?
 - 1. What do your students like?selling it to your students
 - 2. Would your music appeal to your audience?
 - 3. Would your music be appropriate for the contests/festivals that you plan to enter?
- C. Does the selection fit your needs in the total show “package”?
 - 1. Opener, closer, drum feature etc.....
 - 2. Does it provide contrast from the other music that you have selected?
 - 3. Is it the right length?
- D. Stock music vs. custom arrangements- You will need to edit most tunes to fit your band and your show.
 - **Is EVERYONE going to be playing the arrangement?
- E. Be careful of “package shows”. Whose band are they written for? You normally have to make many adjustments to both music and drill to make them work for you. However, they still can be useful and effective.

IV. Writing or Selecting Your Drill (Not Too HARD!)

- A. Does the drill fit the music?
 - 1. Design- flow, “hard” forms, “soft” forms, crescendos, decrescendos, contrasts, dynamics of the music
 - 2. Phrasing- Do the counts in the drill match up with the counts in the musical phrasing? (Ex.- -2- 16ct. phrases and a 24 ct. drill)
- B. What interval(s) should I use?
 - 1. I like a 3-step interval for many situations.
 - 2. 2-step is too small and 4-step is too large to use all of the time, but can be very effective when used in combination for an effect. (joining then exploding out)
 - 3. Do not use a 3.82 interval on form 3 and a 2.76 interval on form 4. Computer drill design programs allow you to key in the number of positions and it will automatically place the people in the form. This presents a huge problem in “cleaning” the drill. USE CONSISTENT INTERVAL SIZE.
- C. Individual demand- step size, rate of the drill move, music difficulty while moving, slides, tempo of the music, recovery time from previous move
- D. Instrument placement for balance and confidence
- E. Time in motion vs. stop time vs. recovery time- short, choppy drill phrases with sudden stops and starts are much harder to clean than longer, more flowing phrases (a kaleidoscopic effect)

F. Having strong leaders in key places

1. Do not put your weakest marcher leading a line on a key move.
2. Do not put a 4 foot 2 inch flute player on the end of a gate turn taking 3-to-5 steps backwards.

V. Color Guard

A. Get someone to choreograph and teach routines....flag camp, band camp, during the fall semester

B. Selecting the equipment

1. Fits the music, drill, size of band, interval, size of flag members
2. Length of pole, size of flag – they need to be proportional
3. Specialty equipment for variety and uniqueness

C. Selecting the uniforms

1. Are they flattering to all flag members?
2. Do they compliment the band? not detract from it...

D. Routines based on fundamentals, written to counts, phrased with the music and drill

E. Routines can be effective without being hard.

F. Drill before routine- Be careful of high demand because of the marching requirement. Make sure that the routine can be executed while marching the drill.

VI. Color Guard Placement

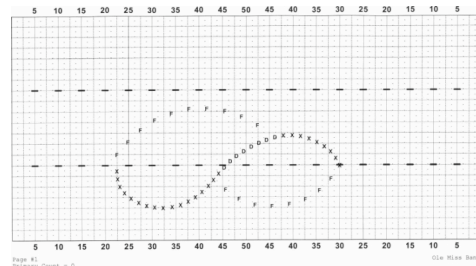
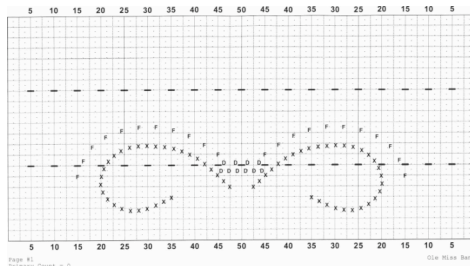
A. Not too close to the back of the band- minimum of 12 to 16 steps

B. Intervals appropriate to form, equipment and music

C. Use a variety of formations and placement. (not an arc in the back for the entire show) Tie the guard in with the band forms in a variety of ways.

D. My “pet peeve”- having equipment laying all over the field, being stepped on and helpers running through the band setting out or retrieving equipment...frame the field with preset equipment or use screens to hide equipment changes.

Equipment changes must be written in the drill and planned.



VII. Percussion

- A. Instrumentation- 1 sn., 1 tenor, 5 basses vs. 3 snares, 1 tenor, 3 basses.....etc.
- B. Pit vs. no pit
- C. Drill placement- interval, formation, split, position on field in relation to band
**Do not be guilty of putting the drum line in a block and moving them up and back on the 50-yard line the entire show.
- D. Small drum line- Do you put them all on the sideline?..sacrifice precision and timing with the band...Is the drum line being judged for marching?

VII. Final Thoughts.....

- A. Do not ask the students to do more than they are capable of doing well!
- B. Emphasize fundamentals every day!
- C. Be firm, but BE POSITIVE!
- D. Band is an elective, not a required course.
- E. "You can't teach an empty chair."

**Special thanks to the Blue Devils, Jay Bocook and Hal Leonard Publishing, and David Willson for granting permission to use their audio and video files in this presentation.

Aztec Fire by Jay Bocook is available through Hal Leonard Publishing Company.

Mr. Willson's Warm-Up is available through Jalen Publishing Company.