

Hey all,

For the next installment from Shirlee, she discusses here the need for the “right” musical choice for your winter program. As an FYI, this can also be VERY applicable to the fall show, so feel free to share with your band director, too! :)

A couple of things I want to add (you know I can't resist the opportunity to put my opinion out there!) to this discussion:

Music is the springboard (Shirlee's word) for all that a guard does. Be sure the music you choose allows you and your students ample opportunity to demonstrate skills in both design and achievement.

The music must be something the kids can achieve to. Difficult polyrhythmic phrases can be very demanding for students to count and perform to (irrespective of the staff's ability to choreograph to the depth of the music) and music that is simply too fast for the kids to be able to consistently achieve can lead to season long headaches.

Finally, be sure the music isn't too “thick” for your staff and students. Remember that your unit does not receive credit for the depth of the soundtrack, but rather for how well the soundtrack is presented visually. If there are multiple lines of music in the soundtrack, there will be an expectation that those lines are frequently reflected. Bear in mind the time and skills involved in portraying thickly scored soundtracks.

I hope this article helps focus you as you nail down your musical selection for this winter! As always, please feel free to let me know if you have any questions or thoughts relative to this. Best of luck the rest of the fall and into the winter!!

Chris
MCCGA Director of Education

MUSIC

10 EASY QUESTIONS WITH A BIG PAYOFF

I'm going to ask you to approach this all important design choice with a list of questions to ask yourself (and your staff) as you wade through a million options.

- **QUESTION 1: What kind of mood do you want to put your audience in?** Excited, nostalgic, sad, happy, energized, lethargic, fascinated, surprised, and the list goes on and on. Answer this first and it sets a roadmap toward your goal. Remember, one of the most commonly shared response mechanisms in people is their reaction to music and sound.
- **QUESTION 2: Do you want to grab your audience immediately with a big effect** or do you want to build into it? This will also help you as you consider the opening of each tune you listen to.
- **QUESTION 3: Does the music provide a great ending????** You always want to leave the audience "wanting more." Do you want the audience to be left "holding their breath" as you conclude, or do you want them screaming and on their feet?
- **QUESTION 4: Does the music guide you smoothly through the "dance of design" as you conceptualize the show?** Can you visualize each segment as you listen?
- **QUESTION 5: Does the music provide contrast and contouring** so that your show takes the viewer on a joy ride of highs and lows? Can you visualize those impact points and strong resolutions?
- **QUESTION 6: Does the music have interesting depth of orchestration?** When considering a specific tune, how many different arrangements/artists do you research before making a decision? Have you considered combining different versions of the same tune?
- **QUESTION 7: Does the music suggest a specific style or "look"** and can you assure that your students can carry it off?
- **QUESTION 8: How many other groups have used this music** and will it set you up for a direct comparison?? It shouldn't but I promise you that there are some tunes that need to be "retired" for the next decade. It's risky to pick a tune used by a highly memorable guard.
- **QUESTION 9: Is this tune similar or different from what you've done for the past couple of years?** Is it time to redefine yourself? Redefinition will keep the kids interested and broaden their skill sets as performers and challenge you as designers!!!!
- **QUESTION 10: Can the performers relate to your vision through this music** and do you have the knowledge to teach them how to interpret their role and character?

Once you've settled on this year's show music, consider how you might embellish it with any special effects or layer it with other arrangements to provide a more unique sound. This is ALL ABOUT YOU and your creative thought process as you set up your show for the best possible production value. Musical choice may very well be the most important choice you will make.

Musical choice and visual style contribute largely to set you apart from the many others in your class. Strive to be remembered as you create your program. Create a musical sound track that will showcase your best assets as you create your visual illustration.