



Show Design Workbook

leanforwardmarchingdesign.com

INTRODUCTION

Objective and Goals

This workbook is geared for any director or designer endeavoring to make a big leap in design from one year to the next. It guides the director through the process of designing a successful marching band show, with tools to aid the process each step of the way. This book can be a resource for any level designer with any level band.

The design process is divided into three segments : production of concept, production of music, and production of visual design. Going step by step through this will allow us to evaluate the product well before it reaches the eyes and ears of students, parents and adjudicators.

Lean Forward Design and the Lean Forward Moment

Lean Forward Design is a company centered on the lean forward moment - that instance when the crowd becomes so engaged in a moment that they lean forward in their seats. This is our goal and our mission - to make entertaining, engaging, and educational marching band productions that work for everyone, performer and consumer alike. By identifying and creating lean forward moments (*LFMs*) throughout the production, we create a design that is perfectly tailored to your band and your style, but is also successful anywhere, to any audience.

Timeline

Sticking to a timeline can alleviate some of the stress in regards to designing a marching band show. Successful designs take time , but with proper planning the process can be compartmentalized into small sections. This allows the director time to design a great marching band show, while also doing other 1,000 things on the winter/spring schedule! In a perfect world, this would be the schedule to follow:

Mid/Late-December : Full staff meeting. Show concept brainstorm completed, logline written, staff homework sheet distributed.

Mid-January : Musical selections chosen, individual loglines written, contact arranger.

End-January : Initial production sheet filled out, musical *LFMs* chosen, musical selections cut up into Audacity, send to arranger!

Mid/Late-March : Music back in, send to drill writer and staff.

Mid April : Staff meeting with drill and guard writer. Visual *LFMs* brainstormed and added in. Storyboard of entire show completed.

May: Final production sheet filled out with visual storyboard.

June : Get your numbers finalized-ish. Contact drill writer and staff for a final design check before there is no more time!

July : Give drill writer final numbers, and get ready for band camp!

PRODUCTION OF CONCEPT

At Lean Forward, we believe that a coordinated product is the result of the entire design team working together. Although the final show decision is entirely the band director's, utilizing the staff's creativity and intellectual resources can open design doors that may have not been opened before. During December, have a staff meeting/brainstorming session/holiday party, or if not possible just hold a conference call or Skype. Getting everyone's ideas on the table this early in the process will ensure all ideas are heard, and that we maximize our product creation.

Reproduce the below chart on your whiteboard and have enough markers for your entire staff. By the end, we should have at least 26 show concepts that can be explored.

The initial concept brainstorm doesn't need to be constrained to any line of thinking, to "this will work," or "that won't work." Each concept and idea needs to be thrown out there, and this is a judgement free zone so there are no bad ideas. We are only concerned with "What" at this point, worrying about the "How" will come later. A useful tool is the ABC brainstorm game, a great way to get your staff meeting warmed up with some easy thinking.

Brainstorm all show concepts starting with the letter...

A	G	M	S
B	H	N	T
C	I	O	U
D	J	P	V
E	K	Q	W
F	L	R	XYZ

NARROWING THE STORM

With the initial brainstorming complete, the goal is to finish the meeting with three concepts narrowed down and very roughly fleshed out.

Have the staff write down their five favorite concepts on a piece of paper, then transfer them to the board. All of the concepts written down stay on the board, all the concepts that were not written down (barring a band director override) get erased. Debating these concepts is the next step, but this must be an INFORMED discussion, so as a staff, answer the following questions!

Who are we as a band?

Who are our models as bands we look to emulate?

Who do we want to be as a band?

What is our school and community like?

Answering these questions will define what direction the overall concept of the show will go.

The following questions will define how we can get there, and what is possible within that show concept.

What are our strengths musically?

What are our weaknesses musically?

What are our strengths visually?

What are our weaknesses visually?

This is the time to be honest about the band program, with no ego involved. In order to design the most appropriate and successful product for your band, you need to be realistic, while also being optimistic! This conversation can eliminate some show concepts (don't play Festive Overture if you have no trumpets and clarinets!) and aid in narrowing the ideas.

At the end of the staff meeting, the goal is to have three show concepts with loglines, three Lean Forward Moments for each concept and a rough idea of the musical selections. Conversely, if the staff has music already and no visual, the goal is to develop loglines and a concept that will fit that particular music.

LOGLINES

A logline is a three or four sentence summary of the show concept. For movies and tv, it's the short blurb in TV guide that explains what a movie is about and helps you decide if you're interested in seeing it. Loglines need to be full of descriptive adjectives and adverbs that capture the spirit of the concept. Loglines are used throughout this workbook as a way of maintaining focus on the product we are creating. A good logline should be referred back to throughout the season by the design team. It is our show concept's mission statement!

If a show concept won't fit into a few sentences, it will never be understood by an audience, let alone an adjudicator. Marching bands do not have the advantage of performing to the same judges over the course of a summer like DCI, where those judges have multiple times to understand a story or concept. High school marching band must be clear, focused, and understandable. Loglines keep a design true to its purpose.

Here is a sample logline for a brainstorm for Phantom Regiment 2006 "Faust."

In Faust, we see the epic battle of good versus evil, light versus dark. Faust sells his soul to the Devil to achieve worldly pleasure and to win him the heart of the beautiful and innocent Margeurite. The devil and his army of demons procure her for Faust, only to hurt her in the process and cause Faust to beg her forgiveness. They fall in love, infuriating the Devil and a great battle ensues, costing Margeurite her life, but resulting in her resurrection, Faust's redemption, and the triumph of good over evil.

With each concept that the staff debates, attempt to develop a logline for it. Whether the show is the machine, Faust, or even the Teletubbies, a thread must be established that can tie the show together. If the staff cannot produce a logline, or a logline of appropriate length, it might be a good idea to move on to the next concept.

When the loglines are completed, the last phase is to identify at least 3 big picture Lean Forward Moments that can be featured in the show. If the staff cannot brainstorm at least 3 good ideas for each show concept, that concept doesn't need to make the final three. These *LFMs* are big picture type things, special drill moves, special effects and prop integration, a big musical moment, whatever the staff sees as most indicative of that concept. In a perfect world, you should also have musical numbers in mind for each of the concepts.

At the end of the meeting, the staff receives homework to complete and send back to you. This ensures that the staff has something tangible to work off of in developing more ideas. This homework is crucial in maximizing the Lean Forward Moments we develop throughout the next few months.

Show Development Homework

Show Concepts

1. _____

Logline: _____

2. _____

Logline: _____

3. _____

Logline: _____

1. For each of the show concepts, identify 10 possible Lean Forward Moments, both musical and visual.

Ex. : Coordinated drill move with music, soloists, guard or band spectacular visual, iconic drill image (snowflake), section features, small combo, the unexpected!, technical exposure, narration, dramatic moment, integrated prop moment, special effect, and the list goes on and on.

2. Identify 10 words/phrases/adjectives/colors that describe each concept.

3. List any and all music, from any genre that is connected to each show concept.

4. What are we trying to say/sell/do with this concept?

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY - MUSICAL PRODUCTION

All the homework should be completed during winter break, and as the staff send in their responses, collate them and share with the group via dropbox/conference call/Skype. Set your goal at picking a show concept for January 1. This gives the staff a month before the musical production sheets and Audacity files need to be sent off to the arranger. When the group comes to a consensus (or the band director puts their foot down) the staff can transition into developing the musical production.

Developing a show concept into a musical sketch for the arranger is a whole book in itself, so this workbook provides a brief overview, with helpful tools to aid in the process.

When the music is sent to the arranger, the staff should have a good idea of what is going to happen musically and visually throughout the show. Musical arrangements are too often written without any forethought to the visual package, but this is where the homework from earlier comes in. Using the *LFMs* from the homework along with the initial production sheet, the staff can ensure that pacing is good, there are a wide variety of elements, and maximize effect in the design room instead of on the football field. To be effective, the show needs *LFMs* to happen ever 10-15 seconds, whether they are music or visual.

THE INITIAL PRODUCTION SHEET

The initial production sheet streamlines the thought process, focusing on “roughing in” the big picture ideas so the arranger sees the entirety of the concept. The overall conceptual logline is at the top, and each module (tune) has an individual logline, focusing the decision making for each number. Fill out each box, staying true to the established logline. What *LFMs* are going to be present in this part of the show? Here is the big list:

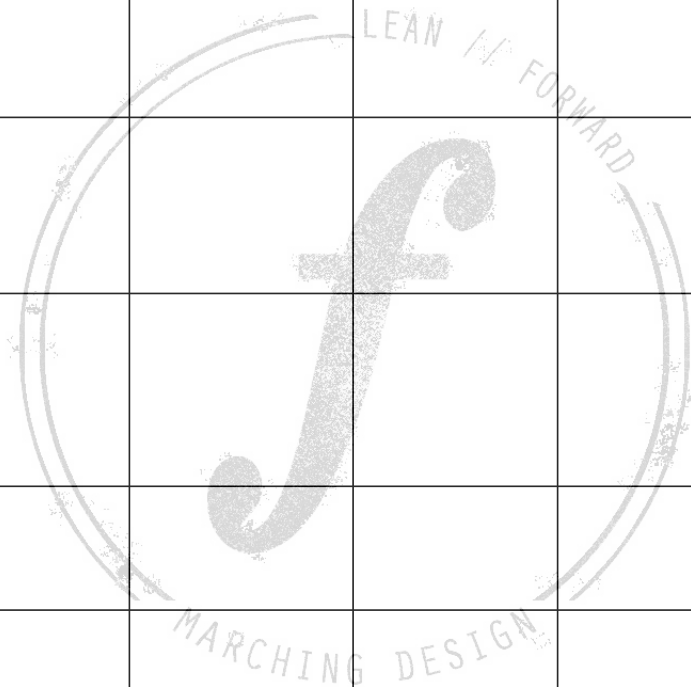
- Sudden Dynamic Changes
- Coordinated move w/music at musical impact point
- Big Drill Move
- Soloists
- Guard or Band spectacular visual – Coordinated!
- Tempo Changes
- Iconic Drill Image (Leaf falling from tree during Autumn Leaves)
- Key Changes
- Section Features
- Small Combo
- The Unexpected
- The expected! (Tension/Release)
- Humor
- WW, Brass , Percussion Technical exposure
- Fear or Anxiety
- Narration (if done properly)
- Dramatic moment (if character show)
- Integrated prop moment
- Special effect

The degree of specificity is totally up to the band director and music arranger. This production sheet gives the director and staff the opportunity to have as much, or as little control over the musical production as they could want.

Lean Forward - Initial Production Sheet 2016

Overall Show Logline:

Timeline						
Logline - What are we trying to say?						
Lean Forward - What moments draw the crowd in?						
Music						
Music GE						
Visual and Staging						
Prop Placement						
Color Guard Ideas and Equipment						
Voiceovers / Sound Effects						
Additional Ideas						
Comments						



CREATING MIX TAPES AND AUDACITY

Thankfully, the days of making a mix tape with an old cassette tape are long past! With free software like Audacity, taking your musical selections from scribbles on a production sheet to a nicely pasted together recording could not be easier. Making these files affords a chance to examine the production at the earliest stage and identify flaws to address.

In case it has not been made apparent, this workbook is designed to catch errors before they make it to the students - never allow yourself to settle for "OK" as a designer or director. To have a successful band in the fall you need a successful design team in the spring. Attention to detail and quality control are how this works!

After cutting and pasting, listen to the result as many times as possible. Visualization of the show is paramount at this juncture. Can you see the show on the field? Is it engaging and entertaining? Is there variety and a range of expression? Is the show getting you to lean forward and come into it? Are the visual and musical *LFMs* that were planned going to work with this music? Take your time with this examination, because this is the point of no return. Once the arranger has it, the process will be very hard to stop midstream as all of us that have redesigned a show in June can attest!!

It is always a good idea to give your arranger more ideas and music than they need. In addition to the cut files, include the complete originals to your arranger, scores, and any other music that never made it off the cutting room floor! You never know when the one random counter melody the arranger pulled from another place becomes the best moment of the show!

THE MUSICAL ANALYSIS GRAPH

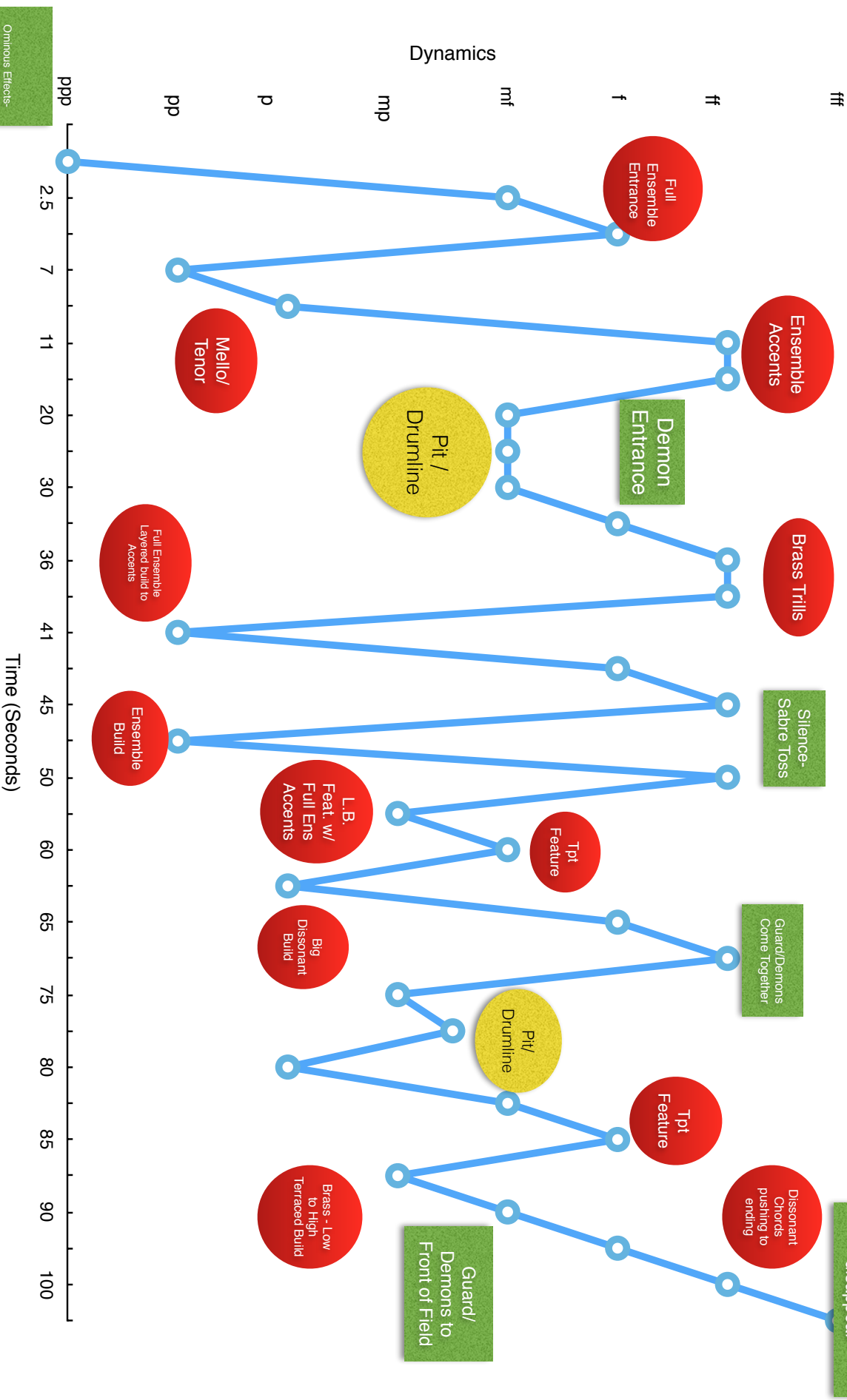
For those not satisfied with the degree of specificity on the initial production sheet, there is one more tool that gives the designer complete control over the end product. This is the musical analysis graph.

The music analysis graph is a tool to examine the horizontal pacing and vertical integration in the show. This tool can be used before AND/OR after the music has come back from the arranger. Used before, it can easily lay out the contour and design of your show. Used after, it can examine flaws in the design both from a musical and visual standpoint, and allow the design team to easily fix them.

On an x/y graph, 'X' represents time, where 'Y' represents the dynamic spectrum. The dynamic changes are plotted through the entirety of the piece while looking at the stopwatch. The musical lean forward moments that are present (*Sudden dynamic changes, soloists, tempo changes, key changes, section features, small combo, tension/release, instrumental technical exposure, etc*) are then plotted onto the graph in circles. Using the results of the brainstorming sessions and follow up discussions with the staff, insert the visual *LFMs* onto the graph in rectangles. The result is a graphical representation of the musical arrangement with the accompanying visual ideas. This tool allows one to view the pacing, flow, continuity, coordination of elements, variety of texture, range of dynamics, range of expression and so much more in one simple chart. This is an optional element, but is well worth the 20 minute investment as it is an additional layer of quality control for the band director and design team.



Lean Forward Musical Analysis Example - Phantom 2006 "Faust" Module 3



PRODUCTION OF THE VISUAL PROGRAM

The music is safely off to the arranger, the calendar turns to February, and now the band director can focus on the 5,000 events on the calendar for February. The musical arranger is hard at work on the music, and now is a good time for the staff to think about props and guard things (costumes, flags, money!). Fleshing these ideas out before the music comes back, saves a lot of time when the music comes in.

The production of the visual program is a 3-step process designed to deliver a coordinated product.

ANALYSIS - STORYBOARDING - PRODUCTION SHEET

When the music comes in, distribute it to the staff and make sure the music is what was intended. If there are substantial changes in the arrangements from the analysis that was done earlier, update the analysis so that there is a true representation of the product. If only the initial production sheet was completed prior to sending the music to the arranger, now would be a good time to do an analysis of the product. The analysis creates a frame of reference for discussion during the storyboard phase.

Storyboarding affords the staff an opportunity to show the drill writer what they are envisioning, and allows them to see if their *LFMs* will or will not work. The storyboarding meeting should be the last staff meeting before the product is sent to the drill writer, and with Skype, hopefully the drill writer can be a part of the meeting!

The goal of the storyboard meeting is to get the show roughly mapped out visually. The storyboard is not meant to be a set-by-set depiction of the drill, it is a depiction of *LFMs* to *LFMs*. Ideally, every 48 to 64 counts of the show should be storyboarded. Each frame should approximately map out where staging will occur, and give an idea of the relative shapes/effects/etc for that chunk of the show.

A good storyboard will give a big picture flow of the show, and will make sure the drill designer and staff are on the same page.

Disclaimer : Band directors and design staffs fix storyboard problems, and drill writers solve mathematical problems! Do not expect that a drill writer will draw the exact images and get every thought written into the show. The reality of moving images through time using high school students is that there is a limit to motion, and when instrumental staging is involved, the limitations are even stricter. The drill writer's job is to incorporate the best of all the ideas, to ensure instruments and visual elements are staged for maximum success, and to write it all at a level that is attainable by your band. Keep this in mind when storyboarding out ideas, as it may influence the decision making process.

Lean Forward Design Storyboard 2016

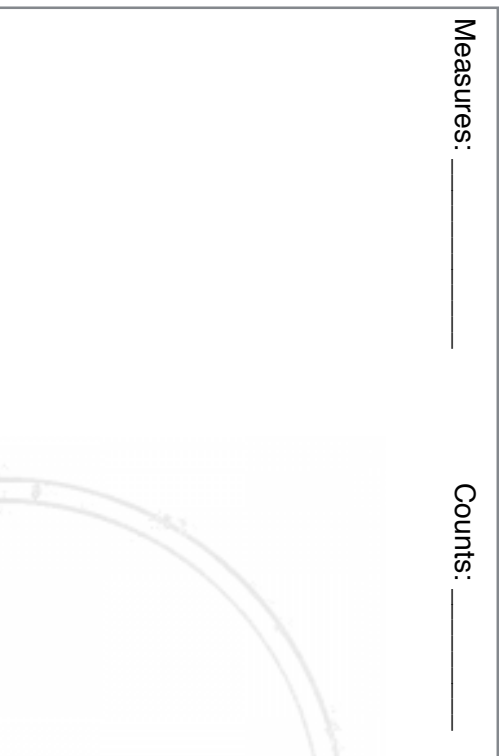
Title _____

Page # _____

Logline _____

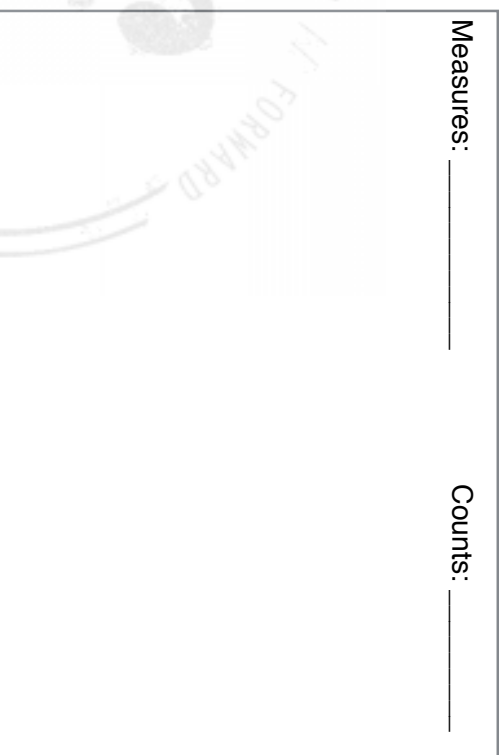
Measures: _____

Counts: _____

A large empty rectangular box for drawing the first storyboard panel.

Measures: _____

Counts: _____

A large empty rectangular box for drawing the second storyboard panel.

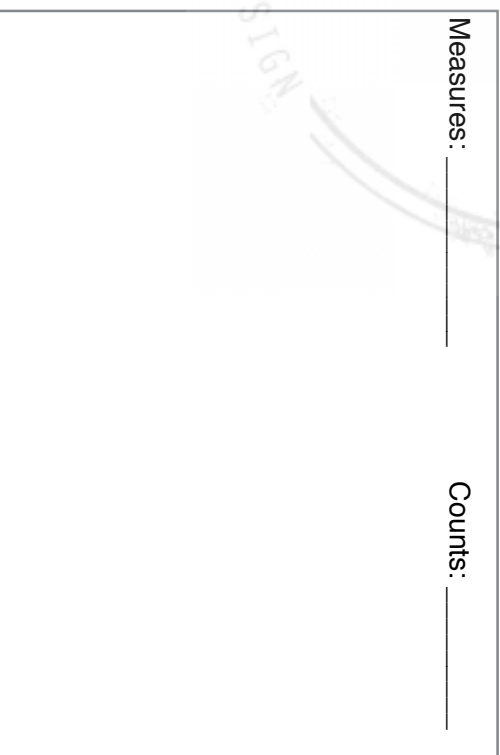
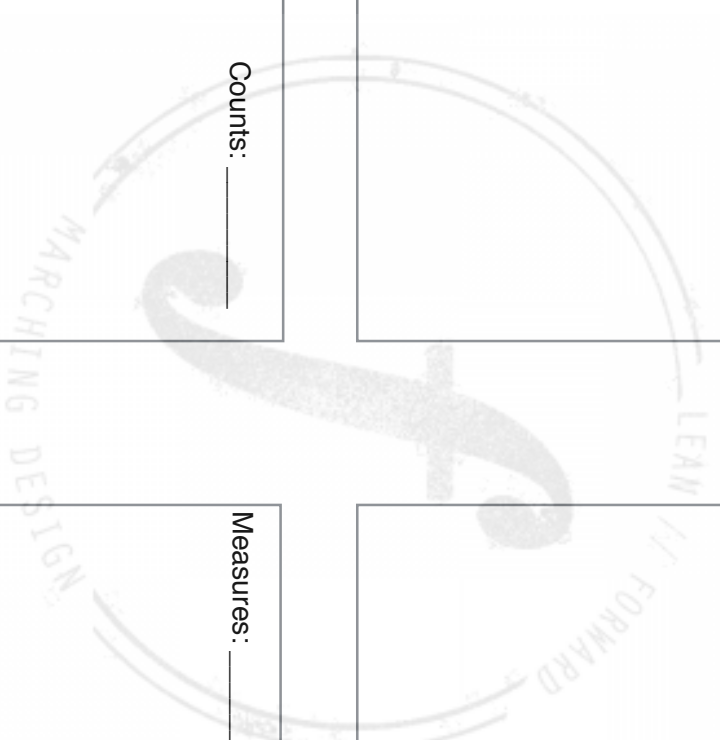
Measures: _____

Counts: _____

A large empty rectangular box for drawing the third storyboard panel.

Measures: _____

Counts: _____

A large empty rectangular box for drawing the fourth storyboard panel.

DEVELOPING THE FINAL PRODUCTION SHEET

The final production sheet is the final hurdle before the show becomes reality. It is the most detailed document pertaining to the show and allows the band director to tailor all movement specifically to their ensemble.

Using the production sheet provided, listen to the music and mark in each phrase with measure numbers, how many counts, in what meter, and moving or halting. This gives the band director complete control over how much, or how little movement is in the show. Then using the storyboard, loglines, and musical analysis from earlier, fill in the remainder of the information. The result should be a robust document that clearly shows *what* is happening *when* and *how* we are showing that to the audience. Circulate it to the staff so that all other pertinent information can make it onto the document.

The guard choreographer needs to fill in what the guard is doing (dance, flags, equipment, other), how many will be doing it, for how long will they be doing it, and when they will be changing equipment.

Lastly, talk with the visual staff and think about the visual expectations and limitations of the group. From the information at the first staff meeting there should be a fairly good idea of what the ensemble is capable of. Let the drill writer know the capabilities in terms of marching (8x5, 6x5, 4x5?), movement (dance/bodywork) and visuals. Considering this limitations will also provide information on what needs to be addressed educationally in the visual fundamentals program.

Send all the files, numbers, scores and *.wav files to the drill designer and make sure to check in with them before they start writing. It is always good to have one final checkup before the production truly becomes a reality.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As you go through the show design process, remember that you can do as much, or as little of it as you want. Hiring experienced designers and staff members can alleviate much of this workload. Some band directors love that, and some hate it - so whatever your style or preference, just make sure you are getting the most out of the time spent in the design process. By simply taking a few hours spread throughout the winter and spring, a concept can be developed that you, your parents, your audience, and most importantly- your students can enjoy for an entire fall.

For video and audio samples, and any thoughts, comments or questions about Lean Forward Design and what we could offer your band program, please check us out at www.leanforwardmarchingdesign.com.

Lean Forward Final Production Sheet 2016

Logline:

Measure #	Counts	Meter	Hold or Move?	Musical Analysis	LFM	Wind Staging	Percussion Staging	Guard Staging	Storyboard

