

What is the role of Drill?

As we journey through the new era of marching band, it's important that we step back and examine what exactly is the role of drill and how can it help us achieve our goals as an organization?

At the heart of the activity, marching band is about live music. Drill must embody and enhance the music as well as give the audience a deeper understanding of the musical material. But, most importantly, the drill must put the musicians in the best places for them to succeed. Staging must allow them to be in the right place to be heard at the right time. Drill should solve the majority of your balance and blend issues BEFORE you ever set foot on a field.

Drill must help solve your musical problems, because on top of their musical responsibilities, wind and percussion members are also tasked with an inordinate amount of movement responsibilities. In today's marching bands, winds and percussion are expected to perform not only their music and drill, but perform dance choreography, flutter run, and jazz run transitions. What used to be the sole purview of the colorguard, is now being asked of wind and percussion members!

As winds and percussion have taken on more visual responsibility, the guard is now expected to perform at a WGI level in the fall. In today's marching band, the performance of the guard and the ensemble's visual effect scores are now 100% linked and, without an effective colorguard, bands simply will not get enough credit for their visual package.

The deployment of the guard has to be an integral design element. Lean Forward Design focuses on guard staging that minimizes movement and maximizes effect. What that means is that we are ALWAYS looking for "stop and spin" opportunities in order to give the choreographer as much flexibility as possible. With guards that are large enough, it is our preference to always have a portion of the guard stationary while others transition. This creates a static visual focus which minimizes the amount of times the guard transitions as a group.

Transitions must ALWAYS be smooth and never forced. The design and implementation of transitions to and from equipment must be designed with the same level of care and focus that an arranger would write a trumpet solo. In the past, a designer might have said "just run off the field" or "we'll figure that out later." (It NEVER gets figured out later!) Drill must provide opportunities for the guard to succeed at every moment in the show, whether in transition or static.

At the end of the day, the role of drill is to create a complete union between the guard, winds and percussion in which all sections have the same opportunity to succeed. Drill must respect the difficulty of what is being asked of the performer and deliver a production that matches complexity with ability. Effective AND achievable - that's Lean Forward Design.

Lean on Us//Lean Forward Design