



# **Techniques to Develop Marching Excellence**

**CLINICIANS:**

**Evan VanDoren and Bob Chreste**

## **Texas Bandmasters Association 2012 Convention/Clinic**



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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

# ***Techniques to Develop Marching Excellence***

## **Featuring the Cedar Park High School Band Program**

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Members of the Cedar Park High School Band will demonstrate the processes used to create a uniform marching and movement technique. Through the development of fundamentals and coordinated visual show responsibilities, attendees will learn how to apply these processes to their own band programs.

### **Training your students as "musician-athletes"**

- Implement a physical fitness plan
- Benefits include...
  - Shocks students out of their "summer" bodies!
  - Develops physical and mental stamina
  - After a strenuous workout, marching fundamentals seem easy!
  - Provides environment for immediate relationship building
- How and when?
  - First two weeks of summer band - one hour every morning
  - Remainder of summer band - short, 10-15 minute work-out every morning
  - During the school year - short work-out, 1-2 times per week
- Examples of basic "Crossfit" exercises and formats

### **Using the circle for maximum accountability and visibility**

- Provides clear line of sight between every student and teacher, assisting with...
  - Visual reminders of exercises, fundamentals
  - Performance assessment
  - Peer motivation to support positive performance
  - Student accountability

### **Establishing a solid foundation**

- Posture
  - Establishing quality posture is the foundation of quality marching programs
  - The 5 Points of Alignment
    - Ankles, Knees, Hips, Shoulders, and Ears
    - Allows for clear, tangible discussion of posture, and how to improve it!
  - Equal, even motion over space and time
  - The "S Curve" Exercise
- Pliés and Relevés
  - Focus on maintaining posture, using 5 points of alignment
  - Great way to begin developing dance vocabulary
- Slides/Upper Body Facing
  - Again, focus on maintaining posture, using 5 points of alignment
  - Relationship of ears to shoulders remains static, the relationship between the hips and the shoulders move in tandem to establish the slide position

## **Shaping the lower body**

- Pointe Exercise
  - Focus on maintaining the length of the leg and moving from the hip
  - Work to maintain posture (top three points of alignment) throughout
- "50/50" Exercise
  - All motion is based upon "50/50" weight distribution
  - Applies leg motion learned in pointe exercise, while layering in new responsibility of weight transfer
  - Results in accomplishing "one step forward" and "one step backward"
- The 2-Step Step-out
  - Applies all previously discussed movement concepts in a very short exercise
  - Helps to create a more realistic performance scenario
  - Use step outs as often as possible, especially during "off the field" rehearsals
    - Recreate performance scenarios as closely as possible, as often as possible!
- Putting it all together!
  - Sequence the entire fundamental package together in a short song!

## **Taking quality movement fundamentals "on the move"**

- Circle Drill
  - A simple way to work on basic marching technique while utilizing all of the advantages of the circle
  - Provides opportunities to discuss additional, drill-related skill sets, including spatial awareness, pathways, upper body orientation, and more!
  - Provides a great environment to work on utilizing a visual source of tempo
  - Add musical responsibilities to these exercises as often as possible!
- Single-time/Half-time
  - Develops the skill of energy changes through tempo changes
- "Happy Fun Time"
  - Develops the skill of marching at upper tempos
  - Can be utilized with any simple marching exercise
  - It is important to teach students how to operate outside of their comfort zone!

## **Movement fundamentals within the scope and sequence of your marching band season**

- First week of summer band...
  - Spend the majority of your time establishing visual fundamentals
  - Give your student leaders the opportunity to teach/reinforce concepts
- Remaining weeks of summer band...
  - Split visual time half and half between visual fundamentals and drill
- When school begins...
  - Visual fundamentals are typically rehearsed during band class
  - Go outside during the school day and rehearse playing and moving!
    - Always work to tie musical and visual responsibilities together

Cedar Park H.S. Band Directors – Steve Wessels, Bob Chreste, Evan VanDoren, Roland Chavez  
For additional information on the Cedar Park H.S. Band, please visit: [www.cphsband.org](http://www.cphsband.org)  
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