Techniques to Develop Marching Excellence

CLINICIANS:

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Texas Bandmasters Association
2012 Convention/Clinic

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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
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Techniques to Develop Marching Excellence
Featuring the Cedar Park High School Band Program
Clinicians: Evan VanDoren & Bob Chreste
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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 Releves
  - 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 responsibilities 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
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