



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 26-28, 2018**

**Planning for Success with Bands of  
America System of Competition**

**CLINICIAN:  
Gary Markham**

**Sponsor: Bands of America**



TEXAS BANDMASTER'S ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION  
"HOW TO DO WELL IN A BANDS OF AMERICA SYSTEM OF COMPETITION"

1. UNDERSTAND THE BOA SYSTEM AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR DESIGN
2. UNDERSTAND BOA JUDGE EXPECTATIONS and TRAINING
3. UNDERSTAND ACHIEVEMENT and THE EVALUATION PRIORITIES
4. INTERPRET COMPETITIVE RESULTS FOR PLANNING

**BANDS OF AMERICA**  
**JUDGES EXPECTATIONS THROUGH TRAINING 2018**

**Purpose of this Training**

- Bring diverse backgrounds together and provide consistent philosophical approach to each BOA judging sheet.
- Establish a consistent paradigm with interpretation of the criteria reference and with the value of a tenth for rating purposes.
- Create opportunity for a broadened perspective through judge dialogue and guided questions.
- Define BOA philosophy of band evaluation as contrasted to approaches in other pageantry organizations and how it impacts the sheets and recorded commentary.
- Develop focus and mind-set in preparation for evaluating a BOA show.

**I. General Recording Commentary**

The recorded commentary should provide 1) accountability for evaluation, 2) constructive criticism, and 3) useful information that addresses how to improve. Additionally, the tenor of the commentary should be perceived as genuine helpfulness and geared for student listening.

- Recorded commentary should be sincere and student oriented
- React to the performance with in-depth, substantive comments. Play by play commentary is not really helpful.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses with reasons for your reaction
- Use the descriptors in the criteria reference boxes in the commentary
- Provide specific help for improvement.
- Recognize and credit achievement – approach the sheets back to front.
- Be careful not to dwell on just one or two aspects of the performance, even if it is the major issue.
- There must not only be a balance of commentary based on what is to be evaluated on the sheet, but also a balance of the “what” and “how.”

- Provide a balance of positive and constructive comments offering support and reinforcement for challenges
- USE the **PQP** method of criticism—**Praise** student achievement, use **Questions** to address problematic areas, and help the staffs **Polish** the performance.
- Share enthusiasm for the activity in the tenor of your voice.
- Suggestions for changes should be manageable – however, this does not mean ignore problems that should be changed, but are not manageable
- Read or re-read the “Teacher, Counselor, Critic” article to remind us about our roles in this activity and how to communicate with groups of varying experiences.

Be careful with terminology: Realize that band directors and students listen to all the recordings and some of the terminology utilized in other arenas particularly regarding visual evaluation needs to be put in laymen terms.

Remember Achievement is the simultaneous occurrence of the “What & How.” Achievement terminology should match the descriptors. For example, adjectives such as excellent, superb, or wonderful should not be used to describe a box 3 impression. Similarly, adjectives such as good, OK, or acceptable should not describe a box 4 or 5 impression.

- Critical comments about the “how” should be followed with “how to fix”
- Generally, more information is needed about the DEPTH of the “what”
- Make comments that are useful for students and staff
- Avoid commentary that only identifies error
- Be careful that the perception of your voice demeanor is not demeaning or condescending
- Directors tend to make judgments about recorded input quality based on a disagreeable comment and then ignore the substance of the remainder of the recording.
- Choose your words carefully giving thought to what you are about to say and how you are going to say it. The dialogue should not be constant allowing you time to analyze, hear /see what is happening and be able to intelligently comment.
- Do not allow yourself to become impatient with groups because you have heard or seen the same problem many times, especially groups performing later in the day.

Remember, for 70% of the groups performing in prelims, this will be their only performance of the day, and perhaps the most important of their season.

***Be sure to distinguish the difference between commentary related to ensemble and performance effect. Ensemble comments generally relate to excellence, while performance effect comments relate to performer understanding and communication.***

***Balance your GE commentary to reflect the balance of the GE sheet—50% Repertoire Effect and 50% Performance Effect***

*React to General Effect Events and their transitions as they occur, but always provide an overall effect impression of each production as it concludes. Additionally, provide a holistic effect impression at the end of the show. Staffs need both the micro and macro view of each production and the entire show.*

## II. Numbers Management

The primary responsibility of the judge is to **rank and rate**: to have the groups in a well-considered order using the paradigms, philosophy and standards of Bands of America. The judges will also have the proper numeric spacing between the groups using the evaluation tools provided—judging sheets, tote sheets, philosophy papers, criteria questions, etc.

Stay consistent throughout the day with evaluation as it relates to commentary and tolerance.

Expand your perception and awareness, particularly of electronic contribution and its value.

At the beginning of the show, stay away from the criteria reference margins to avoid movement into boxes that do not fit the performance. However, remember that your first responsibility is to RANK & RATE. Correct rating could force a band's number to fall into a box that is undeserved. The criteria reference delineations are only a guide and not to be perceived as a barrier. Ties are not prohibited, but every effort should be made to avoid bottom line ties. However, remember that ties are also decisions!

- a. The descriptors in Boxes 1 – 4 are references to the middle of the criteria box. Bands must meet all of the criteria in Box 5 before they receive a number in that Box.
- b. Determine which 3<sup>rd</sup> of the box the band is performing, and then rank the band relative to those criteria—Impression, Analysis, Comparison.
  - The lower 3<sup>rd</sup>** of the descriptive area of the system provides a bridge between the previous box and the next higher level of description. The band will display all of the components within the description of the box area, but may have some weaknesses in one or more of the components.
  - The middle 3<sup>rd</sup>** is the area in which the unit typically displays all of the attributes of the box itself without distinction that might lead in the direction of the next higher box.
  - In the upper 3<sup>rd</sup>** some of the components are displayed with a distinction that leads towards the next higher level.
- c. An incomplete show must be considered in terms of achievement. You cannot fully reward a show that is not finished. That is not to say that an incomplete program cannot outscore a complete program, but the differences in achievement must be weighed in terms of the time, as well as, the quality. It is important to reward the units - their program and performance – as they are demonstrated at

- the time of viewing. Some bands will be very well prepared and perform extremely well in early season, where others will be more of a work in progress because each may have different goals for their season. Reward what is demonstrated not the potential of the program.
- d. It is important that we are consistent with the value of a tenth. Therefore, rate the band based on the following system as a guide for the **total caption number**:
    - 1-3 Tenths: The bands are essentially equal except that minor issues may rate one higher in the caption
    - 4-6 Tenths: There are subtle, but objective differences that make it clear that one band would be rated higher in the caption
    - 7-9 Tenths: There are at least one or two significant differences that are easily identifiable in comparison of the bands in the caption
    - 1 or more: There are generally several significant differences when comparing the bands in the caption
    - If the bands are clearly in separate criteria areas, refer back to which 3<sup>rd</sup> of the box or another box to determine the score.
  - e. Sub-captions are independently considered, but not independent. It is important to compare the units in sub captions first, and then evaluate the total score for accuracy to your overall impression. If the total number is not correct, re-evaluate your sub caption scores to adjust. It is not appropriate to rate the unit with a total number from impression and then accommodate the sub caption scores to agree with your total number. This skips the most important part of the assignment process--analysis. This will lead you to a final comparison more accurately as a judge.
  - f. Be careful not to be seduced into a quality number based on a single segment of the band--good clarinets, or fabulous trumpets or color guard.
  - g. Music judges: Remember, the aural expectation is band sonority!
  - h. Visual judges: Remember that marching style, as a choice is not judged, it's the accuracy/consistency and depth of training.
  - i. Use of the tote sheet and tally sheet – mark numbers on the tote first before transferring to caption sheet or block tote.
  - j. It is important that tolerances between judges within the boxes are similar, particularly GE Music. While it is possible for a band to be 2 boxes apart between captions, it is highly unlikely.
  - k. Develop and refer to anchor points throughout the day and make notes on each program. Identify a band in each neighborhood as the day progresses that become the reference point for your initial impression anchor. Write notes on your program to help with reference and recall.
  - l. Understand that credit cannot be given to performers, if the opportunity to demonstrate achievement does not exist in the content.
  - m. Greatest challenge will be rating the middle 50% of bands. Carefully, delineate and describe the subtle differences between bands in this vicinity.
  - n. Use of the Placemats (Handout-All placemats)
    - Reminder of the Philosophy and a tool for Comparison through questions

- Determine which group had the greater success – in each sub-caption by reviewing each question.

**Electronics-**

It is important to fairly assess the use of electronics and how it is used to elevate, enhance, or to mask issues within the band. It is essential to evaluate the role that the electronically produced effects are used within the program. It could be an issue when weaknesses in the band are covered by the use of electronic voices. This should lead to a consideration within achievement. For example, a moment created by one musician using an electronic instrument versus a similarly successful moment created by multiple students should be balanced by rewarding the achievement of getting multiple ensemble members to develop the moment in concert.

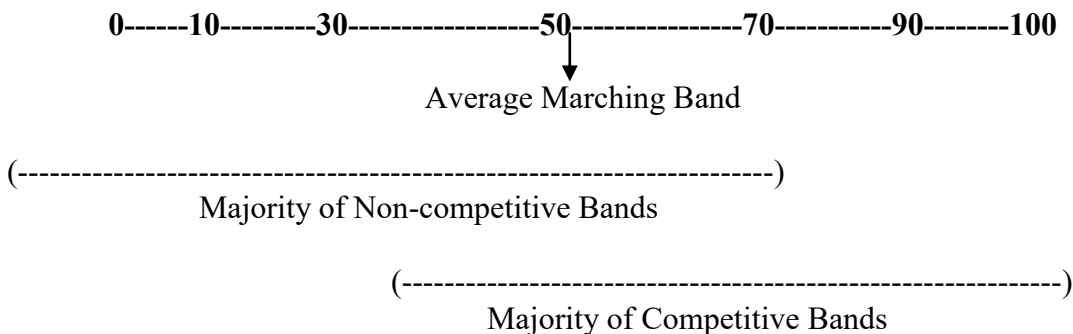
The absence of programmed electronics or distractions created by electronic malfunctions cannot be ignored by the adjudicator. If a significant part of the presentation is missing because of logistical issues, you must respond accordingly through commentary and scoring.

**III. Criteria Reference and a National Perspective**

Note that the criteria reference for marching band has no relationship to other national pageantry or local applications or philosophies.

**Judges – National Linear Scale**

- What is the National Linear Scale – History & Usefulness?
- The scale was intended to consider all 25, 000 marching bands in the U. S. from a National perspective.
- The majority of the competitive marching bands in the US fall into a segment of this scale.



**Achievement**

- Content (What) + Performance (How) = Achievement – The role of each in an educational setting.
- What is the hierarchy of the elements or components of Achievement?

1. Pure Musical/Visual Demands that challenge the performer
  - i. Technique
  - ii. Range
  - iii. Tuning demands
  - iv. Vocabulary
2. Environmental demands that challenge the performer
  - i. Spread/Density
  - ii. Spatial/Effort changes
  - iii. Changing of the Listening/Visual Center
3. Physical Demands
  - i. Speed and distance traveled
  - ii. Visual/Musical responsibilities moving
4. Each of these components must also be considered through the following degrees:
  - i. Level of Simultaneous Responsibilities – cognitive & physical
  - ii. Amount of time and number of performers involved

**Prelims-**

- The main emphasis for the judge in prelims is to advance the correct units into finals in your particular caption.
- The use of proper spreads, neighborhood assignments and a daylong consistency of the judge's tolerance are critical components to successfully achieve this goal. Your task is to reward the best units in your caption with finalist ranking. The System has been devised so that each caption has its valued weight in the overall evaluation of the bands. The compilation of these individual evaluations demonstrates the relative strengths and weakness of a program and the final totaling of the various captions will determine the ranking of the bands.
- Spreads in prelim scores might well be wider than in the final contest. BOA contests do not seed bands based on any performance criteria. You very may well see the best band during the morning sessions. You need to leave enough numerical distance to allow for an opportunity to respond to any scenario. The finals panel will be charged to refine the spreads and separations in the contest.

**Finals-**

- Most often the adjudicators are rotated between finals and prelims. Remember that with young students performances could vary from prelims to finals. Do not carry over any impressions you may have developed from prelims. It is an entirely different contest. The order is usually a draw within bottom half of the order and the upper half. The bands will not necessarily perform in order of their finish from prelims. So it is important for us to maintain a strong numbers management discipline.

**IV. Captions**

**General Effect - GE Music and GE Visual**

The Goal of the Music/Visual General Effect Sheet is to measure the effect of the program, and to measure the ability of the performers to communicate the program.

Provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the musical/visual program by rewarding the aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional components as realized through creativity, coordination, pacing, staging, continuity, and musical/visual interpretation. The performers are an integral part of the evaluation by communicating the program effectively.

Music GE judges should limit visual comments to substantive reaction to coordination/staging/enhancement.

Visual GE judges should include Audio-Visual interpretation and staging.

### **Visual Performance Ensemble – Visual Ensemble**

The Goal of the Visual Performance Ensemble Sheet is to measure the Achievement of Skill of the ensemble through their performance of the visual program. Provide an evaluation of the collective ensemble performance considering the content responsibilities required of the performers through the “active demonstration” of skill and excellence in technique, accuracy, and orientation. Visual Artistry is a discussion of the construction, its logic, and the use of accepted design principles. Understand that many times the ensemble performance issues are construction related and must be identified in terms of achievement and the opportunity of the performers to be successful. This sheet has changed from previous years to afford a better evaluation.

### **Music Performance Ensemble – Music Ensemble**

**The goal of the Music Performance Ensemble sheet is to reward** the Achievement of Skill as it relates to sound quality, intonation, accuracy, and musicality. Provide an evaluation of the ensemble performance considering the content responsibilities required of the performers. **Although content responsibilities would include environmental and physical—the majority of the evaluation should be musical content related to achievement.**

### **Visual Performance Individual – Individual Visual**

The goal of the Visual Performance Individual Sheet is to reward the Skill and Training of the individual performers, as it relates to accuracy and definition and the quality of technique. Provide a representative sampling and evaluation of the individual performance considering the content responsibilities required of the performers through the “active demonstration” of skill in form, body and equipment. Musical responsibilities should be considered when evaluating wind & percussion performers just as equipment responsibilities would be considered as content while moving.



Sampling ratios should match the number of performers—careful not to dwell on color guard. Field positioning should not be distracting to the students or the audience, but should reflect what is necessary to evaluate the caption.

### **Music Performance Individual – Individual Music**

The goal of the Music Performance Individual sheet is to reward the Achievement of Technique as it relates to accuracy, intonation, tuning and tone quality. Provide a representative sampling and evaluation of the individual performance considering the content responsibilities required of the performers through the “active demonstration” of sound quality, intonation, and accuracy.

**The music performance individual sheet has been adjusted using the former skills that were evaluated as sub-captions. These would then be sampled through all of the sections.**

**Be aware of the sampling and the relative amounts of time needed/warranted for each section, including the front ensemble.**

Try to make the rounds in each production and be prepared for percussion feature sections

Although content responsibilities should include the physical/environmental, the majority of the consideration should be musical content.

Field positioning should not be distracting to the students or the audience, and should only be close enough to evaluate individual performance, not provide a private lesson!!! It is extremely important that you not impede students marching.

### **V. Professionalism**

**Please refrain from cell phone use during the show except when necessary so there is not the appearance of collusion between judges. Most importantly, stay off SOCIAL MEDIA with regards to your role as BOA judge. We want to avoid unnecessary criticism about the judging process or the integrity of the BOA program.**

It is important that you take care in conversations with other judges and colleagues throughout the season. Please limit your judgmental opinions, even with colleagues. This is especially true in public. If overheard could be perceived as influence peddling. You never know who is within hearing distance

Band directors and staff **DO NOT HAVE A RIGHT** for a critique with you at any time unless approved by Gary Markham, Chief Judge. Please refrain from any conversation related to a band’s show or future competitive possibilities at any time during the season. There may be instances where the Chief Judge will suggest a conversation with a particular judge for specific clarification purposes only.

As a judge, even your casual conversations with staff members or directors must always remain professional. While you are entitled to your opinion, expressing it may be viewed as coming from the BOA judging community or the BOA staff.

Comments you make to others will always be repeated and probably exaggerated or misrepresented. Please refrain from any commentary on social media regarding as aspect of the shows you are judging. You have an important and unique position during the competitive season. Always think first and be professional.

Please do not call all of your friends after a show and give your play-by-play opinion of each band's performance or chances at Nationals.

**“PHILOSOPHY OF JUDGING - TEACHER, COUNSELOR, CRITIC”**  
**Author, Unknown**

It has always been an accepted priority that the responsibility of the judge is to rank the units in their correct order and to rate them with an appropriate number grade reflecting the quality of their design and the quality of their performance. Because this is a highly competitive activity, numbers are tremendously significant to the performers and the instructors. We must also take a long look at the nature of our activity. We as judges are extremely close to the units. We share in their growth, we take on the responsibility of giving them ideas for improvement, and we sometimes talk to the staff and try to help them understand what is being expected of them. Unlike athletic referees or umpires, unlike the Olympic judges we are not isolated from the competitors who we grade. This forces us to really take a long hard look at why we are judges.

In most cases, we have come from this activity; it has given something tremendously important to us. Either we have been performers or instructors. Some of us have felt the stinging indifference of a judge who didn't seem to care, and we have vowed never to be like that. Others have felt the nurturing of some special person who went just a little bit beyond his duty and helped us to grow. In any event, we are all basically motivated to give something back to an activity that is very special to all of us. Besides that, we all have a tremendous feeling for youngsters. We share a common delight in watching kids grow and develop into something special. These mutual qualities bring us to that credo which becomes our philosophy of judging.

COMMUNICATION skills are essential. We must communicate to the units in everything we do, the cassette tape, the critique, and just casual conversation with instructors carries a need for informative and sensitive communication skills. Judges and professionals should not employ sarcastic or rude dialog to those whom they adjudicate. Hurtful commentary is totally unnecessary and totally unacceptable. We must make

every effort to learn to speak to people in a firm, natural and positive manner. Your tone of voice frequently says more than the words you articulate. To convey boredom or annoyance is hurtful and unproductive.

A judge functions basically on three levels: Beginning units with very young, inexperienced instructors require us to be teachers. We will find many times when we are practically giving clinics in basic technique. This must be done with patience, with a firm guiding dialog, setting immediate goals that the unit can attain, offering encouragement when they are confused and enthusiasm when they show some level of success. Remember that these beginners are where many of you were some years ago and should be dealt with in rather basic terms. But remember too, that without encouragement and enthusiasm for their minor successes, growth will be severely impaired. The nurturing process at this level is of great importance.

At the second level, we deal with those units who have been around for a couple of years, felt some sense of success and think they are ready to move up to a higher level. Here we sometimes find ourselves dealing with the adolescent of our activity--convinced they know it all, and very reluctant to accept the fact that they have anything to learn. At this point we will find ourselves in the role of Parent-Counselor. This level probably takes the most patience, the strongest concern and the greatest amount of counseling and guiding you can devise. It is hard to watch units at this level stumble and make mistakes. But we cannot give up on them. At this level we encounter their impatience, their frustrations and their absolute conviction that they are not understood or appreciated. There could be some rough, heated times during this period.

Finally, the day may come when the student really grows up and we see moments of brilliance emerge from their creations and one day they have it all together. In terms of creativity they have surpassed the teacher, and outgrown the counselor and look to us now to be the critic. At this point we must challenge, encourage, and set even higher goals and standards for them to attain. We should expect outbursts of temperament from time to time. Be firm in what we will or will not accept but be professional and concerned because that is a part of our role.

A great teacher continually learns from his or her students--so, too, a good judge continually learns from his or her instructors. Communication and growth is a two way street. Good units and good judges grow together by helping one another, by keeping communication lines open and by setting mutual goals and standards for the activity. If you are only going to dabble in this activity, then please do not be available for judging assignments. Our activity has always demanded total commitment. Superior performers always give more than 100%. As judges our disciplines, our attitudes, and our integrity

must be a model for these performers to follow and instructors to follow. We expect them to be professional, so must we be; we expect them to respect us, so must we respect them. Demand no less of yourself than you would from each performer. Judge with your eyes and ears, comment with your heart in a positive, nurturing and challenging manner, and be honored to be a part of this very singular art form.



# Bands of America

---



## System and Judging Process

Gary Markham  
Chief Judge



# System Philosophy

---

- Provide more than a competitive outcome
- Be able to evaluate any band style or musical choice
- Provide Standards of Performance Excellence
- Allow for Creativity



# System Philosophy

---

- Promote musical communication through musical and visual performance
- Inspire the visual to be a representation of the music through form, body, and equipment
- Simultaneously examines what is being done and how well it is being performed
- Annually Reviewed and revised by peers



# System Overview

---

- Weighted to value music as a priority with visual enhancement
  - 60% of the value on Music
  - 40% of the value on Visual





# System Overview

---

- Weighted to value audience  
Entertainment and Communication
  - 60% General Effect
  - 40% Performance



# System Overview

---

- Evaluates:
  - Individual Skill and Training
  - Ensemble Responsibilities
  - Understanding and Communication



# Judging Captions

---

- 20 points\* Music Performance (Individual)
- 20 points\* Music Performance (Ensemble)
- 20 points\* Visual Performance (Individual)
- 20 points\* Visual Performance (Ensemble)
- 20 points Visual General Effect
- 20 points Music General Effect 1
- 20 points Music General Effect 2
  
- **\*Indicates scores are averaged**



# Judging Process Overview

---

- Recorded Commentary
  - Comments in real time as the show progresses
  - Provides Accountability for Evaluation
  - Constructive Criticism
  - Information for Improvement



# Judging Process Overview

---

- Written Commentary
  - Provides an overall assessment of the caption components
  - Scores provide an impression, analysis, and comparison result of performance achievement by subcaption



# Judging Process Tools

---

- Judging Sheet

- Provides “What” is to be evaluated
- Outlines the components of the caption



# Judging Process Tools

---

- Criteria Reference Rubric Questions
  - Provides the “How Well” assessment of the performance
  - Description of the relative “Achievement” required for each numerical score





# Judging Process Tools

---

- Comparison Guideline Questions
  - Indicates the analysis and comparison strategy for the caption
  - Reviews the philosophical approach to the caption





# Judging Process Tools

---

- Scoring detail Tabulation Sheet
- Ranking Tote Sheet



# Judge Training

---

- Comprehensive Detailed Judging Manual
- Regular Training Session prior to Contest
- System and Tools updated Regularly
- Model Tapes provided after each Contest
- One-on-One Evaluation by Chief Judge
- Advisory Board Performance Review
- Performance DVD's available as a Resource
- Post-contest Recap Sheets



# The Judging System Should

---

- Support Music Education Goals
- Reward and Inspire Achievement in Excellence, Challenge, and, Creativity
- Provide Guidance for Performance Improvement
- Fairly Evaluate Performance Breadth and Depth



**BANDS OF  
AMERICA®**