

Color Guard Staging

By: Terry W. Kent

When it comes to the band's Visual Ensemble, there are so many possibilities to enhance your band's performance. One of the most important aspects of the color guard's contribution to the band is the staging. The visual Ensemble's role in the High School Band's performance is to make the music come alive and proper staging is very helpful in achieving that goal. Here are a few pointers that can help you utilize your visual ensemble to the highest potential.

Set your transitions first. Decide in your program where the impact points are and where you need to change equipment. There would be a need to change equipment if you would like to bring out the mood and style of each piece the band is playing. A rule of thumb when doing transitions is to always leave something on the field for the audience and judges to look at. It is never a good idea to have your entire ensemble leave the field all at once and return all at once with the new flag or piece of equipment. One idea would be to have the ensemble leave randomly (a few at a time) and have them return a few at a time in order to create a seamless transition. The audience then has something visual to watch at all times.

Overlapping equipment changes over two songs is a good way to achieve a seamless transition. By that, I mean to make the equipment change after a different song has started, not always right at the end of the song and the beginning of the next. This idea of transition overlapping gives some continuity and flow to the musical idea and connects the songs together. A solo dancer or an exceptionally talented equipment diva can divert the audience's attention during that transition to keep the flow moving.

Once you have plotted your transitions, impact or high moments in the show should be planned out. Decide in your program where you want to achieve the high effect points and utilize the entire color guard. Covering the field with lots of color and large intervals would be a great way to end a show. Staging and field placement is important to bring the music to life. Solid forms in the visual ensemble tend to have more impact in the louder more full sections of the music. In these forms, there is a lot you can do with unison, layered and opposite work to maximize the effect. Straight-line forms are better used for subtler and less dynamic effects. Remember to use a variety of staging possibilities to bring out the music. Don't be afraid to incorporate the visual ensemble within the band. Some pass through maneuvers are acceptable and effective but try not to over do it. Too many pass throughs limit the choreography and scares the band members. Be careful not to stay in a particular form or making the same form too many times because it becomes stagnant and gets old very quickly.

Variety is very helpful to achieve a well-rounded visual ensemble-staging program. Weapons such as rifles and sabres and any props that you use should be staged near the front and never really going behind the front hash mark. These people are typically the older, more experienced and stronger performers. Their equipment is also too small to keep them hidden behind the band.

The Visual Ensemble is an integral part of the band's success. In order to achieve the highest amount of effect, the visual ensemble staging is at the top of the list for being most important. Bringing the music to life is an important job for the visual ensemble and

can be easily done with proper planning and execution of staging, choreography and training. Good luck with your program!