

Creative Visuals

by Missy McCurry, WGI & Bands of America Judge

On the field, parade route or in the gym, Auxiliaries are the VISUAL VOICE OF THE MUSIC! Today, more than ever, the sky's the limit when it comes to visual ideas.

In the past, auxiliaries were often limited to using one flag, usually school colors, for an entire field show. Now, with great colors available in china silk and tissue lame fabrics, you can create beautiful interpretations of all kinds of music. Think of your auxiliary unit as the "music in motion."

The first step is planning. Listen to music selection for your field show, parade routine or indoor color guard show and feel the mood of each piece of music. Close your eyes and picture what color you feel or see. Big, bold pieces of music are very effectively visualized using bright, strong colors and shapes in your flags or props. Remember your audience is usually pretty far away, so think BIG for your flags or props! Make a visual statement!

As each piece of music changes, play with variations of size, shape and color combinations to create new effects and to reflect the musical mood of the piece. Ballads or more lyrical pieces are very effective with softer colors, flowing shapes and more fluid choreography. Judges look for variety in your interpretations, crediting range and depth of creativity as your show progresses.

Theme shows can really be amazing when thought and detail is given to the auxiliary visual impacts. Say you are doing an "Austin Powers" medley - think fun colors, not only in your flags/props, but in your costuming and character of your performers. A piece of music like "Swan Lake" may call for a more classic, sophisticated look, using more of a refined approach like long fluid dresses and gradations of colors in your flags to depict the rich musical dynamics. Playing Copeland's "Rodeo" can inspire country western ideas conveyed by using theme flags and props such as corral gates on the field, horses on a stick, cowboy hats, wagon wheels, etc. How about "Spiderman?" Think about a giant spider web on the field for an awesome finale effect. You can even manipulate rope like a web as a prop. What about "Gladiator?" Vinyl makes great costuming and shields and mock swords make very creative props.

How do we come up with all of this, you ask? Sit and brainstorm with your booster parents, captains and directors. Most things can be handmade, allowing bonding of the parent organizations and pride in knowing you all helped out to create your visual effects! I'll never forget the strange reactions I

received in the local hardware store, when attempting to explain what I was going to do with that PVC pipe, or that feather duster! Remember: the sky's the limit when it comes to creativity and visual effects!

When you finally have your visual ideas mapped out, remember to think of the BIG PICTURE—how the colors and props are placed in your show, how the color palate relates to the costumes and the band uniforms. Remember to think like a team player. It is all one show and must be coordinated to be effective visually. If you have a color guard and a drill team, or even a feature twirler, you must coordinate your planned effects, as far as color, staging, or focal point on the field—again remembering the BIG PICTURE. The most successful programs are those that take the time to plan out the visual progression of your ideas, with lots of detailing. And don't forget - more is not always better!

Transitions to and from your flag or prop changes are crucial to the pacing and continuity of your program. Never take everyone off the field at the same time to make a prop change and always keep some element, like a soloist or a small ensemble, as the focus to distract from the prop transitions. Usually a prop change is meant to be a surprise, most often related to musical impacts and dynamics.

Pageantry offers the youth of today great opportunities to learn about expressiveness, role-playing, creativity, originality, teamwork, discipline and commitment. Your auxiliary can be a wonderful enhancement to the music, through creative visualization using color, character, and props. Have fun with it! Your willingness and freedom to explore creative visual ideas will help to inspire today's youth to be tomorrow's leaders!

