

Iowa Research Online

A history of Drum Corps International: 2000-2023.

Metzger, Kara

<https://iro.uiowa.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/A-history-of-Drum-Corps-International/9984698153202771/filesAndLinks?index=0>

Metzger, K. (2024). A history of Drum Corps International: 2000-2023 [University of Iowa].
<https://doi.org/10.25820/etd.007705>

<https://iro.uiowa.edu>
Free to read and download
Copyright 2024 Kara Metzger
Downloaded on 2025/07/16 15:32:08 -0500

**A History of Drum Corps International:
2000-2023**

by

Kara Metzger

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts
degree in Music (Wind Conducting) in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

August 2024

Thesis Committee:

Richard Mark Heidel, Thesis Supervisor
Eric W. Bush, Thesis Supervisor
John Manning
Marian Wilson Kimber

Copyright by

Kara Metzger

2024

All Rights Reserved

I dedicate this work to all individuals who love marching arts activities and those who have found safety and a home with people that they had never known could make a lasting impact on them. I hope that academic environments become more widely accepting of the marching arts fields as a whole. The values of instilling continual learning and growth is an important journey that the marching arts community provides for many individuals to do so in so many musical and extra-musical ways. Keep making these spaces possible for the future!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is hard to pinpoint just a few notable individuals to acknowledge throughout this process as so many people have been consequential in my life. First and foremost, thank you to the unwavering support my family has given me. They frequently give up their time, even on holidays or special events, allowing me the opportunity to continue to work on projects like this and help me pursue what I love to do! Micki and Gary Metzger are truly the best parents any person could ask for.

Thank you to the DCI community. This activity has always been a place that I have called a “home away from home” since I joined in 2011. I have made life-long connections that will always be very meaningful to me. This community of individuals continually bands together to support each other which shows throughout this document based on the generosity of support I was given to procure the information necessary to produce the final product of this document. The gift of time and knowledge from interviewees and survey participants is incomparable. A special thank you to Vicki McFarlane for helping me to create the connections needed for this project and being an unwavering leader in the drum corps activity.

Thank you to the profession! I have always wanted to pursue a career in music education, and more specifically in bands since I was a young and naive 7th grade student in Waukesha, Wisconsin. This community is unlike any other, and I have been supported throughout my journey here. Therefore, thank you to all students of music at any level. You have helped me to find my true calling and passion in life. Teaching helps me to continually grow and learn alongside other passionate humans and further develop my craft and musicianship.

Thank you to the community I have been a part of throughout all of my educational endeavors! All my teachers, mentors, colleagues, and peers have left an impact on who I am

today and will continue to shape my professional career going forward. A token of gratitude goes out towards my editor, Erin Maher and my weekly writing center mentor, Trudy Jacobs. A large portion of gratitude goes towards my close-knit support system throughout the past several years, but especially that of Drew Bonner, Emily Chiesa, Tori Colyer, Erin Dowd, Kathy Ford, Catherine Grimm, Reed Hartman, Megan Hobbs, Keelie Kruse, Amanda Mastrian, Dr. R. Ward Miller, Dr. Nick Miller, Dr. Myron Peterson, Kristen Ronning, Cory Schmitt, Dr. Tyler Strickland, and Dr. Sarah Suhadolnik. There are simply too many people to name who have aided in getting me to where I am today. Largely I would not be here without the great music educators that influenced me like Dr. Jonathan Allen, Dr. Derek Bromme, Cynthia Eisenmann, Mark Hoelscher, Guy Kammerer, Dr. Phil Ostrander, Dr. John Stewart, Dr. Mark Whitlock, and Dr. Jerry Young.

I have felt continuously supported throughout my time at the University of Iowa and want to thank Dr. Tammie Walker for her leadership in University of Iowa's School of Music and her drive towards making all students feel they can achieve their goals. An additional, and very important, nod of praise goes towards the guidance of my advisors and mentors throughout my time at the University of Iowa, Dr. R. Mark Heidel and Dr. Eric W. Bush. Their dedication to my success and growth has been unwavering. And finally, the rest of the committee at the University of Iowa, Dr. Marian Wilson Kimber and Professor John Manning. Every person listed here has been an integral component to my successes to date.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to inform readers about and guide them towards understanding the development of the Drum Corps International (DCI) activity between 2000 and 2023. It succinctly shows the inner workings of the community and allows for much of the information to reach a level of generalized knowledge for the community at large. Specifically, the project recounts many major changes that have occurred in the DCI community since 2000 by documenting relevant landmarks, past and present. Information surrounding DCI's structure, business practices, competition, rule alterations, show design, and membership are noted in detail. Major components in this research outline a business restructure for DCI in 2008, a more standardized approach to tour, alterations to the ensemble soundscape in terms of electronics, reporting of membership statistics since 2006, a heightening of professionalism to the activity at large, and the vital membership safety protocols researched and established. There is also commentary on their response to COVID-19 and effect on DCI. Prior to these discussions in the 2000s, introductory chapters sketch details of the longer history of DCI that are necessary to understanding present changes. These and other details emphasize the evolution of DCI, precursory information is integral to contextualize what occurred in the twenty-first century thus far.

The findings discussed in this thesis come from a conglomeration of sources, featuring interview prose from highly influential DCI personnel that carry the primary narrative along with additional sources to support claims throughout. These include Dan Acheson, former CEO of DCI (1995-2023), Dan Potter, DCI announcer, Vicki McFarlane, Colts Drum and Bugle Corps Director, Michael Klesch, Carolina Crown Drum and Bugle Corps Brass Arranger, and Richard Hinshaw, Colts Drum and Bugle Corps Drill Designer (formerly associated with the Cavaliers).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
DEFINITIONS: DCI TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND JARGON	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY	1
Literature Review.....	5
Drum and Bugle Corps History	5
Marching Band/Band Program History	6
Marching Music/Marching Arts History	9
Marching Arts Teaching Practices.....	10
Other Relevant Studies	11
Purpose of the Study	13
Methodology	14
Limitations	18
Thesis Organization	20
CHAPTER 2: THE FOUNDATION OF DRUM CORPS PRIOR TO DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL	22
American Drum and Bugle Corps.....	25
Competition/Governing Bodies	29
Show Design	34
Uniforms	35
Color Guard	39
Daily Life	42
CHAPTER 3: DCI 1972-2000.....	45

Foundational Framework for the Beginning of DCI.....	45
Beginnings of DCI	50
Competitions/Adjudication Philosophies.....	55
1980s Innovation.....	60
Corps to note	65
Drum Corps and Society	67
1990s	68
CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATION AND BUSINESS	71
Policy	89
Financial.....	90
Communication and Collaboration	93
Initiatives.....	96
Individual Corps Business	99
Covid-19 and DCI.....	101
CHAPTER 5: JUDGING, COMPETITION, AND INSTRUMENTATION.....	107
Rules Congress Proceedings	107
Logistical Rules	109
Ensemble Instrumentation	111
Percussion	112
Brass.....	119
Adjudication Methods.....	122
Competition Information	131
Tour Alterations	132

Non-Competitive Years	137
Post-Pandemic Competition.....	139
Overall Competitive Success	141
CHAPTER 6: SHOW DESIGN: MUSICAL AND VISUAL	146
The Design Process.....	149
Musical Innovation	153
Copyright	164
Visual Innovation.....	166
General Effect	170
Notable Shows	172
2000-2006	173
20007-2009	174
2010-2016	177
2017-2023	180
Overview.....	183
CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP LIFE.....	186
Daily Life	187
Membership Statistics	193
Recruitment.....	211
Financial Considerations.....	214
What Corps Provide for Membership	217
Pedagogy and Teaching	218
Membership Safety	224

Participation in Roles Outside of Member or Staff	236
Conclusion	237
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	238
Opportunities for Further Research	240
Closing Remarks	245
BIBLIOGRAPHY	247
APPENDIX A	257
Interview Questions for Dan Acheson	257
Full Transcript with Dan Acheson	258
APPENDIX B	279
Interview Questions for Dan Potter	279
Full Transcript for Dan Potter	280
APPENDIX C	287
Interview Questions for Vicki McFarlane	287
Full Transcript from December 27, 2023	288
Additional Transcripts from March 15, 2024	308
APPENDIX D	311
Interview Questions for Richard Hinshaw	311
Full Transcript for Richard Hinshaw	312
APPENDIX E	328
Interview Questions for Michael Klesch	328
Full Transcripts for Michael Klesch	329

APPENDIX F	344
Questionnaire for Current/Former Membership	344
APPENDIX G	345
Biographies for Interviewees	345
Dan Acheson	345
Dan Potter	345
Vicki McFarlane	346
Richard Hinshaw	347
Michael Klesch	348
APPENDIX H	349
Letter from IRB	349
APPENDIX I	350
Permissions for Photo Use (In Figures)	350
APPENDIX J	353
Complete List of DCI Corps Active for the Upcoming 2024 Competitive Season	353
DCI World Class	353
DCI Open Class	354
DCI All Age (new 2024)	354

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Percentage of Points for Drum Corps Shows Pre-DCI.....	30
Table 2: DCI Champions and Caption Awards Since 2000.....	143
Table 3: Average Age of Participants	194
Table 4: Gender Identification	196
Table 5: Ethnicity Reporting.....	198
Table 6: Household Factors	200
Table 7: Number of Seasons Participated	202
Table 8: Private Instruction.....	203
Table 9: Audition Statistics.....	204

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: “Week-End Trip to Rhinelander, Wis., & Park Falls, Wis.”	38
Figure 2: “Schedule of Appearances”	43
Figure 3: “General Effect- Bugles”	58
Figure 4: “What We Do! Staff Structure”	80
Figure 5: “Music Effect/Brass Performance/Ensemble Music/Percussion Performance 2”	126
Figure 6: “Visual Proficiency”.	127
Figure 7: “General Effect”.	129
Figure 8: “ <i>Down Side Up</i> Uniform”.	180
Figure 9: “ <i>Jagged Line</i> Prop”.	182

DEFINITIONS: DCI TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND JARGON

A.A.D.B.C.B.A.: An acronym for All-American Drum and Bugle Corps and Band Association.

Age Out: The defined age for membership in junior corps groups. All participants must be 22 or younger on June 1 of any calendar year to participate in that season.

Analysis (Visual/Musical): The adjudication category that views the entire musical or visual package of a corps' show. This is reflected on the 2016 rubric revisions in DCI as specific categories.

Auxiliary Percussion: Percussion that does not fall into battery or mallet categories. These are often smaller instruments that create specific timbral effects in ensembles, such as triangles, bongos, tambourines, and other percussive instruments.

Backsticking: A technique that percussionists use to alter their traditional performance style using the opposite side of their stick for greater performance variation.

Battery: percussionists that march on the field with harnessed drums and/or cymbals

Bibs: A component to corps proper uniforms. They appear as pants, but go up higher on an individual to appear like overalls.

BOA: An acronym for Bands of America.

Bracket: a way to describe a competitive organization within drum corps. DCI is not the only bracket that has existed throughout time.

Bugle: Brass instruments played in this ensemble, found in different pitches in different eras. These instruments began valveless and added rotors and/or pistons throughout their evolution.

Camp: A weekend event held prior to the drum corps season. These events are often in conjunction with auditions and/or rehearsals on the upcoming show content.

Caption: A term used for a section of a corps.

Caption Head: A staff member in charge of a certain section and its staff members.

Crew: A crew is a task or chore that members engage in to make sure the corps operates smoothly. Often these crews occur in conjunction with travel of some sort.

Color guard: A non-musical, purely visual element to the ensemble. Mostly commonly these performers use dance, flags, sabres, and rifles within their choreography.

Corps Director: This person is often a full time staff member of the organization that directs the corps administratively.

Corps Proper: members of a drum corps traditionally in the brass and percussion sections.

Corps Style: A style of marching often referred to when an ensemble marches with a “low step” approach. See also: Low Step in this definition list.

DCA: An acronym for Drum Corps Associates.

DCI: An acronym for Drum Corps International.

Division II/III: A classification of competition in DCI prior to the term Open Class. These ensembles included a smaller number of performers than the top classification. This classification was noted between 1992 and 2007.

Facing: The direction a member’s front is oriented towards as they perform. Often, but not always, this is towards the front sideline or audience.

Front Ensemble/pit: A group of percussionists that participate with limited mobility, often stationary in front of the field. The two terms here (front ensemble and pit) are frequently used interchangeably.

General Effect: A way to evaluate a drum corps based on overall perception, this category can often be subjective.

Junior Corps: A corps comprised of membership in the age range of sixteen to twenty-one. An extension of age is granted to those turning twenty-two after June 1 of any calendar year which is called a “Bonus Year.”

Low Step: A style of marching where performers keep their feet low to the ground. Often, but not always, corps use a straight leg shape in conjunction with this technique.

Majorette: A female version of a “major,” like drum major. The term is used more historically prior to 2000.

Marching Arts: A term used interchangeably with pageantry arts which is used to describe the overarching activities in all marching bands, indoor drumlines, color guard groups, and drum corps.

Match Grip: When percussionists perform with both hands facing in the same direction. This is opposed to traditional grip where the left hand (usually for snare drum performers) is oriented upward instead of the ground.

Open Class: The competition classification in DCI immediately below World Class.

Pageantry Arts: A term used interchangeably with marching arts which is used to describe the overarching activities in all marching bands, indoor drumlines, color guard groups, and drum corps.

Performance (Visual): An adjudication caption that refers to the style in which the performers are executing and their degree of achievement. This is reflected as a caption title in the 2016 DCI rubrics.

Pre-season: any activity that occurs September-May in drum corps. This is also a period of great planning and preparation for administrative individuals .

Presentation of Colors: A component of drum corps shows prior to 2000 that required a special sequence of movements to reveal the American Flag. This is highly steeped in the military tradition of corps' roots.

Program Coordinator: a staff member in charge of the design and direction of the show

Rep: An abbreviation for repetition that is used as jargon in drum corps as a segment that members engage in during rehearsal.

Rifle: A piece of equipment, non-functional in nature, that color guards typically incorporate into their movements.

Sabre: A piece of equipment, non-functional in nature, that color guards typically incorporate into their movements.

Set: This word can have two meanings in drum corps; first is the formations that are represented on the field from performing members, or second this is the position of attention that members maintain throughout their given segments.

Senior Corps: A corps comprised of adults (anyone over the age of twenty-one)

Subcaption: A smaller component to each caption or section. i.e. trumpets are a subcaption within the brass caption.

Tech (Technician): A member of the instructional staff of a corps.

Tour: Throughout the summer drum corps call their movements a tour as they travel from city to city. Some components of the tour are shows, rehearsals, and move-ins (mostly stationary rehearsal days).

Tour Director: A staff member in charge of the logistics of touring with the ensemble.

UIL (University Interscholastic League): A competitive organization outlining rules specifically in Texas.

VFW: acronym for Veterans of Foreign Wars

WGI: acronym for Winter Guard International

World Class: The top classification for DCI competition.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

Originating in the early 1900s, drum and bugle corps have emerged as part of the marching arts community, becoming the flagship experience for marching excellence and establishing itself as highly competitive and ever creative in their endeavors. Its self-proclamation as, “Marching music’s major league” speaks to these aims. Drum Corps International (DCI) is the flagship organization presiding over Open and World Class drum corps competition today.¹ DCI, at its core, has been a dynamic force propelling marching music forward. In recent times, drum corps involved in DCI have undergone significant transitions and shifts in the avenues of competition, ensemble construction, show design, member life, and business organization. The primary purpose of the study is to chronicle the history of Drum Corps International from 2000 to 2023.

Over the past six hundred years, marching music has undergone growth and, at times, altered its artistic intent. For example, militaristic signaling, which can be traced to the fifteenth century, became the inception for marching musical units.² In the United States, colonists from Europe utilized a similar tradition in military music which originated with fife and drum musicians. Both instruments in these early ensembles were easy to procure at the time.³ The accessibility of instruments paired well with the folk music tradition and the military music

¹ The competitive classification systems in DCI, “About Drum Corps International,” Drum Corps International, 2022, <https://www.dci.org/static/about-drum-corps-international>.

² Stephen L. Rhodes, “A History of the Wind Band,” July 7, 2007, <https://windbandhistory.neocities.org/>.

³ James Clark, *Connecticut's Fife and Drum Tradition* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 14.

tradition in colonial America.⁴ These precursor musical organizations led to the development of bands and marching ensembles in the United States, spurred by President John Adams in 1798 when he signed an Act of Congress establishing the United States Marine Band.⁵ The ensemble began as a marching musical unit similar to others of this period. These early military units were not the only ensembles of this nature, and they continued throughout U.S. history. Details regarding these early drum corps ensembles are highlighted in chapter 2.

Military musical units were adopted into scholastic settings by the late 1800s. These ensembles originally consisted of fifes and drums and later expanded to include brass; they performed for special campus events such as parades.⁶ Upon the introduction of the bugle into American marching ensembles after World War I, drum and bugle corps began to emerge with great popularity.⁷ These ensembles, in turn, inspired a consistent growth in visual and musical output, which led to the development of the marching arts. Marching arts, as defined in this study, are any type of musical productions that include the musicians and participants moving in an organized fashion whilst making music. Today, this category includes marching bands, drum and bugle corps, and winter percussion/guard groups.

The movements of marching ensembles began in simplistic block formations and have since expanded to include charted pictures and complex shapes within the marching drill. As this

⁴ Clark, *Connecticut's Fife and Drum Tradition*, 14.

⁵ Frank L. Battisti, *The New Winds of Change: The Evolution of the Contemporary American Wind Band/Ensemble and Its Music* (Delray Beach, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 2018), 326.

⁶ Samuel Carter Biggers Jr, "On Iowa! A History of the University of Iowa Marching Band, 1881–2012" (DMA thesis, The University of Iowa, 2013), 12-15.

⁷ Raphael Osheroff and Robert Zinko, "The Big Parade," in *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 3.

movement expanded, so did the purpose of these ensembles. University marching bands have often been used as a way to support athletic endeavors and create a general spirited atmosphere for event attendees and participants. At the beginning, these bands were frequently part of parade participation, military drills, and civic/patriotic ceremonies.⁸ This involvement, in turn, helped the marching ensembles to establish their presence in scholastic environments. These groups now serve a multitude of needs within a school's culture and its surrounding community including athletic events, parades, and community gatherings. Similar ensembles, such as drum and bugle corps, have also branched out into private, non-scholastic organizations and have incorporated competitive aspects into their shows. Competition is not exclusive to the private sectors of the marching arts, though. Both the scholastic and private sectors have incorporated competition as the activity has evolved, making it an integral component of the marching arts. Trends in the competitive aspects have also incorporated theatrical elements to enhance and further develop the current state of the field.

Drum and bugle corps, often simply called "drum corps," has been one of the driving forces of competitive marching arts. The drum and bugle corps emerged in the early 1900s as a community-based activity for non-trained musicians.⁹ Robert Zinko writes, "[A] Legion, whose bugles and drums thundered from every town and city in our land, did not let us forget your great sacrifice."¹⁰ The great sacrifice, in this instance, was the First World War. Parades were full of corps units at this time, and many were utilized to show support for those who had served or

⁸ Battisti, *The New Winds of Change*, 326.

⁹ Osheroff and Zinko, "The Big Parade," 3.

¹⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, 1.

were serving in the military. This spirited initiative was infectious and led to a major increase in ensembles. From 1921 through 1939, participants enthusiastically sought out “Veteran sponsored” drum and bugle corps activities.¹¹ This endeavor was rooted mostly in spirited and not necessarily musically rich performances.¹² Drum corps initially served as a means to better the local community operating in conjunction with the ensemble by providing an activity for school-aged individuals outside of a traditional classroom. Advertisements for older versions of the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps depict drum corps as a way for students to get involved in a positive activity and “stay out of trouble.”¹³ These corps essentially began with elements of regional-based parade traditions; through the development of competitive circuits, they have evolved to include expertly designed field shows with fully developed performance tours.

Though drum corps activity initially became popular in the early 1900s, 1972 marked a turning point due to the establishment of Drum Corps International as one of its overall competitive governing bodies. Through its roughly fifty-year history, DCI has evolved to become the major organization of competitive marching arts circuits. Its humble beginnings initiated with an informal conversation between Jim Jones (director of the Troopers) and Don Warren (director of the Cavaliers) in the pursuit of each drum corps being the “master of its own destiny.”¹⁴ Prior to the 1970s, the V.F.W. (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and American Legion organizations ruled the competitive circuits for corps and they did not allow corps to have

¹¹ Osheroff and Zinko, 9.

¹² Osheroff and Zinko, 9.

¹³ Corps Membership- Colts Drum and Bugle Corps, advertisement, 1960s.

¹⁴ William Howard, “Masters of their destiny – DCI is established,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 319.

autonomy in creating rules by which they were adjudicated on. The “tick-based” judging system that was used was punitive, as it tallied the total errors of individuals within the group. At this point, corps leadership wanted autonomy to create their own criteria for evaluation. Since then, the activity has drastically changed. The DCI musical productions that have developed over the years have achieved higher levels of visual and musical qualities. The ensembles in DCI intend to educate students, but they are not part of a formal or academic educational system. Some highlights of drum corps’s advancement include the evolution of DCI as a business, judging criteria, alterations to ensemble make-up, show design, corps life and culture, and general pedagogy, which will be discussed throughout this project. All of these factors have assisted in the development of a high level of artistic output within the marching arts community.

Literature Review

While previous studies have outlined historical elements in drum corps prior to the year 2000, current scholarship lacks in-depth analysis and historical details surrounding the DCI community in the twenty-first century. The research outlined in the categories below will serve as the foundation for this study. In addition to subject matter, the structure employed by many previous scholarly works informs the organization of the project to present them thoroughly in a clear and cohesive manner.

Drum and Bugle Corps History

The first important document to recount the history of drum corps is a two-volume set titled *The History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, edited by Steve Vickers.¹⁵ The second source is a

¹⁵ Steve Vickers, ed., *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps*, 2 vols. (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002).

single volume by Nicholas Waerzeggers about the first ten years of Drum Corps International.¹⁶ Neither of these sources provides information after 2002. Both resources utilize detailed information and personal anecdotes to document the history of drum corps. They also provide images to illustrate the drill formations, uniforms, performances, and the corps' daily life throughout different time periods. These two sources serve as a model for this research in their structural and categorical topics discussed.

While previous resources do not cover the entire history of Drum Corps International into the twenty-first century, they provide support for understanding the formative years of the drum corps activity and offer ample details related to DCI's founding and organization. Expansion of the research is necessary to continue the previous narrative and to provide commentary about today's drum and bugle corps. While some components of drum corps retain traditional practices, many aspects of the activity have evolved drastically over the past twenty years.

Marching Band/Band Program History

Although Drum Corps International is the focus of this study, marching band traditions and histories developed in tandem with drum corps, and several historical theses have been written regarding band programs and/or marching bands. These sources provide grounding to historical documentation of other musical organizations while also adding fuel to research in marching arts. Two examples of this type of writing have been produced by students at the University of Iowa. Most recently, Tyler Strickland completed his thesis in 2022 recounting the history of the Auburn Band program.¹⁷ An integral component of this research was the Auburn

¹⁶ Nicholas Waerzeggers, *Drum Corps International: The First Decade, 1972-1981*, vol. 1, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Sights & Sounds, 2010).

¹⁷ Tyler Lee Strickland, "On to Vict'ry, Strike Up the Band! A History of the Auburn University Band Program from 1991 to 2021" (DMA diss., The University of Iowa, 2022).

University's marching band. This document was a continuation of an earlier historical look into this band program.

Another study detailing a historical document of a program centers around the Hawkeye Marching Band. "On Iowa! A History of the University of Iowa Marching Band, 1881–2012," was written by S. Carter Biggers in 2013. Throughout this study, Biggers addresses significant changes in the band's history and traditions. This thesis provides a foundation for future research in the study of marching bands and marching arts. Furthermore, Biggers provides a rationale in his study that supports my current project by mentioning that drum corps has "influenced the development of marching bands in America."¹⁸ The concept of drum corps's influence on marching bands is tied into the research completed by Kenneth Guthrie in 1983 at the University of Arkansas outlining changes to marching styles in marching bands toward the modern drum corps style. Guthrie dedicates an entire chapter to the evolution of marching style.¹⁹ He describes the use of a high step (a marching style where legs are significantly taken off of the ground, often in a "chair"-like position) and low step technique. The low step technique is a common "corps-style" technique that stemmed from the drum corps tradition, though it has not been always used by all drum corps. Through this shared technique, the marching band and drum corps communities have become intertwined; both are important facets in the marching arts community thus, each must be considered to understand the other's development.

The history of other collegiate band programs have been chronicled, including the University of Miami (McKenzie), California State University - Long Beach (de Seriere), and

¹⁸ Samuel Carter Biggers Jr., "On Iowa! A History of the University of Iowa Marching Band, 1881–2012" (DMA diss., The University of Iowa, 2013), 5.

¹⁹ Kenneth Ray Guthrie, "Changing Marching Styles: Traditional Marching Band to Drum Corps Style" (Ed.D. diss., University of Arkansas, 1983), 18-30.

Stephen F. Austin University (Atkins).²⁰ These studies provide further grounding for the chronicling of specific programs in a historical manner. Though they primarily focus on concert band practices, their methods can also be applied to a marching band setting.

Another significant study related to marching band was conducted by Michquaelena Ferguson at The Pennsylvania State University, involving the oral histories of women in marching bands following the passing of Title IX. This resource focuses on the importance of overall culture within a marching program and provides insights into first-hand experiences. The project ultimately demonstrates that personal experience can serve in the presentation of a powerful historical perspective.²¹

For collegiate marching bands, John Allen Fuller of The Ohio State University, completed a dissertation titled “A descriptive analysis of the eleven Big Ten Conference marching band programs” in 1995.²² This study highlights key research on marching musical organizations such as a history of marching bands in America, analysis on arranging/drill writing, marching styles, staffing models, rehearsal instruction, travel. Many of the analytical techniques will be utilized within the current study. Additionally, Fuller’s study was continued in

²⁰ Craig S. McKenzie, "A Timeline and History of the Band Program at the University of Miami" (DMA diss., University of Miami, 2019); Jeffrey E. de Seriere, II, "The Band Program at California State University, Long Beach: Its History and Contributions to the Wind Band Medium" (MM thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2018); Christopher Michael Atkins, "A Brief History of the Band Program at Stephen F. Austin University since Its Inception to the Present (1926-1998)" (MA thesis, Stephen F. Austin State University, 1998).

²¹ Michquaelena Potlunas Ferguson, "Oral Histories of Women Instrumentalists in College Marching Bands Post-Title IX" (DMA diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2021).

²² John Allen Fuller, “A Descriptive Analysis of the Eleven Big Ten Conference Marching Band Programs” (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 1995).

2018 by Joseph Scheivert continuing the precedent that revisiting historical data and reporting changes within organizations are important undertakings.²³

Marching Music/Marching Arts History

Research related to early marching music ensembles that became a precursor to the marching arts of today is also relevant to the current study. An example of this is military music ensembles. For example, James Clark outlines a tradition of fife and drum ensembles in the New England Area, addressing the initial militaristic nature of such ensembles like this and their intentions as well as their importance in history.²⁴

A recent published work related to the history of marching arts was completed in 2023 by Nicholas Joseph Miller. The dissertation chronicles percussion writing for the DCI's Santa Clara Vanguard from their formation in 1968 to the present day.²⁵ This study pinpoints one specific aspect of show design, percussion scoring and arranging.

Marching arts studies have also initiated research considering competition in musical avenues. Many states have their own governing systems for marching competitions, with the process in Texas being very detailed. The University Interscholastic League (UIL) administers these endeavors for high school programs. In 1975, Bruce Cook chronicled this program's history

²³ Joseph Elliot Scheivert, "Big Life. Big Stage. Big Ten. An Examination of Big Ten Conference March Band Policies and Procedures concerning Social Media, Copyright, Relationships with Athletic Departments, and Behavioral Expectations" (DMA diss. The University of Iowa, 2018).

²⁴ Clark, *Connecticut's Fife and Drum Tradition*.

²⁵ Nicholas Joseph Miller, "Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion: Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps, 1968 to 2023" (DMA diss., The University of Iowa, 2023).

and was able to view competitive music making through an academic lens.²⁶ This study provides grounding for the current project in both historical and marching arts elements.

Marching Arts Teaching Practices

In addition to historical studies, the development of teaching resources dedicated to the marching arts is essential to understanding their historical trends. A common source is Gary Smith's *The System*, which provides an overview of an entire marching program today by outlining perspectives on teaching different marching fundamentals, drill design, and special teaching needs.²⁷ The book has gone through many editions and revisions and has become a top-tier resource in marching arts pedagogy.

Another comparable resource to Smith's, *The System*, is a text published by Dan and Karen Ryder titled, *Techniques of Marching Band Show Designing System*.²⁸ Other sources that addresses teaching and management of marching arts ensembles is Hjelmervik and Berg's *Marching Bands: How to Organize and Develop Them*. This resource assists ensemble leaders in understanding the important topics of equipment purchases and marching band preparation.²⁹ Alternative resources that follow a similar pattern to Smith and Hjelmervik and Berg is *The Complete Marching Band Resource Manual* by Bailey, et al. This manual provides guides to

²⁶ Bruce Farrell Cook, "Twenty-five Years of Music Competition under University Interscholastic League Administration" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1975).

²⁷ Gary Smith, *The System: Marching Band Methods* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2019).

²⁸ Dan Ryder and Karen F. Ryder, *Techniques of Marching Band Show Designing System* (Wylie, TX: Dan Ryder Field Drills, 2016).

²⁹ Kenneth Hjelmervik and Richard C. Berg, *Marching Bands; How to Organize and Develop Them* (New York: Ronald Press, 1963).

writing drill, designing shows, and teaching specifically for marching bands.³⁰ The precedent clearly shows that directors need more information around the marching arts than their traditional education might provide. For the purpose of this project, understanding past trends assists in guiding future education within the marching arts.

Other Relevant Studies

In addition to historical and educational sources revolving around the drum corps and marching arts activities, dissertations have explored other aspects relating to drum corps. Each of these studies is closely related to my current interests and directly informs the project at hand.

Program comparison is another precedent related to chronicling the marching arts. Taylor Whitehead performed this type of study in a thesis titled “A Comparative Study of the Marching Bands at Four Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” which provides insight for comparing other marching arts activities.³¹ This is important since DCI holds many member corps. These corps, though similar, do not all operate in the same manner. Therefore, cannot be viewed through exactly the same lens.

Research centered more explicitly on drum corps was produced by Lane Summerlin. This study focuses on the front ensemble, a small subsection of musicians in a drum corps that is typically located at the front of the field and performs in a stationary manner. These members often play keyboards such as marimba, xylophone, and vibraphone. Another function of the front

³⁰ Wayne Bailey, Cormac Cannon, and Brandt Payne, *The Complete Marching Band Resource Manual: Techniques and Materials for Teaching, Drill Design, and Music Arranging*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

³¹ Taylor Leonard Whitehead, “A Comparative Study of the Marching Bands at Four Historically Black Colleges and Universities” (Ed.D. diss., Liberty University, 2023).

ensemble is performing on auxiliary percussion equipment that can be most commonly associated with timbres found in a concert venue. In many competitive marching performances, this musical unit provides additional colors and timbres to the soundscape. Similar to wind band music, front ensembles and their instruments have expanded over time. Initially, marchers in drum corps moved with various pitched percussion instruments which later turned into the front ensembles. Front ensembles were also the first subsection to utilize amplification which has been the subject of substantial debate within the marching arts community. This concept is further explored in a master's-level research project conducted by Erin Maher, which discusses the resistance to the changes within the tradition of the activity. Like many changes occurring over time, the addition of amplification has been met with "the idea that drum corps is losing its connection to its own history."³² This argument, like many in the drum corps field, provides a special relevance to this project since amplification continues to be utilized and championed within DCI regardless of the controversy it spurs.

Additional research, specifically on the percussive components of drum corps, was conducted by Jason Giachetti in 2022.³³ His work aimed to produce qualitative assessment of percussion writing in drum and bugle corps.

Further studies conducted that are key components towards discussion of specific topics in this project include Alyssa Wells's dissertation, "Falling Out of Step: Belonging, Grit, and

³² Erin K. Maher, "The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International: Technological Change and the Meaning of Tradition" (MA thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), 4.

³³ Jason J. Giachetti, "A Qualitative Analysis of Front Ensemble Arrangements for Drum Corps International Finalists and Applications to Marching Band Programs" (DMA diss., Five Towns College, 2022).

Drum Corps International's Moment of Reckoning,"³⁴ which grappled with the #MeToo movement in 2017 American Culture and how it impacted the DCI community. DCI's response become part of this project. Other studies focusing on gender, sexuality, and program design in drum corps have also been completed by Nathan Huxtable providing further grounding.³⁵

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document significant changes and developments within Drum Corps International from 2000 to 2023. In so doing, it will highlight important figures and events as they relate to DCI's organization and business practices, competition and judging, ensemble makeup, show design, and membership. In turn, this study describes the state of Drum Corps International by documenting the recent history of the organization. This document creates further awareness regarding the activity and strives to demystify DCI as a whole. Additionally, the study reveals opportunities for future research into parallel trends in other marching arts communities.

Overall, the evolution and rapid development of DCI has been expansive in the past 23 years, making the project and its contributions worthwhile in an academic conversation. 2023 is a logical marker for the conclusion of the research period due to the retirement of CEO Dan Acheson, at the completion of that season. Since 2000, there have been major changes to the workings of the DCI circuit, which will be explored at length in this study. Ultimately, the study will produce ample information justifying its importance in academic avenues.

³⁴ Alyssa Wells, "Falling out of Step: Belonging, Grit, and Drum Corps International's Moment of Reckoning" (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2022).

³⁵ Nathan R. Huxtable, "Making the Man in North American Drum Corps: Masculinities and Militaristic Music in Performance" (MA thesis, University of California Riverside, 2022).

Methodology

The nature of this study primarily falls within qualitative research methodology. Research strategies, such as sample sets, were informed by the text, *Educational Research* by Johnson and Christensen. Most of the sampling for research was conducted using purposive sampling.³⁶ With this method, the researcher selects specific subjects for their research based on their qualifications. In this case, program administrators, marching members, and show designers are utilized as samples.

The research specifically targets individuals to be key contributors as interviewees for primary source material. These participants are staff members, show designers, and operations managers within Drum Corps International. Interviews with DCI representatives were conducted via Zoom video platform from December 2023 through March 2024. Transcripts were generated from the closed captioning function on Zoom and were reviewed and edited by the interviewer for accuracy and clarity.

The following individuals were interviewed to provide insight about DCI: Dan Acheson (retired CEO of DCI), Dan Potter (long-time DCI announcer and commentator), Vicki McFarlane (corps director for the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps), Richard Hinshaw (former drill writer with the Cavaliers and current drill writer for the Colts), and Michael Klesch (brass arranger for Carolina Crown). Dan Acheson has served on the board of directors for DCI since 1995 and was later appointed Chief Executive Officer. He retired from this role upon the conclusion of the 2023 Drum Corps International season. The majority of the changes that have occurred in DCI are directly connected to his work in the past twenty-three years, making his voice an integral component in reporting and recounting its history. Dan Potter has been a major

³⁶ R. Burke Johnson and Larry B. Christensen, *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2017), 267.

voice for DCI since 1991 through announcing and interviewing. He has many insights that are directly relevant to recounting the student and staff perspectives. As the director of a drum corps since 2002, Vicki McFarlane provides a unique angle by contributing a wealth of inside knowledge. She began as the director of the Colt Cadets, an Open Class drum corps. In 2013, she moved into the director role in a World Class corps, the Colts. She serves on many committees within DCI and has recently been elected to its board of directors. She provided an abundance of knowledge imperative to multiple key categories in DCI's understanding. Both Richard Hinshaw and Michael Klesch were selected based upon their reputation within the designing community. They have continually worked within the show design process for a good portion of the current century and upheld approaches representative of most design processes today. Interviews took place on the following dates: McFarlane, December 27, 2023, Richard Hinshaw, January 9, 2024, Dan Acheson January 20, 2024, Dan Potter, January 29, 2024, and Michael Klesch, February 23, 2024. Due to scheduling issues, some interviewees changed since the initial proposal. Therefore, since the prospectus defense, one interviewee was altered to accommodate schedules for both researcher and subject. Upon the conclusion of these interviews, the researcher compiled and provided each interviewee with a copy of the transcripts from their session to confirm for accuracy.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher was also able to interact with former DCI board of directors' member, Steve Auditore. Auditore has been highly influential in the community and has continually been collecting and documenting the member experience with surveys since 2006. The researcher spoke with Auditore on the phone on January 17, 2024, and obtained more pertinent information regarding the inner workings of DCI. This conversation also led to Auditore providing the research with data from surveys that were administered through

DCI and anonymously reported membership data. The surveys began in 2006 and have continued annually through the current year, apart from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The information provided an additional type of primary source that the researcher utilizes in Chapter 7.

The previously mentioned interviews consisted of questions specific to each person's role in the DCI community. The questions were formulated in an open-ended fashion to provide for ample explanation and dialogue. The data reported throughout the interviews was synthesized based on broad scale information. It provided detail and grounding to the overarching needs of this research within this document. Insight into successful interview strategies was provided by *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research* edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney.³⁷ The researcher listened for similarities of answers provided by multiple participants as a means to determine relevance of specific facts as they related to the overall study. Additionally, the researcher aimed to understand the narrative behind the answers. There is potential for overlapping oral accounts that do not align completely due to personal experience. If this occurs, it will be noted as a discrepancy in the writing of the chapters to come as information is reported.

In addition to these interviews, the researcher conducted her own brief survey containing questions related to membership in DCI between 2000 and 2023. The contents of the survey included a total of eleven short response questions for respondents to fill out. This survey was conducted while maintaining the anonymity of the subjects and collecting no data that could allow for respondents to be identified in any way. Survey participants volunteered their time to

³⁷ Jaber F. Gubrium, et al., eds, *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research : The Complexity of the Craft* (Thousand Oaks, SAGE, 2012).

complete the survey. The researcher utilized both convenience and snowball sampling to procure the necessary survey responses. Ultimately, the survey was conducted using the social media platform, Facebook. Snowball sampling was utilized as the survey was posted on the researcher's personal page and shared by many colleagues.³⁸ Additionally, a post within the "Drum Corps Friends" group elicited 221 completed responses. The data from this survey were then coded for similar and prevalent responses to determine trends throughout the past twenty-three years.

Utilizing human interactions like surveys and interviews required additional confirmation from the University of Iowa to maintain proper ethics throughout the study. Conferral with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was utilized to determine that the nature of the work being completed is compliant with all policies and ethical practices. When submitted for approval, this work was deemed to meet the definition of human subject research as outlined by the IRB. The form explaining this is attached to this document as Appendix H.

Further research components include online news reports, archival findings, and video analysis from drum corps events. Items such as photographs, newspaper articles, and videos of performances and/or rehearsals will be essential for mapping trends and providing a detailed history. A particularly fruitful resource was found in Tim Hinton's podcast, *Marching Roundtable*, which provided insight into various topics that were not covered within interviewee responses but highlighted aspects of DCI that are essential to the daily operations of many corps.

Outside of interviews and surveys, additional information will also stem from previously conducted research in the DCI field. For example, three studies from the literature review will be

³⁸ Johnson and Christensen, *Educational Research*, 268.

explicitly referenced. The research of Lane Summerlin, Nick Miller, and Erin Maher on percussion and amplification within the activity will be highlighted within this body of work.³⁹ Other studies mentioned in the literature review with specific comment on drum and bugle corps serve a similar purpose to for the research. These sources are supplemental secondary sources to the primary source material discussed above.

For any additional information needed from specific corps, the researcher contacted corps leadership directly. The researcher also utilized video from internet platforms such as YouTube to review performances. Examination of full performances, musically and visually, is particularly important for understanding historical design trends as well as influence among different realms within the marching arts community.

Limitations

Given the nature of this study, there is a need to consolidate the information to its most significant elements in order to document the overall state of DCI from 2000 to 2023. Therefore, this study does not outline the histories of specific corps. There are exceptions for specific events to be noted for some corps as they became a catalyst for change that other corps similarly followed. Often this can be seen in different design elements of shows. Although parallels may be drawn by others within the community, this study avoids other marching arts domains: it does not explicitly comment on other similar organizations such as Winter Guard International, Bands of America, or Drum Corps America.

³⁹ Miller, “Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion: Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps, 1968 to 2023.”; Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International: Technological Change and the Meaning of Tradition,”; Lane Wendell Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International” (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 2016).

One of the most important limitations of this project is the small number of voices included within the narrative. The five figures interviewed are essential to the project, but it would be difficult to cover all aspects of DCI innovation with these five individuals. In an ideal world, more DCI hall of fame inductees would be featured in commentary. The scope and timeline of this research required a careful and limited selection of interviewees.

An example of this type of limitation relates to the two designers who were interviewed. Michael Klesch and Richard Hinshaw work in the brass and visual categories of design, respectively. Realistically, there are more designers on a team that focus on color guard, percussion, and overall programmatic elements within a show as well. Additionally, creative minds differ. Therefore, these individuals do not speak for all designer perspectives even in their own caption. Since some captions are omitted, there could also be gaps in understanding within the exploration of total show design. However, this limitation, specifically in percussive writing, is explored in other research. Therefore, it is less essential for this study, as gaps in information are available in other studies, such as dissertations from Lane Summerlin regarding the evolution of the front ensemble and another by Jason Giachetti about battery writing in drum corps.⁴⁰ These are utilized similarly to others within the literature review. Even without directly targeting percussion design and pedagogy throughout the interview process, trends can still be established and characterized with the supplemental sources produced recently in the field.

Outside of this limitation, there seems to be a lack of representation in the narrative of regular staff members and caption heads. This neglects some pedagogical elements to the corps history, though this gap is filled in with the researcher's perspectives as a long-standing staff

⁴⁰ Summerlin, "The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International."; Giachetti, "A Qualitative Analysis of Front Ensemble Arrangements for Drum Corps International Finalists and Applications to Marching Band Programs."

member within DCI drum corps. Regardless, trends will still be identified and characterized within the daily life portion of the study and commented on by corps director Vicki McFarlane as well.

Furthermore, the lack of color guard representation provides for a lack of development for this caption in DCI. The interviews did not elicit enough information regarding this topic at large. The evolution of color guards has also shown immense growth in terms of ability levels and skills performers are asked to achieve as well as the overall design and choreographed process. The information provided, though brief, is what was established based on interviewee experience when interacting with this caption. The choreographed nature of color guards situates it outside of most music-related academic discussion and may be better suited for specific scholarship in different fields, such as dance.

This study is a personal passion of the researcher. She has been involved annually with Drum Corps International as a performing and/or staff member since 2011. Therefore, it must be noted there is potential for bias based on her preconceived notions due to her close involvement with the Colts, Colt Cadets, and Blue Stars organizations. The researcher strove to remain objective throughout the study and did not use personal anecdotes or experiences that occurred with her personal corps background to inform the dialogue in the final document. Instead, the researcher relied on the evidence and testimonials provided by others within the study.

Thesis Organization

Primarily, this research outlines specific trends in the drum corps activity since the turn of the twenty-first century. The first chapter of this study presents the initial proposal and includes the introduction, literature review, purpose, methodology, limitations, thesis organization, and definitions providing context for the study's relevance and importance.

Drawing on prior published research on the history of drum and bugle corps, the second and third chapters highlight the major themes found within these previous works by recounting noteworthy historical events in drum corps prior to 2000 and connecting these themes to the remainder of the study. This brief history is organized into two sections: drum corps prior to DCI and after DCI's beginning in 1972. The majority of the information provided in these sections will stem from the two volumes Vickers's *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps* in order to create a more concise history for the reader.

Chapters four through seven describe evolutionary aspects of drum and bugle corps from a variety of perspectives, including the ensemble and soundscape, competition and judging, show design (musical and visual), corps life, and organization/business (staff, corps, governing body). Each of these chapters spans the twenty-three-year period of the study from one perspective, focusing on a single topic to highlight the variation and trends within the narrow subject matter.

Finally, chapter eight synthesizes all findings and summarizes the most significant changes that have occurred since 2000 in DCI. Beyond this, chapter eight explores parallels within the marching arts community that exist, providing topics for future research projects. Potential overlap might exist with Winter Guard International (WGI), Bands of America (BOA), Drum Corps Europe (DCE), Drum Corps Associates (DCA), and other facets in marching music. Any overlap will be noted, but not discussed at length within the scope of the current study. The chapter will conclude by highlighting further DCI news and events that are integral to the continuation of the activity post the 2023 season.

CHAPTER 2: THE FOUNDATION OF DRUM CORPS PRIOR TO DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL

Like most types of musical ensembles, drum and bugle corps did not emerge without influence from other areas. Many of these influences converged to make drum corps and affect these groups as they evolved through time. The interweaving of other musical units including concert ensembles, marching units, and military groups, combined to construct the ensemble that would be known as the drum and bugle corps. Entertainment and pageantry were not at the forefront of the original drum corps. Instead, the evolution of drum and bugle corps can be traced back to various forms of militaristic or marching music, as far back as the Greek and Roman empires.⁴¹ Sacred traditions in marching music continued through the Christian army crusades and the defense of small kingdoms in the Middle Ages.⁴² Muslim military musicians even utilized their field music as a method to signal battle and retreat by continuous playing throughout battles.⁴³

All of the previous military musical traditions then advanced with the Swiss infantry. Music in a militaristic style largely spread from Swiss units throughout Europe by 1492.⁴⁴ At this point, the Swiss “developed the practice of marching in step to the music” of their militaristic musicians.⁴⁵ Their system developed to be so ornate that specific tunes signified formations and

⁴¹ Ron Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps Vol. 2*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 6.

⁴² Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 7.

⁴³ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 7.

⁴⁴ Clark, *Connecticut's Fife and Drum Tradition*, 14.

⁴⁵ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 7.

movements on the battlefield.⁴⁶ These ensembles produced sought-after personnel for other situations, often this personnel became bodyguards when not administering their musical duties.⁴⁷ European military music continued to grow more ornate in nature with any aspect that could qualify as a distinction, such as dress, reaching its height in the Napoleonic Wars (1804-1815).⁴⁸

Originally fifes and drums, and later trumpets and bugles, were the instruments employed in signaling situations by soldiers holding general military rank. Later, “bandsman” became a specific title for musicians in the military.⁴⁹ In the United States, parallel developments occurred. By the time of the Civil War (1861-1865), fifes were quickly replaced with brass alternatives and soldiers who were actual musicians, becoming known as “field music[ians].”⁵⁰ These units were used to signal across military fields, and the musicians often learned their trade by rote. Different bores and types of instruments were used in varied settings to signal the alternative military classifications, infantry and cavalry.⁵¹ For the purpose of this document, traditional bugles in America are “bell-front soprano and valveless instrument[s].”⁵² The bugles were learned by

⁴⁶ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 7.

⁴⁷ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 7.

⁴⁸ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 9.

⁴⁹ Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 6.

⁵⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 20; Da Silva, “Pageantry Born on the Battlefield,” 6.

⁵¹ Osheroff and Zinko, 20.

⁵² Osheroff and Zinko, 20.

performers in the early 1900s by utilizing a variety of field music texts, but most frequently the tradition was passed down by rote.

The competitive nature of drum and bugle corps can be traced to Connecticut in 1872, just after the American Civil War.⁵³ At this time, these ensembles were still used in a militaristic capacity, but competition became an integral force for change. Based on these facts, it would seem that competition, at its core, was a leading catalyst of advancement and standardization for drum corps life. One dominant force in marching music was the use of the drum: more specifically, rudimental drumming. A rudiment is “a short musical phrase for drums or percussion that trains a percussionist in fundamental physical and rhythmic techniques.”⁵⁴ The genesis of this expansion is known to have been spurred by the early fife and drum corps traditions and later carried into the drum and bugle corps activity.⁵⁵ The late 1800s even produced a group known as the National Association for Rudimental Drummers, showing the serious nature of percussion, the vital role it played even in early ensembles, and the standardization it produced.⁵⁶ With competition and rudiments in place, the activity of drum corps was able to evolve towards an ensemble more familiar to today’s activity.

⁵³ Rick Beckham, “The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 56.

⁵⁴ “Drum Rudiments Explained: A Guide to Rudimental Drumming,” MasterClass, August 13, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/drum-rudiments-explained#>.

⁵⁵ Beckham, “The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming,” 56.

⁵⁶ Beckham, 56.

Drum and bugle corps, as we know them, began to blossom after World War I in the United States and sprung up with great popularity.⁵⁷ The entertainment value of professional army bands eventually trickled down into community music making and spurred a movement in which drum corps grew in popularity. Ultimately, the drum corps movement stemmed from the long-standing grassroots traditions of the United States in which people made their own music as a pastime activity.⁵⁸ John Philip Sousa stated, “Community bands are perhaps the greatest factor in the production of fine bandmen.”⁵⁹ The drum and bugle corps, at this point in time, was a community staple throughout the United States. These groups would eventually be regularly highlighted in news and catalog outlets; media that reached not only participants but also spectators in large quantities. The influence of corps spread at its highest level in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁰ These groups even became part of mainstream America as their iconography was utilized in Hollywood and replica/collectible figurines sold in stores.⁶¹ The country as a whole, not just the participants, truly took to this form of entertainment.

American Drum and Bugle Corps

In the initial years of American drum and bugle corps, the corps were amateur, community music ensembles, integral to American culture. In fact, the earliest official drum corps ensembles were comprised of untrained musicians who often learned their craft outside of

⁵⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 3.

⁵⁸ Osheroff and Zinko, 12.

⁵⁹ Osheroff and Zinko, 12.

⁶⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, 43.

⁶¹ Osheroff and Zinko, 45.

formal music education. Originally as parade units, these corps stemmed from local American Legion posts, and often they celebrated the sacrifices soldiers made for their communities. The activity occupied the time of returning soldiers, known as “doughboys,” as they assimilated back into mainstream culture after their involvement with World War I.⁶² Drum corps, like the military, was predominately male, however, by the 1930s it became more inclusive as women started to participate.⁶³

American Legion and VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) posts often instigated and sponsored early competitions among corps units. Beginning in 1938, the Sons of the American Legion (S.A.L.) were organized as a way for offspring of drum and bugle corps participants to instigate continued involvement of the activity that their elder family members were already participating in.⁶⁴ The ranks of the corps infiltrated parade routes. This initial influx of corps taking to the streets in a parade was known as “The Big Parade,” which occurred in 1921 in Kansas City, Missouri.⁶⁵ Overwhelmingly, the “Big Parade” events became popular and grew in magnitude. Osheroff and Zinko provide the following statistics regarding drum corps parades sponsored by the American Legion. The first competition was held with what was considered to be “sparse” support of 20,000 musicians (1919), whereas within fifteen years of growth, the events hosted 400,000 musicians in three hundred corps (1933).⁶⁶

⁶² Osheroff and Zinko, 1.

⁶³ Ron Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps Vol. 2*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 47.

⁶⁴ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 9.

⁶⁵ Osheroff and Zinko, 9, 32.

⁶⁶ Osheroff and Zinko, 6.

Parade and other marching events continued to grow, and each one lasted for numerous hours with an abundance of spectators. By 1937, the main Legion convention lasted for eighteen hours and was attended by 2.5 million spectators.⁶⁷ The event continued through 1939. The magnitude of these events made them a pastime for countless individuals in the United States. Though they were not initially perceived to have high artistic merit, their entertainment value and popularity immediately marks drum corps as significant to American culture. Osheroff and Zinko state that, “What was lacking in musicality was made up for in enthusiasm” by the members of the ensembles.⁶⁸ Corps events drove commerce in their host cities as “they [the musicians in the corps] came to town with full wallets and left with empty ones.”⁶⁹ Osheroff and Zinko likewise noted that, “As the movement matured, eventually there was involvement of creative musicians” leading the drum corps activity towards becoming an art form for pageantry activities.⁷⁰

The years after World War II were a time of expansion for drum corps activity. During this time, veterans flocked to American Legion and VFW establishments which provided a greater sense of patriotism for the country. More local posts of veteran establishments were created, and they continued to form various drum corps groups, fife and drum units as well as drum and bugle units mostly outlived the precursory marching musical units.⁷¹ Most of the

⁶⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, 8.

⁶⁸ Osheroff and Zinko, 9.

⁶⁹ Osheroff and Zinko, 7.

⁷⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, 9.

⁷¹ Carmen Cluna, “The Movement Starts to Grow in the 1950s,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 307.

groups from this time period were configured of individuals concluding their military service or older than young adults. The distinction of senior corps was given to older ensembles upon the establishment of junior corps in the 1930s. Junior corps were first delineated in championship competition in 1937.⁷² By the 1950s, junior corps meant for younger individuals were prominent in the drum corps community. Often, the word “cadet” was included in the title of such a corps to signify its standing as a younger corps and its association with a senior corps.⁷³ Though junior corps existed prior to the 1950s, their units were considered less competitive and/or did not develop competitive field shows.⁷⁴ The junior corps classification began to have its own circuits or regional leagues within the community.⁷⁵ The delineation between junior and senior corps is imperative to understanding the trajectory of drum corps as junior corps became the primary contenders within the Drum Corps International circuit and, as explained further throughout this history, are now the ensembles driving innovation in the activity at large.

Junior corps were deeply rooted in the idea that the character of young individuals needed building. Establishments like the Roman Catholic Church, Boy Scout of America, local American Legions, and VFWs, sponsored and supported corps activities for young individuals as they pursued their journeys towards growth.⁷⁶ An advertisement from the Colt .45 (today known

⁷² Brian Tolzman, “80 Years of Drum and Bugle Corps Scores,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 233.

⁷³ Cluna, “The Movement Starts to Grow in the 1950s,” 307.

⁷⁴ Cluna, 307.

⁷⁵ Cluna, 308.

⁷⁶ Cluna, 308.

simply as the Colts) from Dubuque, Iowa mentions its stance for recruitment aligning with personal growth for its participants. It states,

The 200 boys and girls who are members of the ‘Colt. 45’ are not roaming the streets, damaging property, smoking pot, sniffing glue, or protesting against the ‘establishment.’ Instead they are learning a skill, experiencing discipline, practicing cooperation, maturing in a way that would please you!⁷⁷

This statement also helped to further the association of drum and bugle corps with community and pride.

The initial “Big Parade” and the parades to follow spurred an investment in competition between corps. Parades were initially the primary competitive activity through which to judge the ensembles. Rules and regulations were paramount, yet not completely compelling to ensembles. Innovation was key to staying ahead of others, but innovation had its limits.

Competition/Governing Bodies

Competition, subsequently branched out and was no longer confined to the parade route. In the late 1920s, American Legion competitions hoped to “maintain the field music tradition,” allowing for the top fifteen corps were selected for a five-minute semi-final performance on a field, followed by the top five of these groups earning an additional twenty-minute performance slot.⁷⁸ Here, military expectations were upheld to a high degree, including inspections of appearance and uniform. The criteria were judged by a five-person panel of military men with the addition of two exclusively musical judges of a professional caliber.⁷⁹ Viewing these

⁷⁷ An early advertisement from Colt .45 Drum and Bugle Corps #52001, date unknown, circa 1960s-1970s.

⁷⁸ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 37.

⁷⁹ Osheroff and Zinko, 37.

competitions through a modern lens, one of the more significant expectations was the fact that musicians were not involved in the rule making process and the evaluative systems were centered on rigidity, precision, and uniformity over “the perfection of an ‘art form.’”⁸⁰ Routines were mostly prescribed, with specific techniques required for demonstration. Ultimately, points were awarded based on the criteria outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of Points for Drum Corps Shows Pre-DCI

Category	Percentage of Total Score
Appearance of uniform	5
Appearance of bugle	5
Position of bugle	5
Military bearing	5
Execution (technique and precision)	50
Expression	10
Intonation (pitch)	10
Intonation (quality)	10

Source: Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 38.

This point system set a precedent for corps to participate in both field and parade activities and to prepare in both facets. Overall, execution and musical elements were the highest categories in which corps could earn points.

The American Legion’s competitive reasoning had a counterpart on the VFW circuit. Though their rules paralleled that of the American Legion, there was more of a sense of

⁸⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, 37.

flexibility and earlier acceptance of instrumental innovations.⁸¹ This was not always the case, though, as each governing body provided specific kinds of leniency on various elements of competition. For example, the American Legion activity would prove to be more lenient in terms of drill and cadence compared to that of the VFW.⁸²

Other governing bodies helped to foster the competitive aspects of the developing drum corps activity. The sponsoring organizations for groups (American Legion and VFW posts) were often among the competitive organizers as well. In conjunction with this, the All-American Drum and Bugle Corps and Band Association (A.A.D.B.C.B.A.) was organized in 1932.⁸³ This organization had three essential goals:

1. To provide a standard set of rules, procedures and judging methods and complete a set of standard scoring blanks for all phases of the contest.
2. To provide a source of qualified judges.
3. To ensure efficiently organized and conducted contests through the use of judges trained in uniform procedures.⁸⁴

The A.A.D.B.C.B.A. was the first major unifying organization in the field of drum and bugle corps. The principles outlined above are evident throughout the Drum Corps International umbrella of jurisdiction in modern times. Though the new organization was meant to help drum corps unify nationally, the formation of Drum Corps International would alter from the competitive aspects to a national scale.

⁸¹ Osheroff and Zinko, 39.

⁸² Osheroff and Zinko, 47.

⁸³ Osheroff and Zinko, 46.

⁸⁴ Osheroff and Zinko, 46.

The A.A.D.B.C.B.A. helped to outline the integral components of what a drum corps competition is. These components included inspection, marching and maneuvering, bugling, drumming, general effect, cadence (tempo), and timing.⁸⁵ Variations of these categories remain today. The competition, though, was deeply entrenched in a punitive system. Uniformity was of the utmost significance in any caption, and failure to perform in a uniform manner deducted one tenth from the overall score and contributed to what was called the “tick” system.⁸⁶ Within this system, each tick on a score sheet represented a tenth to be deducted. At this time, the general effect caption was an indication of cohesion. It measured effectiveness towards the audience, overall musicianship, overall marching, and the way in which maneuvers were set and/or complementary to the music.⁸⁷ General effect, though vague, reflected the judgment of many subjective elements based on prescribed adjectives such as simple, complex, varied, interesting, pleasing, or monotonous.⁸⁸ Judging of general effect went further to interpret the overall appeal of a corps based on coordination and the importance of each section in providing substance to the group.⁸⁹ These criteria can be viewed as the most vague and subjective aspect of judging, with individual interpretation by each judge.

⁸⁵ Osheroff and Zinko, 48.

⁸⁶ Osheroff and Zinko, 48.

⁸⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, 48.

⁸⁸ Chris Atkinson and Allison Close, “And now the scores... the art and science of drum corps judging,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps Vol. 2*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 68.

⁸⁹ Atkinson and Close, 68.

The junior corps was not the only break-away competitive bracket in American drum corps. There were different judging brackets within the various competitive venues as well. Other categories in early competition included open class, class A, all-girl, division 1-4, and many more. The junior and senior corps divisions, though, ultimately became a pivotal factor in the culmination of the highest point of popular involvement in the drum corps activity in the 1960s.

By 1965, another influential competitive institution was formed, Drum Corps Associates. Drum Corps Associates, otherwise known as DCA, remained an organization through the conclusion of the 2023 season. They sponsored competitions for corps formerly known as senior corps and presently known as “all-age.” (The distinction between these two categories will be discussed more in the final chapter of this research).

Judging was viewed from a generational lens, regardless of governing body. Unlike younger generations of judges, veterans often appeared to focus more on the sanction of militaristic ideals and less on the music.⁹⁰ In the 1940s, judging based on militaristic expectations was extremely strict. One leader in judging was World War I veteran, Anton Schlechta, who upheld strict military standards. Schlechta took over the primary role of judging within the VFW circuit and that of the All-American Judges Association, as part of the A.A.D.B.C.B.A.⁹¹ All individuals wishing to judge at this time had to be certified by the All-American Judges Association.⁹² Ultimately, they were required to conform and uphold its—Schlechta’s—

⁹⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 39.

⁹¹ Osheroff and Zinko, 46.

⁹² Osheroff and Zinko, 46.

standards. Some states, like Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, and Massachusetts, created their own judging circuits and broke free of the strict control.⁹³ In turn, the individualized circuits became a precursor to the approach that Drum Corps International took upon its inception in 1972.

Ultimately, the judging systems discussed here are not the only judging brackets, but they represent most of the major factors in the competitive scene. Additionally, their separation did not necessarily lead to completely different rulings. The nature of the various brackets ebbed, flowed, and intertwined with one another to create the entire drum corps performance stage.

Show Design

In conjunction with the judging system, corps began to design and program their shows to meet the standards outlined previously while also attempting to play to the strength of their ensembles and to enrapture their audiences. Many of their selections were chosen based upon the rules and regulations for performance. Performances began on the “starting line” with a gun signaling the beginning of the timed judging period and allowing corps to enter the field. Customarily, corps would play a fanfare to begin their march down the field, followed by another opening tune featuring a quick tempo.⁹⁴ Typically, the musical selections to begin shows were all upbeat and engaging and often recognizable to audiences. Customarily, the next component of a performance was the integral presentation of colors, which was centered around the fifty-yard line and featured a patriotic musical selection.⁹⁵ Though the percussion section

⁹³ Osheroff and Zinko, 47.

⁹⁴ Cozy Baker, “The 1960s: the Dream, then Miami; the World, then Miami,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 312.

⁹⁵ Baker, 310-312.

played continuously, they were often featured in a solo section following the presentation of colors, which then led into transitional music and an fast tempo closing number.⁹⁶ Fanfares often took corps off the field at the conclusion of the show or through the finish line, at the other endzone.⁹⁷ Corps often chose popular songs and made creative arrangements of their chosen compositions to separate themselves from others. By the 1960s, corps even experimented with time signatures featuring mixed meter (*Mission Impossible*, *Argonne Rebels*) and later mixed meter in 1970 (*Colt .45 Stomp*, *Colt .45*).⁹⁸ Even at this time, corps began to develop various personas and often played thematic material associated with their identity. For example, the Blue Devils were associated with jazz, whereas the Colt .45 were known for their western-themed music.

Uniforms

Costuming was another element to the drum corps pageantry. The streets and marching fields were filled with musicians in standardized costumes resembling the clean look of a military uniform. Ron Da Silva notes that the “Army Officer style,” with an army-style headgear, was the most prevalent in the 1920s.⁹⁹ Though many corps dressed similarly, variation arose in the specific military inspiration for the attire (like cavalry units). By the late 1930s, costuming began to incorporate minor changes in color, location source of military inspiration (including Germanic, Prussian, and Italian influences), and large variations to headgear.¹⁰⁰ The “West Point

⁹⁶ Baker, 312.

⁹⁷ Baker, 312.

⁹⁸ Baker, 312.

⁹⁹ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 42.

¹⁰⁰ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 43.

Cadet” style uniform caught on slowly, eventually making up around half of the costuming by the mid-1930s.¹⁰¹ The “West Point” style became the quintessential representation of what most would consider to be a traditional look. One iconic installment of this style of uniform was worn by the Garfield Cadets through the turn of the twenty-first century. Additional popular uniform styles included an “Ike” jacket, after President Eisenhower, which featured front buttons and cuffed sleeves.¹⁰² The jackets were championed by corps like the Madison Scouts and worn through the early 1980s.¹⁰³

The uniforms of female members of the corps, introduced in the 1930s paralleled that of their male counterparts, with the exception of a skirt or one-piece dress.¹⁰⁴ The alteration to this look for majorettes was a shortened skirt accompanied by tall boots, whereas color guard members often wore the same uniform with reversed colors to from the rest of the corps proper.¹⁰⁵

After World War II, uniforms regressed in some regards, going in the opposite direction from the activity’s previous trajectory of ornate uniforming. Uniforms became simpler and featured satin shirts/buttoned blouses, waist sashes, and shakos with plumes.¹⁰⁶ The reduction was a more cost-effective way of outfitting corps, specifically junior corps since entire uniforms

¹⁰¹ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 43.

¹⁰² Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 44.

¹⁰³ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 44.

¹⁰⁴ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 47.

¹⁰⁵ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 47.

¹⁰⁶ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 44.

were not custom designed nor made-to-measure for individuals.¹⁰⁷ Though they were easier to produce, the maintenance of these items was more difficult on the individual due to the stringent uniform inspections at shows.¹⁰⁸ The frequency at which these uniforms were used peaked in the late 1950s, followed by a return to the West Point Cadet style in the 1960s.¹⁰⁹ From this point on, the attire for each corps was designed to give it a distinctive look that differs from the others in its state or region, though often still modeling or replicating various types of militia uniforms.¹¹⁰ In spite of military influence, some corps did not dress in a traditional manner. Outliers were seen in Spanish caballero attire and other costumes that reflected their geographic location or particular corps theme.¹¹¹

Because drum corps often operated in environments of extreme heat, heavy costumes were not always practical. The 1950s and 1960s also produced corps that dressed more economically for the weather and/or had two sets of uniforms for their various performances, afternoon and evening.¹¹² Most corps at that time performed a parade during the afternoon and a field show in the evening, which can be seen as the example of typical days consisting of many events in Figure 1.

¹⁰⁷ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 44-45.

¹⁰⁸ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 45.

¹⁰⁹ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 44.

¹¹⁰ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 46.

¹¹¹ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 48.

¹¹² Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 47.

COLT .45 DRUM & BUGLE CORPS

DIVISION OF LEGION AIRES INC.

P.O. BOX 515

DUBUQUE, IOWA 52001

Week-End Trip to Rhinelander, Wis., & Park Falls, Wis.

Saturday-July 31, 1971 - BUS WILL LEAVE SENIOR HIGH PARKING LOT 5:00 A.M.

Saturday, July 31, 1971

Parade Start: 2:00 P.M.

Contest Start: 8:00 P.M.

Contest Site: School Field

Dressing Rooms & Housing:
Rhinelander High School

Corps in Competition:

8:00 P.M. - Blue Notes
8:15 P.M. - Brass Regiment
8:30 P.M. - Blue Knights
8:45 P.M. - Northernaires
9:00 P.M. - Ambassadors
9:15 P.M. - 32nd Hussars
9:30 P.M. - Colt .45
9:45 P.M. - Belles of St. Mary's - Exhib.
10:00 P.M. - Finale

Local contact- Stan Nianga - Phone: 715-362-7330 (In case of emergency)

Sunday, August 1, 1971 - PARK FALLS, WISCONSIN

Parade Start: 1:00 P.M.

Contest Start: 7:00 P.M.

Contest Site: School Field

Dressing Rooms: School

Corps in Competition

7:00 P.M. - Centralaires
7:15 P.M. - Blue Notes
7:30 P.M. - Sundowners
7:45 P.M. - Belles of St. Mary's
8:00 P.M. - 32nd Hussars
8:15 P.M. - Blue Knights
8:30 P.M. - Colt .45
8:45 P.M. - Brass Regiment - Exhibition
9:00 P.M. - Finale

Local Contact - Ken Teeters - Phone: 715-762-3364 (In case of emergency)

For Information on Results of Corps Competition each

Night; and Arrival Home Time, Listen to Both Local

Radio Stations, KDUB-TV or Call Dubuque Answering



Figure 1: "Week-End Trip to Rhinelander, Wis., & Park Falls, Wis.," (printed document, Colts Warehouse Archives, Dubuque, IA, 1971). Permission granted by Jeff and Vicki McFarlane.

Not all corps were able to afford this, and some wore one uniform at all times regardless of the event.

In any case, the uniforms the corps wore became a signal of their identity. Variations to any aspect of a specific uniform were made to signify its corps. Styles were typically not updated frequently, thereby giving corps a sense of identity within a crowd or competition.¹¹³

Photographs document costuming styles can be found throughout Vicker's, *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps* and among Da Silva's, "Uniforms and Colors."

Color Guard

Though the name, drum and bugle corps, refers to the instrumentalists of the groups, color guard units were utilized from the beginning. These originated in units with weapons, or guns, guarding the national and regimental colors similar to a presentation of colors by a military group at an athletic event today.¹¹⁴ The tradition dates back to Benjamin Franklin in 1777 and was adopted into United States military law in 1812, creating ceremonial "manual exercises" for early color guards.¹¹⁵ The VFW, Boy Scout groups, and fraternal organizations adopted these traditions in their ceremonies, often at for funerals.¹¹⁶ Since drum corps is heavily steeped in military traditions and associated with the VFW, the color guard was a logical addition to corps.

¹¹³ Da Silva, "Uniforms and Colors," 43.

¹¹⁴ Shirley Stratton Dorritie, "Why the guns? Color guard from military to modern," in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps Vol. 2*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2003), 72.

¹¹⁵ Dorritie, "Why the guns?," 72.

¹¹⁶ Dorritie, 73.

Adding the color guard was meant to elicit an “emotionally stirring event” for those who watched by instilling pride and excitement.¹¹⁷ Precision and unity were at the forefront of an excellent color guard, which correlated with the objectives for other sections in the drum corps.¹¹⁸ The initial showing for these groups always included a captain, holding a saber and/or pistol that was accompanied by two rifles to guard the two flags in the unit, the American flag and the flag of their corps sponsor (often American Legion or VFW).¹¹⁹ The presentation of the flags was always a creative endeavor, with the American flag presentation being the most difficult obstacle, given the steep penalties of the U.S. Flag Code if executed improperly.¹²⁰ Ultimately, this code and the strict judging penalty for violations limited innovation at first. Dorritie comments that “more difficult equipment maneuvers frequently brought more risk than reward,” causing units to take few chances.¹²¹

The unit expanded upon competitive success by guarding the coveted championship flags earned by the corps.¹²² By the 1920s, color guards often had six to twelve members marching separately from the corps. Throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, flag and guidon (lancers) sections grew substantially.¹²³ Flag units undertook a drastic shift in the color guard function in

¹¹⁷ Dorritie, 73.

¹¹⁸ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 43.

¹¹⁹ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 48.

¹²⁰ Dorritie, “Why the guns?,” 73.

¹²¹ Dorritie, 74.

¹²² Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 48.

¹²³ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 48.

the late 1960s when Bruce Leo added the challenge of spinning flags into their performance vocabulary.¹²⁴ Additional flags, called “flash” flags, incorporated colors of the corps uniform and became standard in the drill by the 1970s.¹²⁵

Color guard progression developed in conjunction with the formation of DCI. Frustration grew with the inflexible evaluation according to rules; aspects such as minute as finger placement on equipment were scrutinized, hindering the ability of color guards to produce more artistic visual performance options.¹²⁶ Most innovations initially were rooted in color-guard-only competitions, but were quickly added into drum corps at large.¹²⁷ This enabled the development of spinning and other techniques on all equipment: flags, rifles, and sabers.

With the inclusion of thematic shows in many drum corps, theatrics entered into the domain of the color guard.¹²⁸ Gary Czapinski was at the forefront of these designs with the 1971 Madison Scouts production, which highlighted many characters from fables.¹²⁹ In addition, color guard competitions existed separate from drum corps as well, and evolved into another pageantry art known today as Winter Guard International, or WGI, which is outside the scope of this research.

¹²⁴ Dorritie, 74.

¹²⁵ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 48.

¹²⁶ Dorritie, “Why the guns?,” 75.

¹²⁷ Dorritie, 78.

¹²⁸ Dorritie, 75.

¹²⁹ Dorritie, 75.

Daily Life

Ultimately, in the 1960s, drum corps became a way of life for many individuals involved. In present-day terms, drum corps operated similarly to traveling sports teams in family life. For example, students performed for audiences of twenty to thirty thousand people, many of the local corps celebrated major anniversaries and milestones, children followed in the footsteps of their role models by joining junior corps. Government funding and support of corps became possible, advertisements of corps placements became common for the communities at large to see, and family travel plans revolved around the major competitions.¹³⁰ Cozy Baker offers the raw data that the 1969 drum corps scene had 320 contests, with over 1,150 corps participating in the 1960s.¹³¹ These numbers dwindled in the decades to follow, as did the number of corps playing a role in the drum corps scene. Despite the decrease in participants, other aspects heightened in the decades to come.

Drum corps further developed to build a more rigorous rehearsal schedule. Some corps events began meeting five days a week.¹³² Figure 2 shows the more extensive performance schedules that required additional rehearsal around 1972.

¹³⁰ Baker, “The 1960s: the Dream, then Miami; the World, then Miami,” 309-310.

¹³¹ Baker, 310-311.

¹³² Cluna, “The Movement Starts to Grow in the 1950s,” 308.

April	21-22-23	Fri-Sat	Drill Camp, Beckman High-Dyersville, Iowa
"	30	Sun	Parade - Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin
May	5-6-7	Fri-Sat-Sun	Drill Camp, Beckman High-Dyersville, Iowa
"	20	Sat	Contest & Parade - Macomb, Illinois
"	21	Sun	Contest & Parade - Quincy, Illinois
"	29	Mon	Parade - Memorial Day, Dubuque, Iowa
June	10	Sat	Contest & Parade - Cedar Rapids, Iowa
"	11	Sun	Contest & Parade - Waterloo, Iowa
"	17	Sat	Contest & Parade - State Center, Iowa
"	25	Sun	Contest & Parade - Cedarburg, Wisconsin
July	1	Sat	Parade & Exhibition - Dubuque, Iowa
"	2	Sun	Contest & Parade - Dixon, Illinois (Tent.)
"	4	Tue	Contest & Parade - Rockford, Illinois
"	8	Sat	Contest & Parade - St. Louis, Missouri
"	9	Sun	Contest & Parade - Springfield, Illinois
"	22-23	Sat-Sun	American Legion State - Des Moines, Iowa
"	26	Wed	Standstill & Parade, Maquoketa, Iowa
"	30	Sun	Contest & Parade - Mauston, Wisconsin
Aug	5	Sat	Contest & Parade - Waupun, Wisconsin
"	10	Fri	D.C.I. Championship - Wittenwater, Wis (Tent)
"	19-20-21	Sat-Sun-Mon	American Legion Nationals-Chicago, Ill.
"	22-23	Tue-Wed	V. F. W. Nationals - Minneapolis, Minn.
Sept	2	Sat	Contest & Parade - Osage, Iowa
"	3	Sun	Contest & Parade - Waterloo, Iowa
"	4	Mon	Exhibition & Parade - Dubuque, Iowa
"	16-17	Sat-Sun	Contest & Parade - Monroe, Wisconsin

Figure 2: "Schedule of Appearances," (printed document, Colts Warehouse Archives, Dubuque, IA, 1972). *Permission granted by Jeff and Vicki McFarlane.*

With the expansion of the rehearsal schedule, the entire season's events multiplied as well. Participants were involved in competitions and other commitments from May through October, with the opportunity for rehearsals beginning earlier in the year.¹³³ Though this was the case, travel for each corps was more minimal than present day. Each corps mainly focused on local events until a major championship event.¹³⁴ The rising cost of fuel limited travel, and it remains a factor in budgetary concerns today.

Though the activity was thriving with involvement, strife was apparent. "Growing pains" were associated with the politics surrounding the competition, with both American Legion and VFW events promoting their own agendas.¹³⁵ The strict and harsh judging systems caused struggle in the competitive aspects in the late 1960s and early 1970s. All of this laid the groundwork for Drum Corps International, a new bracket formed in 1972.

¹³³ Baker, "The 1960s: The Dream, then Miami; the World, then Miami," 310.

¹³⁴ Baker, 310.

¹³⁵ Baker, 310.

CHAPTER 3: DCI 1972-2000

Foundational Framework for the Beginning of DCI

During its early eras, drum corps were met with patriotism and excitement as participants paraded down the streets. From the 1950s through the 1980s, competition and creativity were at the forefront regardless of the other challenges corps were met with, like financial difficulties and dwindling personnel. Nonetheless, over time the activity adapted to include more creativity causing a distinction in artistic merit. By the 1970s, drum corps had gained popularity, attracting giant audiences, and were able to host shows in NFL (National Football League) stadiums. According to Waerzeggers, this milestone positioned drum corps as what could be the “next big American art form” after jazz.¹³⁶ In the 1970s a new, and historically altering, competitive bracket was formed.

The competitive division Drum Corps International was formed in 1972. This organization initially worked in tandem with the existing drum corps competitive circuits. For example, the VFW’s championship continued to operate through 1983.¹³⁷ Based on the numerous competitive circuits (outlined in Chapter 2), a new competitive bracket was not necessary, but it occurred regardless. When Don Warren and Jim Jones had an informal conversation surrounding the idea of each drum corps becoming the “master of its own destiny,” they set forth to remedy the issues present in the existing competitive spaces beginning in 1971.¹³⁸ The new system, Drum Corps International, helped to promote the autonomy of competitive organizations. The strict judging and regimented performance prescription did not

¹³⁶ Waerzeggers, *Drum Corps International: The First Decade, 1972-1981*, 28.

¹³⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 39.

¹³⁸ Howard, “Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established,” 319.

seem to sit well with them, since they believed the entertainment value of the shows was where the “real power” of the activity lay.¹³⁹

As innovations increasingly occurred in the early 1970s, not all were accepted. Different new aspects in to corps performances often caused “uproar” among the drum corps community.¹⁴⁰ Tony Schlecta, chair of the VFW drum corps committee, declared:

To preserve the prestige of this contest being a semi-military nature in the tradition of drum and bugle corps, there will be No Clowning, Dancing, Prancing or Skipping permitted, nor the use of any costumes that are not in conformity with the uniforms of the unit.¹⁴¹

This allowed VFW and American Legion competitions to uphold the uncompromising judging standards from which the founders of DCI were hoping to depart.

Yet change in the activity became undeniable. Former judges for the All-American Judges Association helped to split apart from the current organizations and pursued the development of Drum Corps International, making history and setting up what is seen in modern drum corps competition.¹⁴² At the forefront of this movement was the Madison Scouts Drum and Bugle Corps. Their 1971 show featured some non-military costuming and retold the story of *Alice in Wonderland*, in a radical departure from old standards that was met with enthusiasm from audiences.¹⁴³ The Madison Scouts show featured costuming similar to that of Broadway for some of its members. Osherhoff and Zinko had noted that “the pageantry of a championship

¹³⁹ Howard, 319.

¹⁴⁰ Dorritie, “Why the guns?,” 75.

¹⁴¹ Dorritie, 76.

¹⁴² Osherhoff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 47.

¹⁴³ Osherhoff and Zinko, 47.

drum corps competition combines the military precision of West Point, and the musical blend of a well-directed band and the showmanship of Broadway.”¹⁴⁴ The implied goal of showmanship, could be seen in subsequent performances and arguably today as well.

What did DCI, the new organization, truly mean for the community? At its core, DCI’s vision advanced based upon the notion of governing autonomy. The corps participating in the events, not the stricter outside forces, would be in charge of judging criteria. The decision making power of corps members most frequently was associated with competitive rules, but also branched out to the financial realm and tour schedules.¹⁴⁵ Jones and Warren established that not all corps would initially have a say, but the corps directors with a record of proven and strong management skills could help to make decisions in DCI.¹⁴⁶ Corps like the Blue Stars, Cavaliers, Madison Scouts, Santa Clara Vanguard, and Troopers became founding members of the “Combine,” an immediate precursor to DCI.¹⁴⁷ Their expertise in various sides of the business and educational fields was put to the test as they formed guidelines for their new vision. One catalyst for the separation of groups from American Legion and VFW events was costuming. Though it was not explicitly stated in their rule books, both the 1971 Madison Scouts and Cavaliers shows were penalized for utilizing non-militaristic costuming, which eventually led to the announcement that the groups would be “penalized at two points per costume” at the VFW championship event.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately the following were considered to be unjust avenues of judging

¹⁴⁴ Osheroff and Zinko, 48.

¹⁴⁵ Howard, “Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established,” 326.

¹⁴⁶ Howard, 319.

¹⁴⁷ Howard, 320.

¹⁴⁸ Howard, 321.

that needed remedy in a new governing system: “military-type inspections, [the] mandatory parade[,] and the judged requirement that show tempos be consistent with military cadence” (approximately 120 beats per minute).¹⁴⁹ The inflexibility of these stipulations was viewed as limiting creativity and progress in the drum corps community.

The costume issues did not directly affect all corps, nor did changes gain traction at first.¹⁵⁰ As DCI started out, most corps kept all members, with specific regard to the color guard, in their traditional uniform pieces. The major immediate alteration concerned theatrics. An early example of this is the 1972 Santa Clara Vanguard color guard performing the “bottle dance” from the popular musical *Fiddler on the Roof*.¹⁵¹

Performances were just the beginning of the ideas individuals wanted to change. Compensation was one of the initial alterations posing risk to the newly formed Combine. It aimed to disseminate prize money more fairly for corps based on their placement at shows and eventually looked to add compensation based on distance traveled to an event.¹⁵² An important distinction in this shift was the fact that events had set monetary needs, meaning funding from sponsors became something they sought instead of reacting to, which left corps more in control than previously.¹⁵³ This economic reality was an important initial shift for DCI.

¹⁴⁹ Howard, 321.

¹⁵⁰ Dorritie, “Why the Guns?,” 76.

¹⁵¹ Dorritie, 76.

¹⁵² Howard, “Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established,” 320.

¹⁵³ Howard, 320.

The Combine was not the only smaller group to materialize. After news of its establishment, drum corps on the eastern side of the United States formed a similar group, called the Eastern Combine or United Organization of Junior Corps (UOJC).¹⁵⁴ This group also consisted of five corps: 27th Lancers, Garfield Cadets, Boston Crusaders, Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights, and Blue Rock.¹⁵⁵ Each of the corps represented in one of the two combines was well established both organizationally and competitively. The two combines became one unit of ten organizations following the ruling about costuming in Dallas, Texas, then ultimately decided to break away from the current governing systems in the following year.¹⁵⁶ They were joined by invited guests, not originally in the membership: the De La Salle Oaklands, Argonne Rebels, and Anaheim Kingsmen.

Determining the new vision took time and planning by each of these corps. They felt a sense of “optimism” towards the enormous task they had set out to achieve.¹⁵⁷ Directors met to discuss logistics of what was to come. Instructional staff for each corps congregated to establish rules, which would later turn into rule congresses.¹⁵⁸ In the inaugural year, two executive directors were elected to lead DCI. David Kampschroer (Blue Stars) led the west and Hugh Mahon (Garfield Cadets) led the eastern side.¹⁵⁹ Ultimately, the pair of CEOs were in charge of

¹⁵⁴ Howard, 320.

¹⁵⁵ Howard, 320.

¹⁵⁶ Howard, 321.

¹⁵⁷ Howard, 321.

¹⁵⁸ Howard, 321.

¹⁵⁹ Howard, 321.

all championship arrangements and hiring. Through other discussions and planning, they produced an inaugural season. Financially, each corps (or its director) within the combine needed to contribute \$2,000, making DCI value at \$26,000 and earn itself an \$18,000 line of credit that went unused that season, which aided in establishing the organization's non-profit status in the state of Wisconsin.¹⁶⁰

The initiatives set forth by the two combines were not always popular. Many smaller corps felt "threatened" by the developments taking place, with news outlets going so far as to produce articles with the headline "Drum Corps Is Dead."¹⁶¹ Despite this proclamation, drum corps continued to remain active in the United States.

Beginnings of DCI

1972 proved to be a turning point for DCI. One initiative it set forth to accomplish was to be viewed as "the only recognized [c]hampionship."¹⁶² Two issues arose: the inability to defend prior championships in other competitive brackets (e.g. Santa Clara Vanguard, VFW) and the need for financial support that these circuits could provide for corps (e.g. Cavaliers, American Legion).¹⁶³ In the end, avoiding financial hardship was the only way to circumvent the multiple championship predicament.¹⁶⁴ Having the corps become fully invested in DCI was meant to legitimize the claim of national/international champion status once the competition took place.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Howard, 321-322.

¹⁶¹ Howard, 320.

¹⁶² Howard, 321.

¹⁶³ Howard, 321.

¹⁶⁴ Howard, 321.

¹⁶⁵ Howard, 322.

Additionally, corps that wished to participate in the circuit at all would need to commit to the championship event as a component of their competitive season.

However, the beginning of DCI was not immediately the end of other competitive avenues. The American Legion continued to host competitions, including their championships, through the turn of the century. By 1997, their sponsorship only went towards corps in the senior category, leaving DCI as the predominant sponsor of junior corps competition.¹⁶⁶ The other major circuit, the VFW, continued their competitions through 1984.¹⁶⁷ Since that time, they have hosted other military types of competition, but have not recently hosted any drum corps competitions. Because the major contenders continued to sponsor competitions, many corps have taken part in multiple championship events. In DCI's year of inception, 1972, several corps participated in two or three of the major competitions. The Anaheim Kingsmen, Argon Rebels, Blue Knights, Cavaliers, Colt .45, Kilties, Sky Riders, and Oshkosh Warriors were among the many corps that competed in multiple championship events.¹⁶⁸ In this inaugural year, no single corps won multiple championship events, and many saw varying success in conjunction with variations to rules and regulations. There were several crowned champions in 1972, but only one DCI champion, the Anaheim Kingsmen.

The earliest DCI championship did not produce a completely separate set of regulations for corps. When corps arrived at the first DCI championship in Whitewater, Wisconsin, their rules most closely aligned with the tabulation sheets of the American Legion events, since many

¹⁶⁶ Beckham, "The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming," 57.

¹⁶⁷ Tolzman, "80 Years of Drum and Bugle Corps Scores," 227-306.

¹⁶⁸ Tolzman, 227-306.

of these corps had attended their annual meeting the year prior to vote on rules.¹⁶⁹ In the years to come, when it seemed practically feasible to do so, they intended to host rules congresses in order to suggest and alter the rules in place, setting forth the course of what competition and shows would look like in upcoming years.¹⁷⁰ The first rules congress took place in 1972 to gear up for the forthcoming competitive season. Since one paramount goal of DCI was to allow corps to have control over the “content and interpretation of rules” for competition, this event was widely attended.¹⁷¹ In fact, 325 people represented seventy-five corps and judges in the first session, helping to further build trust in the young organization.¹⁷² During the initial rules congress session, a major contender for alteration concerned the color guard realm and the flag code.¹⁷³ By 1974, color guards had no explicit requirements; this encouraged corps to “execute any appropriate maneuvers which [were] intended to generate effect,” which immediately added complexity and showmanship to this caption.¹⁷⁴ National colors, though still present, were rarely visible as early as 1979 and became completely optional beginning in 1980.¹⁷⁵

As this document has DCI as its primary focus it will not discuss the later histories of other drum corps competition brackets. To this day, DCI is not a total governing body; instead, it organizes the thoughts of the board of directors in regard to contests, public relations, judging,

¹⁶⁹ Howard, “Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established,” 322.

¹⁷⁰ Howard, 322.

¹⁷¹ Howard, 323.

¹⁷² Howard, 323.

¹⁷³ Dorritie, “Why the Guns?,” 76.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Dorritie, 76-77.

¹⁷⁵ Dorritie, 79.

rules congresses, finances, and research.¹⁷⁶ Each corps remains its own entity within the sphere of DCI. Meticulous care was put into the start-up of the organization by establishing a constitution and by-laws. Paramount to the cause, DCI set out the following primary goal:

To utilize our collective influence to improve the ethical standards and quality level of the drum and bugle corps program so it will be of maximum benefit to its youthful participants and will continue to be worthy of the support of the general public.¹⁷⁷

This was accomplished by working together and creating a community where corps, judges, and contest coordinators could seamlessly collaborate for the best possible outcomes. Judge consistency, corps compensation and accommodation, favorable scheduling, and high quality performances were all major contributors to this cause.¹⁷⁸ Other crucial stipulations outlined in the initial documentation outlined strict membership guidelines, with full membership being given to corps who became finalists by earning a spot in the top twelve.¹⁷⁹ Corps remained in this status for three years if their competitive success was not matched, but corps without this distinction could become associate members (not fully fledged in DCI) upon placing in the top twenty-five groups competitively.¹⁸⁰ The by-laws went on to outline the intricacies of DCI. For example, positions described include chairman, vice chairman, board members, secretary, treasurer, executive director(s), and rules committee chairman, elected by the voting membership.¹⁸¹ One aspect mentioned in the by-laws that changed the course of the activity was

¹⁷⁶ Howard, “Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established,” 326.

¹⁷⁷ Howard, 327.

¹⁷⁸ Howard, 328.

¹⁷⁹ Howard, 328.

¹⁸⁰ Howard, 328.

¹⁸¹ Howard, 328-329.

the timing of championships. It was specified that championship events would occur in the month of August, which in turn would shorten the season from what was previously described in chapter two.¹⁸² Detailed outlines for rule alterations and procedures for cancellations were also produced as part of the by-laws.

After a successful first season, the DCI organization had visions for future development. Directors were meant to establish business and administrative initiatives for the organization without assistance from instructional staff.¹⁸³ The organization also sought to hire an executive director who would operate DCI on a full-time basis. Previously, all corps leadership sustained outside careers in addition to the work they were producing for DCI. The first named CEO of DCI was Donald Pesceone, who operated the organization on a \$15,000 salary out of his own home.¹⁸⁴ He received accolades earning respect in the judging community; he was described as “a man of superlative knowledge and unquestioned integrity.”¹⁸⁵ Though a CEO provided the infrastructure for growth, each corps was still integral to the organization’s success. DCI valued the hivemind of experiences and knowledge of a wide breadth of individuals when establishing policy.¹⁸⁶

Integrity and commitment became requirements for participation in DCI. According to the board of directors, attendance and follow-through on financial obligations were vital unless a

¹⁸² Howard, 329.

¹⁸³ Howard, 322.

¹⁸⁴ Howard, 323.

¹⁸⁵ Howard, 323.

¹⁸⁶ Howard, 324.

corps wanted to be dismissed from the organization.¹⁸⁷ By the mid-1970s, strict enforcement of age policies was also incorporated, which could affect a group's overall standing and eligibility within DCI.¹⁸⁸ Since rules were voted on, they were uncompromisingly enforced. Other areas of importance included the need to appear at shows regularly and to uphold cleanliness at rehearsal and housing facilities.¹⁸⁹

Competitions/Adjudication Philosophies

One important distinction throughout the early years of DCI was the variation in class systems and regional associations. At the beginning of DCI, there was one class of corps, Open Class, with participation from thirty-nine groups.¹⁹⁰ By 1975, the classes expanded to Open (forty-six competitors) and Class A (six competitors), and this was quickly followed by further expansion in 1976 to include an all-girl category with nine competing corps.¹⁹¹ The 1970s also produced regional competition, like Drum Corps Midwest (DCM), which operated in conjunction with DCI but was not controlled by them.¹⁹² DCM was joined by an Eastern division in 1979, which acted similar to an athletic conference within the DCI community. These events and their respective championships occurred earlier than the DCI championship most, but not all, years. Large, popular competitions, like the U.S. Open, were absorbed into the regional circuit

¹⁸⁷ Howard, 324.

¹⁸⁸ Howard, 324.

¹⁸⁹ Howard, 325.

¹⁹⁰ Tolzman, "80 Years of Drum and Bugle Corps Scores," 255.

¹⁹¹ Tolzman, 256.

¹⁹² Howard, "Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established," 326.

events as they disbanded (in this instance, in 1995).¹⁹³ Throughout the 1980s, the regional system became a practical way to divide many corps amongst their competitors. Prior to that time, most corps and competitions were east of the Mississippi River, but the 1970s changed that with the introduction of many corps in other parts of the country (like California), which then produced four distinct U.S. regions: East, South, Midwest, and West.¹⁹⁴ The corps would meet all their competitors essentially only at major championship events.

Prior to 2000, championship locations changed almost yearly, with the exception of 1972-1973 at Warhawk Stadium in Whitewater, Wisconsin, 1981-1982 in Montreal (Canada), and 1985-1987 at Camp Randall in Wisconsin. The locations were often in prestigious stadiums such as the locations for the Orange Bowl, Citrus Bowl, and Rose Bowl. The championship began as a two-day event hosting both preliminary and final competitions; this was expanded in 1983 to include a semifinal event (top twenty-five), with the verbiage of “prelims” changing to “quarterfinals” in 1981.¹⁹⁵ For DCI, the maximum number of competitors entered in a championship event was forty-nine corps. Another alteration to the system was competitive bracket distinctions. Beginning in 1981, a senior class was introduced in the Midwest region (which will be considered in the conclusion of this study as the All-Age bracket beginning in 2024). In 1992, the system of Division I (formerly Open Class) and Division II/III competition was born.¹⁹⁶ This system remained through the turn of the century.

¹⁹³ Tolzman, “80 Years of Drum and Bugle Corps Scores,” 292.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Smith, “The Giant Killer – the 1980s,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 332.

¹⁹⁵ Tolzman, “80 Years of Drum and Bugle Corps Scores,” 265.

¹⁹⁶ Ken Mason, “Drum and Bugle Corps Recordings Through the Years,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 91-97.


Judging, then, in the 1970s became twofold. The tick system remained in place, but the sheets focused on two different aspects of a corps performance: the content and the execution. Content allowed corps to receive points based on the design of their shows, while execution allowed the judges to score the ensemble based on achievement and uniformity. Content was a new introduction within each category, which encouraged the use of more difficult elements in hopes of spurring more interesting productions.¹⁹⁷ This helped to produce reward for any risks associated with attempting something new and began to shift the philosophy away from having competitors being punitively judged. Charts, like rubrics, were made to align standards between individual perspectives and to lessen the blow of the tick.¹⁹⁸ Categories were established that helped to slowly shift DCI away from the rigid system, including the analysis categories like the music, percussion, and visual captions.¹⁹⁹ Technological advancements and heightened qualifications for the judging community made these individuals more like staff members, able to make suggestions and provide rationale for scoring based on predetermined criteria to help guide the adjudicators into further competitions.²⁰⁰ Below, in figure 3, there is a clear sense of verbiage in regards to the shift in a rubric-like approach.

¹⁹⁷ Atkinson and Close, “And Now the Scores... The Art and Science of Drum Corps Judging,” 69.

¹⁹⁸ Atkinson and Close, 70.

¹⁹⁹ Atkinson and Close, 70.

²⁰⁰ Atkinson and Close, 70.



GENERAL EFFECT - BUGLES

NAME OF CORPS COLT .45

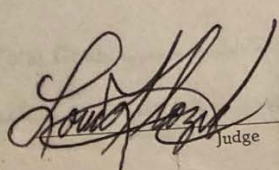
Osage, Iowa 6/15/69 14-022

By G. E. is meant all those elements in the corps' performance which collectively present with impressive effectiveness its superior ability, originality, and showmanship.

	REPERTOIRE	35	Score
FANFARE AT START WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE BUILD UP \leftarrow TOWARD STANDS COULD START EARLIER & BE MORE GRADUAL "MARIA" TOO MUCH OF MUSIC HIDDEN FROM STANDS, TO FAR BACK	Maximum utilization of time for worthwhile music; effectiveness; difficulty, including range; continuity and variety of arrangements.		15
	QUALITY	15	Score
SOPS WEAK IN SPOTS SOMETHING LACKING IN OPENING TO "GRAND OLD FLAG" (SEE ME) UPPER SOPS STRAINING AT END NOT ENOUGH CHIAMAX FOR MY LIKING "I NEED YOUR LOVE" (THIS GUY) NOT IN PAR WITH REST OF SHOW D.M. LACKS CONTROL IN SPOTS SPREAD DRILL HURT SOUND HEARING TO MANY INDIVIDUALS NOT MATURE ENOUGH FOR THIS YET	Rhythm sustained; proper articulation; balance between drums and bugles; brilliance and purity of tone; intonation; melodic and harmonic balance and appeal. Ability to gradually increase or decrease power of tone; to play extremes of loud and soft; to play expressively.		7
	EXPRESSION	15	Score
	SHOWMANSHIP	20	Score
	Instrumental control and exhibitionism; effective use of opening and closing fanfares; unique effects; spectacular appeal; esprit de corps.		9
	CONCERT	15	Score
	Concert should incorporate all the requirements of the above sub-captions, plus conducting effectiveness.		6
	TOTAL	Max. 100	45

GENERAL COMMENTS

NICE SOUND BUT WAS ~~NECESSARY~~
FIVE NECESSARY!
SOPS LOST CONTROL ON CLOSING FANFARE!



C.S.J.A.
Judge

Revised - October, 1968

Figure 3: "General Effect- Bugles," (printed document, Colts Warehouse Archives, Dubuque, IA, June 15, 1969). Permission granted by Jeff and Vicki McFarlane.

Since figure 3 notates a shift in the judging paradigm, changes in these rubrics will be addressed in Chapter 5 of this project by providing similar photographic evidence.

The competitive success of individual corps initially held a bearing on their status within the DCI organization, providing them with decision-making power. In addition to their competitive success, fiscal viability and stability were also important to a corps' status, which helped groups quickly become recognized as part of DCI.²⁰¹ The most successful corps in DCI ultimately held the most power and continued to do so into the 2000s. Therefore, corps that struggled to uphold the standards of DCI could be penalized. The actions of all corps were seen as a reflection on themselves and others, which meant that corps could be voted out of membership if a lofty seventy-five percent of other corps united to expel them.²⁰²

The first decade of DCI was woven with intricacies and nuances from a logistical perspective that shaped the activity. Entering the 1980s, the previously established business practices continued but revealed the possibility for further expansion of artistic merit for the activity at large. Competitively, many corps showed repeated success and set themselves up to be major contenders in contests year after year. These included some corps from California such as the Blue Devils and Santa Clara Vanguard, which would be established as powerhouses for the activity.²⁰³ Though established precedents were evident, the community quickly turned itself around with innovation and ingenuity. Many of the transformations throughout the 1980s were initially spurred by corps with a mediocre competitive pedigree as they were not earning top

²⁰¹ Howard, "Masters of Their Destiny – DCI is Established," 325.

²⁰² Howard, 325.

²⁰³ Smith, "The Giant Killer – the 1980s," 332.

places early in the 1980s. Some of these corps rose to the top as they innovated show design motivating other top contenders to build their shows similarly to keep themselves in the peak competitive echelons.

1980s Innovation

The decade of the 1980s was the inception of tremendous ingenuity. This decade has been described as “explosive” in terms of “design and performance levels.”²⁰⁴ Arguably, it was in the 1980s that the activity began to develop into an artform. Smith writes that “what once was methodical and military became unrestricted and furiously paced,” making the impossible possible.²⁰⁵ This era, in turn, helped the corps scene to truly be in control of competition and achieve the principles that were initially sought after in DCI’s founding.²⁰⁶ Out of this period many pivotal leaders turned their skills into fame and left a lasting legacy on DCI.

Themed programs began to become typical in the 1980s and 1990s.²⁰⁷ Musically, programs also shifted throughout the 1980s. In years prior, it was standard for corps to perform five separate musical selections; this practice evolved into one musical idea towards the middle to the end of the decade.²⁰⁸ Often these themes revolved around movie soundtracks or popular compositions. For example, the 1984 and 1985 Garfield Cadets production featured works by Leonard Bernstein, one of which centered around his musical *West Side Story*. Drum corps in

²⁰⁴ Smith, 337.

²⁰⁵ Smith, 337.

²⁰⁶ Smith, 337.

²⁰⁷ Baker, “The 1960s: the Dream, then Miami; the World, then Miami,” 312.

²⁰⁸ Smith, “The Giant Killer – the 1980s,” 337.

the 1980s saw one of the most integral program shifts, truly beginning to incorporate the theatrical component of showmanship throughout all productions.

Drill design was one of the major components of expansion throughout the 1980s. This was due to the innovative designer George Zingali, who worked with championship level corps such as the 27th Lancers and the Garfield Cadets.²⁰⁹ Zingali was already an established name in the community, specifically with respect to color guards, having incorporated double flag use, dance, and character work that gave other corps the confidence to experiment with various equipment uses.²¹⁰ His drill design “drag[ged] the drum corps community ‘kicking and screaming’ away from the 50-yard line” in the 1980s by creating an asymmetrical nature to the drill.²¹¹ Zingali’s drill was known to be continuous and strenuous, requiring the precision of a perfectly executed adjusted step size. It also incorporated his signature move, the Z-pull, into each production. A Z-pull was essentially a way for a corps to get from one impact to another through the use of a “z” shape and several smaller, yet continuous, sets. This was utilized for visual impact along with musical high points. Zingali’s legacy lives on through the annual award given to the top color guard in DCI.

With the help of Michael Cesario, Zingali incorporated yet another visual innovation in the 1980s with dance. Cesario stated, “One of the things we felt was that marching was a type of dance.”²¹² Modern ballet then began to take a role in corps performances, mostly in the

²⁰⁹ Smith, 332.

²¹⁰ Dorritie, “Why the Guns?,” 78.

²¹¹ Smith, “The Giant Killer – the 1980s,” 334.

²¹² Smith, 334.

movement of the corps proper.²¹³ Not only changes in movement, but extreme tempo adjustments became a demand of all performers, creating a division from prior years where corps were restricted to militaristic tempi in competition.²¹⁴ Dance was accompanied by features for the color guards. Additionally, the uniforms that were worn shifted to being more practical to the movements they were performing and became theme-based replacing a mere reflection of the corps proper, making them costumes instead.²¹⁵ Cesario later used his talents as a designer on Broadway to innovate with corps proper uniforms as well. The goal was to modernize the uniforms to make individuals look taller and leaner by creating bibs with matching shoes, high-waisted jackets, and taller shakos/plumes standard.²¹⁶

Another key figure in the drum corps world at this point in time was Jim Ott, a brass arranger and educator with Spirit of Atlanta who perished suddenly and tragically in an accident in June 1980 (during the corps competitive season).²¹⁷ His brass writing helped to provide one of the largest “walls of sound” drum corps has heard.²¹⁸ He was posthumously inducted into the DCI hall of fame in 1995 and became the namesake for the highest brass score each season. According to the article “Remembering Jim Ott,” he was pedagogically unique for his time since

²¹³ Smith, 334.

²¹⁴ Smith, 334.

²¹⁵ Dorritie, “Why the Guns?,” 79-80.

²¹⁶ Beckham, “The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming,” 54.

²¹⁷ Smith, “The Giant Killer – the 1980s,” 332.

²¹⁸ Smith, 332.

he was not a professional band director.²¹⁹ Instead of teaching exact techniques, he expected students to know the fundamental skills and utilized intuition to move on to each aspect of a brass routine, including an emphasis on breathing and singing fundamentals, to create collaboration between the teacher and the ensemble.²²⁰

Pedagogy changed in the percussion section as well, most significantly with the expansion of rudiments included in drum materials. For a brief time, though, performing with match grip became popular. Fred Sanford began the practice in 1972, but it saw both its height and demise in the 1980s.²²¹ The Percussive Arts Society (PAS) also expanded upon the initial twenty-six essential rudiments from the National Association of Rudimental Drummers (NARD) to include forty that were approved by 1984. Rudiments were separated by categories like roll, flam, diddle, and drag to constitute the nature of each skill.²²² They were outlined but not required, since the initial set of rudiments became known as elementary and essential to percussion language.²²³ These new developments set forth the motion towards further development, creativity, and robust technical performance in percussion. Pit percussion, otherwise known as the front ensemble, began to solidify as a component in DCI and add to field

²¹⁹ Michael Boo, “Remembering Jim Ott,” Drum Corps International, February 17, 2006, <https://www.dci.org/news/remembering-jim-ott>.

²²⁰ Boo, “Remembering Jim Ott.”

²²¹ Beckham, “The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming,” 62.

²²² Beckham, 59.

²²³ Beckham, 59.

percussion in the 1982 season, which eventually introduced instruments of the concert percussion section into drum corps.²²⁴

Arguably the most influential modifications to drum corps had to do with the mindset of adjudication. Beginning in the 1984 season, judges were forced to reshape their entire frame of mind with the elimination of the “tick” system.²²⁵ With the change, judging positively awarded corps for achievements and accomplishments while not immediately punishing them for errors. This moved the community away from the strict, militaristic standards and into expansively creative endeavors.

One lasting legacy of this era is that of show design becoming a full package. Many corps were already recognized for performing in certain styles like “western” and “west coast jazz,” but the changes of the 1980s enabled corps to truly create signatures within their productions. Phantom Regiment (Illinois) performed a “total package” show in 1982.²²⁶ Though their production of *Spartacus* did not win them a championship, it innovated the way that programs were created by engaging the audience differently and including a true storyline, which would earn them merit and would later become expected from other groups.²²⁷

The musical palette also expanded to create more symphonic sounds. Classical music became a centerpiece for many corps’ repertoires. As mentioned above, Leonard Bernstein was championed by the Garfield Cadets. Additionally, groups programmed works by George

²²⁴ Beckham, 63.

²²⁵ Dorritie, “Why the Guns?,” 80.

²²⁶ Smith, “The Giant Killer – the 1980s,” 333.

²²⁷ Smith, 333.

Gershwin, Ottorino Respighi, Aaron Copland, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and Aram Khatchurian, bringing drum corps into a more “serious” musical light.²²⁸ Santa Clara Vanguard also performed music from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical *Phantom of the Opera* multiple times.²²⁹ The selections with higher musical merit became a starting point to influence original works to be written, not arranged, for the drum corps arena.²³⁰

Corps to note

Some corps found themselves at the top the competitive standings. The Blue Devils continued to have dominating success in 1980, 1982, and 1986, receiving one third of the total titles from DCI throughout its first two decades.²³¹ The Cadets also began an impressive three-year champion streak in 1983 with the help of George Zingali’s design, as mentioned above. Though infrequently crowned champion, Santa Clara Vanguard also saw immense success, placing in the top three almost every year of the 1980s.²³²

Among the above mentioned corps, other successful corps included the Madison Scouts, Phantom Regiment, and the Cavaliers. The Madison Scouts won a title with their fiftieth anniversary corps while performing what is now recognized as their signature work, *Malagueña*.²³³ Phantom Regiment utilized this decade to develop their identity as well, with the

²²⁸ Smith, 333-334.

²²⁹ Smith, 336.

²³⁰ Smith, 334.

²³¹ Smith, 335.

²³² Smith, 336.

²³³ Smith, 336.

use of all-white uniforms and “fashionable” use of classical music, especially music with darker undertones.²³⁴ The Cavaliers paralleled the success of the Cadets but at a more gradual rate.²³⁵

They ended the decade as a powerhouse contender, far above how they began it.

The Spirit of Atlanta was an ensemble that waffled in its competitive success. Its importance is that it opened DCI to a new geographical region.²³⁶ Suncoast Sound added to the southern region and saw top-twelve finishes along with Spirit.²³⁷ They were able to stabilize themselves as a finalist throughout the majority of the decade, often captivating audiences with original compositions.²³⁸ Sky Riders also made a short-lived push into finals during this decade. The Velvet Knights began to be viewed as a “‘fun-loving,’ crazy” and often eccentric corps, becoming a fan favorite while achieving finalist placements.²³⁹

Other U.S.-based corps that sustained even keeled competitive success within the semi-finalist category included the Boston Crusaders, the Crossmen, and the Troopers. They were joined by newfound strong contenders like the Colts, the Geneseo Knights, the Glassmen, Florida Wave, the Blue Knights, the Marauders, and the Spartans.²⁴⁰ One particularly interesting

²³⁴ Smith, 336.

²³⁵ Smith, 336.

²³⁶ Smith, 336.

²³⁷ Smith, 337.

²³⁸ Smith, 337.

²³⁹ Smith, 337.

²⁴⁰ Smith, 337.

corps was the Sacramento Freelancers, who went inactive temporarily but were able to rejoin the circuit in full force, something that had not previously been done.²⁴¹

Drum Corps and Society

By now, the days of drum corps reaching the masses had subsided. The 1980s saw a downswing for the activity at large, with active corps reduced from 250 to 110 units.²⁴² Economic considerations were cited as the demise of many of these groups, usually as it related to travel and the fight to stay in the top placements of all corps.²⁴³ Items such as uniforms, equipment, food, and transportation added serious financial strain.²⁴⁴ Smaller groups struggled to stay afloat. A prime example of the decline occurred in the east coast region, where membership and financial viability was difficult to sustain once the corps began to recruit outside their local region which became the trend for corps operating in DCI henceforth.²⁴⁵ One crucial corps that shut its doors indefinitely during the 1980s was the 27th Lancers, who had been a founding member of DCI.²⁴⁶ Many other corps experienced hardship causing them to downgrade in class, but not cease to exist completely. The Blue Stars were one corps affected by hardships. The two previously mentioned corps are only a few examples of corps that did not survive past the decade since many others became dormant during this time as well.

²⁴¹ Smith, 337.

²⁴² Smith, 332.

²⁴³ Smith, 332.

²⁴⁴ Smith, 337.

²⁴⁵ Smith, 332.

²⁴⁶ Smith, 336.

A short-lived, high-achieving corps, Star of Indiana, was established in 1985. This corps immediately impacted all others in two ways, the first of which, and seemingly the one with the most lasting effect, was financial. The corps was listed as a “corporate corps,” meaning it was mainly funded by Cook Group Companies and corporate grants.²⁴⁷ The second thing that Star brought to the table was their commitment to having no recurring thematic material.²⁴⁸ Not all corps followed suit with this initially, but its approach seems to be more indicative of corps productions to come. Star of Indiana was not the only new corps to join in the 1980s. The Bluecoats rejoined the ranks of corps midway through this decade. They quickly regained competitive success, gaining a finalist position in 1987.²⁴⁹

1990s

Due to the astounding amount of innovation throughout the 1980s, in the 1990s corps coasted on this success. The rate at which changes occurred was slower and progressive in comparison to previous years. Essentially, a majority of the quick-paced changes and alterations in design and rules became standard in the 1990s. This allowed each corps to catch up and develop within the parameters previously outlined.

Percussion in the ensembles saw minor shifts in style and personnel. Snare drums once again grew to nine-member sections to balance with the other musicians on the field. Due to the reduced importance of percussion in the overall score, specifically outlined drum solos also

²⁴⁷ Smith, 335.

²⁴⁸ Smith, 335.

²⁴⁹ Smith, 337.

began to dwindle in comparison to prior productions.²⁵⁰ This, in turn, played to the new scoring category of music ensemble, which highlighted marrying brass and percussion sounds into one.²⁵¹ New products introduced throughout the 1980s and 1990s also played a role in the percussive arts.

One group that continued to break boundaries throughout the 1990s was the newcomer, Star of Indiana. Throughout their short-lived tenure, they became a fan favorite and eventually won a singular championship in 1991. In tandem with their competitive success in the early 1990s, Star of Indiana was an instigator for uniform alteration. Though they kept the same uniform style, giving them a corps identity, they began to make yearly modifications to go with the thematic material of their shows.²⁵² These can be seen in miniscule aspects like sashes and other pops of color alongside the corps proper uniform. Phantom Regiment later modeled their alterations on this notion as well.

After Star of Indiana's reign, the judging category changed again in the 1990s. In 1994, the caption of general effect altered the trajectory of competition yet again. In this instance, the musical components were combined into one type of general effect category: instead of considering brass and percussion separately, music became one effect category, eliminating a judge.²⁵³ The combination was mirrored in the analysis caption as well. Therefore, all musical

²⁵⁰ Beckham, "The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming," 63.

²⁵¹ Beckham, 63.

²⁵² Da Silva, "Uniforms and Colors," 55.

²⁵³ Atkinson and Close, "And Now the Scores," 71.

entities were judges as music analysis prevailing over the separated brass and percussion segmented judging philosophies.

A prominent aspect of drum corps that can be seen as most influential in driving the activity towards the turn of the century was pedagogy. Dan Potter stated in his interview, “The 1990s was really the decade when we transitioned towards more professional music educators being on staff.”²⁵⁴ This, in turn, persisted to include higher quality teachers, teaching strategies, students, and ultimately productions going into the decades that followed.

Going forward, this study will chronicle the major alterations that have occurred in DCI since 2000. Each chapter will consider a twenty-three-year span, highlighting the important details and shifts that have set the scene for present-day participation in the activity.

²⁵⁴ Potter Interview.

CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATION AND BUSINESS

Drum Corps International prides itself in “producing events for the world’s most elite and exclusive marching ensembles.”²⁵⁵ Since its inception in 1971 and first official event in 1972, it has provided ample opportunities for young adult and teenage students to perform and compete at a high level. Today, the organization sponsors over a hundred competitive events annually that include World Class Drum Corps, Open Class Drum Corps, SoundSport, and Drumline Battle events.²⁵⁶ The following chapters provide insight into how their operations “[deliver] the message of ‘excellence in performance and in life’” to countless participants.²⁵⁷

DCI is a cooperative, not-for-profit organization incorporated in the state of Wisconsin.²⁵⁸ The business of DCI is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization, otherwise known as a non-profit and tax exempt entity.²⁵⁹ It holds a public charity status classified as 509(a)(1).²⁶⁰ Post-pandemic, this organization operates on a twelve to fourteen million dollar annual budget, which is sizable for any non-profit.²⁶¹ Many of the individual membership organizations, otherwise known as each drum corps found within DCI, fit into the non-profit business category

²⁵⁵ “About Drum Corps International (DCI),” Drum Corps International, accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/static/about-drum-corps-international>.

²⁵⁶ “About Drum Corps International (DCI).”

²⁵⁷ “About Drum Corps International (DCI).”

²⁵⁸ Drum Corps International Bylaws, updated February 2021, <https://online.pubhtml5.com/xada/ikln/>, 2.

²⁵⁹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 36.

²⁶⁰ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 36.

²⁶¹ Dan Acheson (former DCI CEO) in discussion with the author, January 20, 2024.

as well. These corps, with membership under the purview of DCI, operate autonomously while also adhering to the bylaws of DCI.²⁶² The interests of individual corps entities frequently overlap with the goals of DCI, but not always. It requires trust for organizations to act and speak for the overarching whole.²⁶³ For example, the bylaws of DCI are continually under review; since 2000, there have been seventeen alterations to the document.²⁶⁴ The information reported in this study reflects the most recent version, revised in 2021.

As it stands today, DCI believes in the following statements at its core. Decisions for the trajectory of the organization are made with these philosophies in mind:

DCI Mission Statement 2023:

The mission of Drum Corps International is to bring the life-enriching benefits and enjoyment of marching music performing arts to more people worldwide. We do this by creating a stage for participating organizations to engage in education, competition, entertainment, and the promotion of individual growth.

DCI Vision Statement 2023:

A world in which the positive life-transforming personal and societal benefits of marching music performing arts are widely recognized and enjoyed.

DCI Core Values 2023:

Pursuing Excellence: DCI strives to consistently demonstrate excellence in its operations and results and remain the preeminent leader in its field.

Teamwork and Collaboration: DCI promotes effective teamwork, productive relationships, and cooperation to achieve superior results.

Visionary Leadership: DCI leads in moving the marching music performing arts toward a preferred future that inspires others to share the vision and engage.

Commitment and Dedication: DCI works diligently and tirelessly in its devotion to advancing marching music performing arts.

Creativity and Innovation: DCI demonstrates imagination and ingenuity to develop new and effective ways to accomplish its mission.

Mutual Care and Respect: DCI treats all with dignity, courtesy, attention, and appreciation; and seeks these traits in others with whom it engages

²⁶² Drum Corps International Bylaws, 2.

²⁶³ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 2.

²⁶⁴ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 38.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: DCI fosters and promotes the fundamental values of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for all in the drum corps community.²⁶⁵

Simplified by DCI announcer Dan Potter, states, “this is a nonprofit youth activity meant to grow great human beings. That's what we are at the core.”²⁶⁶ This chapter will focus on the growth of the organization after the turn of the century, a process that led to the previous statements becoming the pillar beliefs that DCI stands for. It will also continue to shed light on recent ingenuity in the organization’s activities as a whole.

Previously indicated, DCI was initially a conglomeration of its membership corps. Competitively speaking, the finalist corps earned positions as part of the voting membership of the board of directors for DCI. According to retired CEO Dan Acheson, this mindset was “elitist.”²⁶⁷ In 1988, the corps in power shifted to become the top twenty-five corps, and in 1994, it altered again to the top twenty-one corps to broaden the elitist mentality.²⁶⁸ The shift to including more representative voices created efficiency issues, specifically in regards to budgetary approval.²⁶⁹ Though the restructure included more voices, it still not include all competitive corps in decision making processes and favored the groups with the most competitive success. Essentially, the sole board of directors consisted of the membership advising the DCI community until 2008, when the verbiage was changed to label these corps as

²⁶⁵ “About Drum Corps International (DCI).”

²⁶⁶ Dan Potter (DCI Announcer) interview with the author, January 29, 2024.

²⁶⁷ Acheson Interview.

²⁶⁸ Dan Acheson, “What We Do!” (slideshow presentation, DCI Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN, January 2024), 23.

²⁶⁹ Acheson Interview.

“Voting Membership,” and creating a completely separate board of directors that operated in tandem with one another.²⁷⁰

The term “voting membership” refers to corps that have proven successful by stipulations outlined by DCI to become fully fledged members. Presently, membership is initially determined based upon eligibility. There are three main components of eligibility: participating in DCI summer tour/world championships, meeting the criteria established by the board, and being approved for membership.²⁷¹ The membership status will remain permanent unless revoked for some reason.²⁷² Grounds for removal from DCI include utilizing ensemble members over the age of twenty-one (or twenty-two if born on or after June 1 of the competitive year), missing consecutive member meetings, failing to meet obligatory financial requirements, or being removed by a seventy-five percent vote by the rest of the membership.²⁷³ Ultimately, “DCI does not seek to transgress the participating organizations” by governing over their “administrative independence,” as their code of conduct states, “But as a part of a broader community, it is critically incumbent on each participation organization to fulfill its responsibilities – with fidelity – by promptly addressing allegations of misconduct.”²⁷⁴ This statement allows DCI to hold corps accountable for issues with their administrative leadership, without fully terminating their status. Therefore, corps can be placed on probationary status for issues of safety and/or health of

²⁷⁰ Acheson, “What We Do!” 23.

²⁷¹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 5-6.

²⁷² Drum Corps International Bylaws, 5-6.

²⁷³ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 6-7.

²⁷⁴ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 8.

persons within the organization, which would then limit their participation and provide guidelines to rectify the alleged issues.²⁷⁵ This status was most recently given to Spirit of Atlanta in the 2021 season, after allegations of misconduct were reported and failed to be addressed properly by the organization at large. DCI intervened by placing the corps on a twenty-four-month probationary status. It was lifted in 2024 and the corps was restored to full status, as the organization has held to more stringent monitoring of the alleged issues.²⁷⁶

Within the current climate, there are nineteen World Class Corps that make up the voting component of the activity: the Academy, Blue Devils, Blue Knights, Blue Stars, Bluecoats, Boston Crusaders, Cadets, Carolina Crown, Cavaliers, Colts, Crossmen, Jersey Surf, Madison Scouts, Mandarins, Pacific Crest, Phantom Regiment, Seattle Cascades, Spirit of Atlanta, and Troopers.²⁷⁷ Other corps in the World Class bracket, including Music City and Genesis, are still working on earning their membership status and do not get an official vote at present. Santa Clara Vanguard was included in the membership until its year-long hiatus in the 2023 competitive season but will be returning in the upcoming season. The Cadets will lose their status after 2024, since they have indicated their absence from competition in the upcoming year. Explained more further in chapter 8, this absence will now be indefinite. Open Class corps are not afforded this privilege.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 7.

²⁷⁶ Drum Corps International, “DCI Statement, January 9, 2022,” January 9, 2022., accessed February 21, 2024, <https://dci.org/news/dci-statement-january-9-2022>.

²⁷⁷ Acheson, “What We Do!” 21.

²⁷⁸ Explained in detail later, Open Class ensembles are drum corps competing within DCI. Typically, these groups have smaller membership numbers and/or are less experienced.

The process for becoming a member has been altered from previous methods. Acheson comments that within the last ten years (since 2014), corps now go through an approval and evaluation process as they move up the ranks of DCI.²⁷⁹ New organizations begin as SoundSport teams, then evolve to Open Class and finally World Class competition. Each step of the process requires approval and an evaluation prior to moving to the next level of competition. Once all of the criteria is fulfilled, the voting membership must cast the final vote to accept a group into DCI as a fully-fledged World Class member.²⁸⁰

Corps in the voting membership have a specific purview to propose and vote on aspects of DCI affairs pertaining to the bylaws and membership policies of DCI, as well as to decide competitive issues and rules congresses.²⁸¹ In addition to the elements of their direct involvement, corps representatives (designated annually by the corps) work together on various committees to advise the group as a whole, elect the official board of directors for DCI, and participate in votes regarding changing membership status of corps.²⁸² The voting membership also has the ability to run for one of the six board seats held by corps leadership (see below).²⁸³ The committee work done by the corps representatives, often the corps director, is expansive and includes items such as governance, finance, auditing, membership affairs, artistry and competition (known as the steering committee), hall of fame, succession, CEO assessment,

²⁷⁹ Acheson Interview.

²⁸⁰ Acheson Interview.

²⁸¹ Acheson, “What We Do!” 26-27.

²⁸² Acheson, “What We Do!” 26.

²⁸³ Acheson Interview.

visioning committee, INStep, policy, competition, and area-specific advisory (Open Class, All-Age Class, Pacific Division).²⁸⁴ Representatives of each corps must act on behalf of the interest of their corps in these proceedings and not as a sole proprietor.

Working together, the membership and DCI's officials outline that membership status comes with both responsibilities and benefits. Paramount is the responsibility of all organizations to provide a "safe, healthy, and positive educational environment" for students.²⁸⁵ Earning membership status provides the benefit of voting rights in DCI and helps them to influence the decision-making process. The various aspects that representatives regularly vote on include membership status changes, electing a board of directors (see below), removal of specific directors, defining adjudicative/competitive rules, access to DCI, and compensation for member corps.²⁸⁶ DCI pays all ensembles, not just the voting membership, to assist with travel expenses for performing at events. However, compensation is weighted more favorably for corps with membership status; therefore, it is highly advantageous to earn.²⁸⁷ Though corps are compensated for their participation in DCI tour events, they are required to operate on their own budgets and are not offered loans through DCI itself.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Acheson, "What We Do!" 26.

²⁸⁵ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 6.

²⁸⁶ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 6.

²⁸⁷ Acheson Interview.

²⁸⁸ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 26.

Since 2008, DCI has had a separate board of directors consisting of nine individuals acting separately from any corps affiliation.²⁸⁹ This was a paradigm shift which restructured DCI's business operations. Six of these individuals are elected from the membership corps and three are "at-large directors," meaning they do not have an affiliation with a specific corps.²⁹⁰ In addition to the nine individuals, various DCI-specific representatives are included in the board, but do not have voting rights on the board itself. In 2024, these include the membership chair, chief executive officer, and a representative from the Open/All-Age classifications.²⁹¹ Their role differs from the voting membership in that they are highly influential for the business side of DCI. Elements within their purview include management of the corporation, business conduct, making "conflict free" business decisions, taking other legal and industry standards into account, and employing the CEO.²⁹² The nine individuals also oversee general policy, budgeting, planning, and development considerations.²⁹³ Dan Acheson highlights that this group incurs all fiduciary responsibilities.²⁹⁴

Finally, the official board of directors develops bylaws for DCI. These bylaws are not binding documents until the voting membership approves them, creating a system of checks and balances.²⁹⁵ Ultimately, DCI's board of directors does not have purview over bylaw amendment,

²⁸⁹ Acheson, "What We Do!" 22.

²⁹⁰ Acheson, "What We Do!" 22.

²⁹¹ Acheson, "What We Do!" 22.

²⁹² Acheson, "What We Do!" 27.

²⁹³ Acheson, "What We Do!" 27.

²⁹⁴ Acheson Interview.

²⁹⁵ Acheson, "What We Do!" 27.

membership status, or adjudicative parameters.²⁹⁶ In the most simple terms, the board of directors is “legally and financially” responsible for the business of DCI.²⁹⁷ The board works together with the voting membership by overseeing the committees on which they serve.²⁹⁸

The CEO functions as a bridge between voting membership and DCI staff. They have the status and authority to enforce the rules outlined by the board of directors. This includes, but is not limited to, staffing roles, speaking on behalf of the organization, taking action to support safety for all, monitoring participating corps, and ensuring compliance of corps.²⁹⁹ Evaluation of corps in competition falls under the oversight of the CEO by the appointment of a judge administrator who has final say over competitive qualms that may occur.³⁰⁰ Other important appointees by the CEO include an artistic director and contest directors.

Outside of these vital roles, DCI has staff who work full time or part time for the organization. The staff oversees the areas of events, communications/marketing (eight staff members), finance, general operations (eleven staff members), technology, competition (three staff members), governance, and compliance/corps services (six staff members).³⁰¹ The structure of DCI staff and their roles at present can be seen in figure 3.

²⁹⁶ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 15.

²⁹⁷ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 13.

²⁹⁸ Acheson Interview.

²⁹⁹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 21-22.

³⁰⁰ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 22.

³⁰¹ Acheson, “What We Do!” 48.

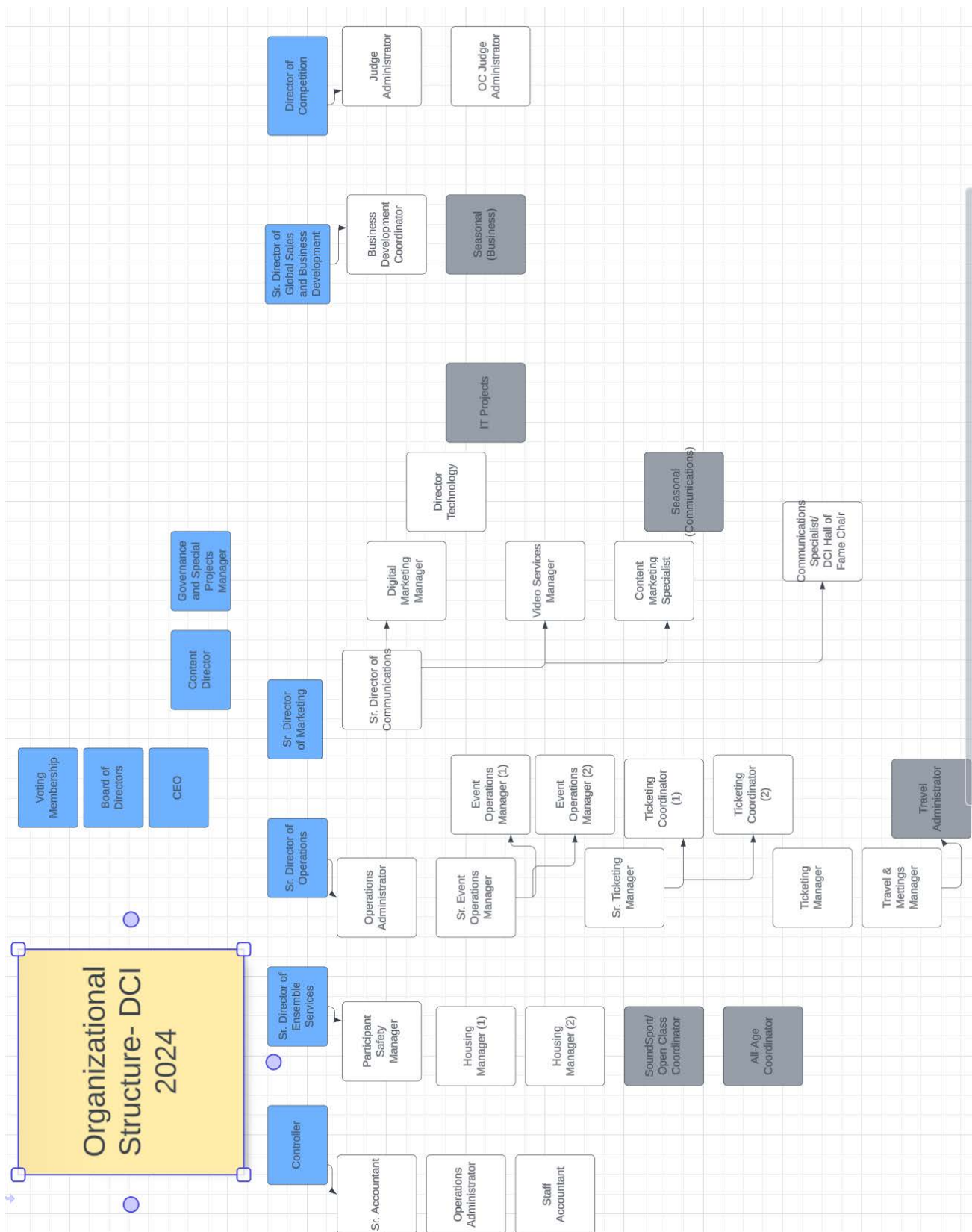


Figure 4: Acheson, “What We Do! Staff Structure” *Permission granted by Dan Acheson.*

The chart demonstrates the CEO, board of directors, and voting membership are the most integral to the hierarchy. Each staff role stems from the CEO's branch and operates under their supervision. Communications/marketing, DCI operations, and corps services require the most labor and are integral to creating smooth operations for DCI since they have the most staff positions, as indicated in figure 3.

DCI is primarily responsible for administering items regarding competition. This includes operating and managing events while continually reviewing and revising the competitive aspects.³⁰² In conjunction with operating shows and events, DCI is also important to the overall sustainability of individual corps. DCI and/or the operating show coordinator is now expected to acquire housing for competitive units, taking a large burden away from individual organizations.³⁰³ Therefore, DCI now functions as “an event promotions company” that also manages corps governance.³⁰⁴ More specifically, the first major competitive events that DCI oversaw were championship and regional competitions. As the century has progressed, DCI has branched out to help manage some “tour event partnered shows” that are sponsored by individual corps. DCI has helped in many different aspects of these events, as needed by the corps.

One of the services that DCI provides for partnered shows is ticketing. Therefore, DCI employs a branch of ticketing services for all purposes in these sales, which became a component of some of their tour partner shows as well.³⁰⁵ Adding these services has fostered better event

³⁰² Acheson, “What We Do!” 44.

³⁰³ Acheson Interview.

³⁰⁴ Acheson Interview.

³⁰⁵ Acheson Interview.

promotion, social media support, and direct email support.³⁰⁶ Essentially, DCI has found entrepreneurial niches to support the corps.³⁰⁷ Currently, DCI handles ticketing for roughly 70% of shows.³⁰⁸

Adding shows in different regions of the country has become DCI's responsibility as their event management has expanded. For example, there had not been any corps operating shows in Texas, but it was deemed a viable market for DCI events, and DCI began to sponsor new events in this market.³⁰⁹ Because of this expansion, DCI now employs people in the "events" branch of work. There are three full-time individuals who work specifically with venues on items such as securing contracts and coordinating with local organizing committees.³¹⁰ They are joined by many "weekend warriors" who are employed part time throughout the summer season for logistics at each venue.³¹¹

Additional expansion of staff occurred because the services that DCI provides for its membership has expanded. One example of this is DCI's ensemble services branch, which is designed to take responsibility for corps housing.³¹² Previously, this responsibility fell on the individual corps. Though each corps remained autonomous, DCI's duties expanded to heighten

³⁰⁶ Acheson Interview.

³⁰⁷ Acheson Interview.

³⁰⁸ Acheson Interview.

³⁰⁹ Acheson Interview.

³¹⁰ Acheson Interview.

³¹¹ Acheson Interview.

³¹² Acheson Interview.

the “corps experience on the road,” which is now an aspect on which corps depend.³¹³ The ensemble services arm also provides meaningful data to support corps, such as by researching financial information to relay to corps in terms of food procurement and other consolidation needs.³¹⁴

The operations branch helps to support many logistical requirements within DCI. For example, they coordinate travel for all full- and part-time DCI staff and judges as well as support needs within the home office that is rented in Indianapolis, Indiana.³¹⁵ Overall, DCI event management has increased to become a production alongside alterations to other areas like safety and management.³¹⁶

From a business perspective, one vital addition that was initiated in the 2017 strategic plan was the management succession plan.³¹⁷ The inevitability of people leaving high-ranking positions in DCI triggered a need to develop a plan to help the eventual successors. Specifically, this plan started in hopes of helping the successor to the CEO position. Dan Acheson was the CEO of DCI throughout the entire time frame of this study and retired upon the conclusion of the 2023 competitive season. The succession plan was created by the board of directors and outlined vital “competencies, skills, and other criteria” that new hires in the CEO position should exemplify.³¹⁸

³¹³ Acheson Interview.

³¹⁴ Acheson Interview.

³¹⁵ Acheson Interview.

³¹⁶ Acheson Interview.

³¹⁷ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 2017, revised 2018, <https://online.pubhtml5.com/xada/snmr/>, 14.

³¹⁸ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 14.

Overall, the voting membership, the board of directors, and the staff must work together on many aspects of DCI's function. Many, but not all, of the large business items formally occur during the DCI annual meetings in January of each year. This is when important votes regarding bylaw amendments, business plans (including sales of property), and competitive rules take place.³¹⁹ It is also an opportunity for many of the committees to meet in person with their elected chairs driving discussion and communication. These meetings typically occur over an intensive four-day period. Business and judging are at the forefront of these meetings, but other topics covered include class-specific inner workings, business objectives outlined by the CEO, educational presentations (often related to marching health), a drum major leadership seminar, and sponsor presentations.³²⁰ Even more figures participate in the meetings when the boards of individual corps meet, which is called the corps board consortium.³²¹ Here, representatives from the individual membership corps work together to discuss their board business on such aspects as fundraising for the corps.³²²

In addition to the large and prestigious annual meeting, DCI's membership meets in September to debrief after the previous season instead of looking forward to the next season as they do in January.³²³ The September meeting also helps to finalize the tours for the upcoming season, as DCI announces these tours well before January of the competitive year. Vicki McFarlane states, "Interaction with other corps, this is what 2020 changed, the COVID year,

³¹⁹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 10.

³²⁰ Acheson Interview.

³²¹ Acheson Interview.

³²² Acheson Interview.

³²³ Acheson Interview.

because all the corps directors started meeting every week. I would say, right now, our interaction as corps directors from 2020 to 2023 is the strongest it's ever been."³²⁴ Frequency of an open line of communication for business-related items is constantly in the workings at present leaving no one in the dark over the operational handling of corps business any longer. Corps are still tight-lipped about their competitive and design elements, though.³²⁵

DCI spearheads several programs that feed into the World Class drum corps. The primary responsibility of the organization is to sponsor competition in the marching arts community. In 2023, the organization hosted events within the categories of World Class Drum and Bugle Corps, Open Class Drum and Bugle Corps, International Class Drum and Bugle Corps, SoundSport, and Drumline Battles.³²⁶ Paramount to this discussion are the additional competitive drum corps categories which were mostly added in order to feed the future of the drum corps.³²⁷

Earlier versions of drum corps were deeply intertwined with their surrounding community. By the 2000s, competitive high school marching bands began to dominate the place that the community-based drum corps previously held in society.³²⁸ This, in turn, decreased the access to entry into the DCI activity for younger and less experienced participants. In 2013, DCI reacted by founding of SoundSport, with lower barriers to entry and less restrictive procedures.³²⁹ Additionally, Drumline Battle (beginning in 2016) is a part of the new systems to

³²⁴ Vicki McFarlane (Colts Corps Director) Interview with author, December 27, 2023.

³²⁵ McFarlane interview, December 27, 2023.

³²⁶ Acheson, "What We Do!" 29.

³²⁷ Acheson Interview.

³²⁸ Acheson Interview.

³²⁹ Acheson Interview.

integrate and build membership for the future and provide opportunities for students to gain experience prior to joining Open and World Class corps.³³⁰ Often, the groups provide access to learning about programming earlier in a student's life. The flexibility provided by these ensembles is related to age limits, cost, participation modes, time commitment, ensemble size, and instrumentation.³³¹ Open Class corps, though still at the drum corps level, are also considered to be an entry to the activity. These corps first began in 2008 after the consolidation of the division II/III system.

In addition, DCI considers the development of its international status. At times, international corps come to the championship events to compete in their own category, frequently unmatched. The SoundSport program has helped provide more competition opportunities for international ensembles.³³² These SoundSport-branded events have appeared worldwide in locations such as England, Ireland, Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan, promoting the DCI brand and making it more international than before (as its name seems to state).³³³ DCI is potentially looking to further its global engagement by hosting international tours.

In a similar vein, DCI continues to build relationships and partnerships with surrounding organizations. These organizations both support DCI and become mutual benefactors. They include Visit Indy (and other arts organizations in Indianapolis specifically), Music Crossroads, Music for All, PAS (Percussive Arts Society), WGI: Sport of the Arts (Winter Guard

³³⁰ "About SoundSport," SoundSport, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://soundsport.com/about-soundsport/>.

³³¹ "About SoundSport."

³³² Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 14.

³³³ Acheson Interview.

International), U.S. Bands, NFHS (National Federation of High School Associations), and National Association for Music Education.³³⁴ Because of its relationships with many of these organizations, DCI helps to drive economic revenue and provide relevance to communities at large. Additionally, many of the music-specific partnerships solidify DCI's importance within the comprehensive package of music education. Their goals center around collaboration that broadens the DCI market.³³⁵

Outside of competition, there are many initiatives that DCI initiated and/or sponsors, some of which will be considered in later chapters. These include Marching Arts Safety and Health (MASH), INStep, INpact Band, BANDtastic, and other music education initiatives.³³⁶ On a smaller scale, DCI spearheads programs that include scholarships for performing members, support an annual induction of members into their Hall of Fame, and have a Friends of DCI program.³³⁷ These initiatives have been met with policy regarding training for staff and other large-scale developments, often regarding safety of members. This will be more explicitly discussed in the chapter 7.

According to Dan Acheson, the boldest step DCI took to initiate change following its 2008 restructure was the release of the 2018 Code of Conduct, which addresses important expectations and outlines ethical guidelines for participating corps/organizations following DCI's purview. This document was revised along with the bylaws in 2021. In this document,

³³⁴ Acheson, "What We Do!" 45-46.

³³⁵ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 7.

³³⁶ Acheson, "What We Do!" 31, 33.

³³⁷ Acheson, "What We Do!" 33.

DCI states that while each corps is unique, “we have [to] come together as a community to celebrate our joint love for music, education, and pageantry” and to extend the values already outlined by DCI in their mission, vision, and value statement.³³⁸ DCI does not have, and never has had, the authority to hire staff within each individual corps, but this set of guidelines helped to promote positive behaviors in the competitive community.³³⁹ These guidelines aim to hold each person inside of the DCI sphere to the same ethical standards. Chapter 7 will address these policies further in relation to membership safety.

In 2017, DCI designed a strategic plan to help promote all vital components of work towards one common goal. These include the staff, CEO, board of directors, participating organizations, and voting membership. The document, was then revised in 2018 to outline DCI’s intentions for drum corps in the upcoming years, taking the activity into the present.³⁴⁰

The strategic plan also identifies a need for a defined membership structure to allow for more types of groups to enter competition.³⁴¹ By 2020, the governance and membership affairs committees were tasked with outlining a membership structure and the benefits that corps earn by gaining membership.³⁴²

³³⁸ Drum Corps International Community Code of Conduct and Ethics Guidelines, 2018, revised 2021, <https://online.pubhtml5.com/xada/klod/>, 2.

³³⁹ Acheson Interview.

³⁴⁰ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 2.

³⁴¹ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 6.

³⁴² Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 9.

Policy

Membership corps must adhere to policies outlined by DCI. Most policies are straightforward, though they require clear and thorough compliance. Items that must be submitted yearly to DCI to ensure viability of each corps include membership documents, individual corps board of director rosters, insurance, and housing inspection (at each site).³⁴³ Each of these documents provides specifications about compliance.

One policy affecting DCI and its membership corps concerns the announcement of corps staff. Corps cannot announce their staff for the upcoming season until the Tuesday following Labor Day, allowing for corps to finish their season prior to divulging membership-altering data for the following year.³⁴⁴

DCI is contractually bound to provide certain commodities for each corps, including items related to scheduling. The CEO of DCI is responsible for scheduling corps at events on tour, with communication from those organizations; corps commit to events for the upcoming season in November, which is called the Fall Commitment.³⁴⁵ Corps must then sign an Agreement of Participation binding them to this event by May.³⁴⁶ Failure to attend an event after making this commitment can result in fines for the corps.

Policies regarding membership can be integral. For example, students with outstanding membership dues at one corps cannot be contracted by another corps without a written

³⁴³ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, revised 2023, <https://pubhtml5.com/xada/mkpd/>.

³⁴⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 9.

³⁴⁵ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 11.

³⁴⁶ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 12.

agreement between both organizations.³⁴⁷ Contractually, members cannot leave their signed agreements during a season to pursue another corps, but in the case of an inactive season, these members are released to pursue membership elsewhere.³⁴⁸

Financial

DCI has not always been the thriving organization it is today. Financially, DCI struggled prior to the turn of the century. Dan Acheson reflects that by around 2000, DCI had rectified these issues.³⁴⁹

Individual corps and the overarching organization of Drum Corps International have large monetary considerations under their purview. Operating budgets for corps have skyrocketed over the years. Based on research compiled in April 2022, the annual operating budget found in archival records for the Colts Youth Organization has expanded from \$7,000 in 1965 to over \$1 million in the present day. This research also uncovered that the start of the DCI era saw the budget double from \$42,000 in 1972 to \$84,000 in 1977.³⁵⁰ Essentially, the majority of the budgetary load falls on the individual corps. DCI, though, as a governing organization, began to add stipends to additional competitive winnings for corps based on mileage and placement results.³⁵¹ The stipends began during the combine system and are still a marginal factor in corps life today. In 1972, the initial year of DCI, each corps was compensated for their

³⁴⁷ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 14.

³⁴⁸ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 14.

³⁴⁹ Acheson Interview.

³⁵⁰ Kara Metzger, unpublished research presentation, April 2022.

³⁵¹ Waerzeggers, *Drum Corps International: The First Decade, 1972-1981*, 54.

travel. The compensation was based on three factors: competitive placement, mileage, and total membership.³⁵² Though the three criteria did not account for all expenses, nor does today's stipend, it alleviates some costs and allows corps from different regions the opportunity to travel to compete against one another. Tours attempt to remain located in similar areas and move as a unit, but it was not until the establishment of the Final Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 2009, that the activity could more reliably and accurately calculate and predict yearly travel costs.

Currently, DCI operations are responsible for a considerable amount of resources in spite of the organization's non-profit status. DCI plans to pay for certain travel needs of its membership corps representatives each year. According to Policy 110 and 111, DCI provides funds for expenses related to membership meetings, such as the annual meetings.³⁵³ With this in mind, corps with new leadership must send their newly appointed CEO or Executive Director to DCI within ninety days of their leadership transition at the expense of the corps, not DCI.³⁵⁴

DCI also helps its membership corps produce their yearly revenue and stay financially solvent in an ever-changing economic climate. One way that DCI does this is by making a block of seating available to each of its member organizations at the championship week events, which allows corps to earn a twenty percent commission for the sale of these tickets.³⁵⁵ In addition to this, DCI compensates corps for their involvement in tour events, as outlined by Policy 211.

³⁵² Waerzeggers, 54.

³⁵³ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 4.

³⁵⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 8.

³⁵⁵ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 6.

Likely the largest assistance is that of housing, with DCI providing housing for all corps at events. Policy 413 outlines that at all premier events, like the championships and regional competitions, DCI provides twenty-four hours of housing for free to its performing corps, and for championships, it covers up to five days of expenses.³⁵⁶ Event partners must provide this for corps participating in their events as well. Additional days of housing may not be provided free of cost.

Additional funds allocated stem from pools of money set aside by DCI. These pools are not explicitly outlined but are allocated based upon the distance corps travel from their home base to championships. These funds total \$50,000 dollars to be divided between the corps.³⁵⁷ Additional pooled allocations are outlined on pages 70-71 of the Policies and Procedures document found on DCI's website.

Most importantly, DCI provides "appearance fees" for each corps at events. Standard rates are as follows: World Class, \$2,600; Non-full World Class Members, \$1,800; Open Class Finalist, \$1,100; and Open Class Non-Finalists, \$700.³⁵⁸ The pay is increased during championship proceedings based upon placement: finalist corps earn \$8,500, corps placing 13-17 earn \$6,500, 18-21st place earns \$4,000, and anyone past 22nd place earns \$2,100.³⁵⁹

As DCI has continually shifted its operations throughout the 2000s, so has each individual corps. Acheson reflects that the past twenty-three years have allowed corps to become

³⁵⁶ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 12.

³⁵⁷ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 69.

³⁵⁸ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 69.

³⁵⁹ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 69.

“better nonprofit organizations.”³⁶⁰ The community has lost numerous corps in recent years due to financial struggles, poor board development, and inadequate director oversight.³⁶¹ In several cases, this has resulted from inflationary issues as well as revenue loss due to COVID-19 shutdowns. Being better organizations has also helped each corps to heighten its ability to put professional educators in front of the corps daily.³⁶² Personal testimonies divulged throughout the interview process emphasized improvements that have taken place.

Vicki McFarlane stated in her interview that the operating budget for the Colts has essentially doubled since her entry into the World Class scene in 2013. Some of the additional expenditures have been attributed to chartering buses and drivers, employing a medical team to tour with ensembles daily, and food.³⁶³ She stated that production needs continue to increase but has remained rather minimal in comparison to the other expenditures.³⁶⁴

Communication and Collaboration

Committee work is of the utmost importance in DCI. Most voting members comprise the various committees that help operate the organization. These committees require some outside meetings and preparation. McFarlane noted that her work in the various branches of DCI is roughly two hours per month for most meeting periods.³⁶⁵ However, some committees only meet

³⁶⁰ Acheson Interview.

³⁶¹ Acheson Interview.

³⁶² Acheson Interview.

³⁶³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁶⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁶⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

as needed, like the participant safety committee.³⁶⁶ McFarlane stated that the reasons for this are twofold: one, it meets in the event of major issues. and two, it is not as regular due to the hire of a full-time staff member to monitor these situations in DCI.³⁶⁷

The committees that are especially active in DCI include those of governance, membership affairs, finance, audit, succession, policy, business development, competition and performance advisory, and CEO assessment.³⁶⁸ Each committee has specific roles, whether advisory or otherwise. The nine elected members of the board of directors oversee all committee work in DCI.

The governance committee specifically works with the legal needs of the organization, meaning the bylaws and procedures that DCI follows.³⁶⁹ Despite our discussion about the governance of the organization, DCI is not an overall governing body.³⁷⁰ The primary functions of this committee, as outlined in DCI's policy and procedure document, are to identify and recommend individuals to become board members; to develop, update, and recommend corporate governance principles for the organization; to develop performance criteria and orientation guidelines for the board of directors; and to provide member orientation and educational opportunities for corps.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁶⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁶⁸ Acheson Interview.

³⁶⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁷⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁷¹ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 26.

Other committees more directly reflect their names, such as the finance, audit, and membership affairs committees. The finance group reviews the budget annually and recommends its approval to the voting membership while also ensuring “appropriate capital structure” and overseeing “organization-wide financial assets.”³⁷² The audit committee exists due to a yearly external audit of the organization.³⁷³ This group works to find an outside company that assess DCI’s effectiveness as a business; they communicate with the company about scope, fees, communication, and reviewing the results.³⁷⁴ The CEO assessment committee focuses on accountability for the CEO for further development, education, and training, which includes their compensation recommendation.³⁷⁵ Finally, the membership affairs committee identifies and develops solutions or recommendations to issues that may arise on the membership front.³⁷⁶

One newer committee originally started as the CEO succession committee but has recently expanded to include succession for other pertinent DCI positions as well. This was encouraged by former DCI CEO Dan Acheson, who knew his retirement would be inevitable at some point.³⁷⁷ Other positions that were opened around the same time as Acheson’s were the CFO and long-time judge administrator.³⁷⁸ This committee was devised to assist in the

³⁷² Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 29.

³⁷³ Acheson Interview.

³⁷⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 32.

³⁷⁵ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 37.

³⁷⁶ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 34-35.

³⁷⁷ Acheson Interview.

³⁷⁸ Acheson Interview.

transitional period of their work by “help[ing] with those decisions going forward.”³⁷⁹ This committee became officially established in 2009.

Competition is one of the major contributors to DCI’s identity, so it requires additional support even beyond the competition committee. The committee itself merely works to define the process and recommendation for the Artistic Director position while also conversing with them on suggestions for the adjudication system.³⁸⁰ It also works to develop procedures for competition and write policy for membership corps regarding props, health, and logistics.³⁸¹ It does not, however, decide any of the competitive rules.

Some of the smaller teams, like the policy and business development realms, are meant to oversee items already outlined by either DCI staff or the board of directors. For example, the business development committee is specifically targeted with helping the marketing team “identify, plan, and facilitate” business development.³⁸²

Initiatives

One of the biggest initiatives driven by DCI was INStep, which paralleled the “Me Too” movement for women in the United States. Acheson recalls that this was a reflection on DCI and its roots to ensure that DCI never causes an access issue for women in the activity.³⁸³ The military roots of the activity fostered an environment where women were not highly involved in

³⁷⁹ Acheson Interview.

³⁸⁰ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 42.

³⁸¹ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 42.

³⁸² Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 40.

³⁸³ Acheson Interview.

the field. Prior to 2000 drum corps incorporated an “all-girl” class of competition but has evolved to allow all genders in most corps. Acheson asks, “How have we [DCI] evolved from then?” and “What can we [DCI] do to open that up even more?” as questions leaders in the activity pondered in INStep’s inception.³⁸⁴

In its original state, the INStep program focused solely on the women’s issue of access within DCI. Acheson mentions that the biggest stride made in this regard has been awareness.³⁸⁵ One operational change that was affected by the initiative was the use of open calls for staff position which led to more women holding staff roles in the DCI community, instead of the hiring of people who are friends with existing staff members.³⁸⁶ Seeing more women in higher roles provides the opportunity for students to see themselves reflected in the community they wish to participate in, and hopefully will provide a trickle down of increased female involvement organization-wide.

At a similar time to INStep’s inception, the Madison Scouts drum and bugle corps announced the inclusion of an all-inclusive approach towards membership policies during the competitive season of 2019 that would be effective for the upcoming season.³⁸⁷ This corps was one of two ensembles that only accepted male performers due to their inception as Boy Scout troops. After this announcement, only the Cavaliers remain in this category. Forward Performing Arts, the parent organization of the Madison Scouts, released a statement regarding their

³⁸⁴ Acheson Interview.

³⁸⁵ Acheson Interview.

³⁸⁶ Acheson Interview.

³⁸⁷ Drum Corps International, “Madison Scouts Will Open Ranks to All Genders,” Drum Corps International, July 7, 2019, <https://www.dci.org/news/madison-scouts-will-open-ranks-to-all-genders#>.

decision, “From day one, the corps was integrated racially and has since carried a strong culture of diversity through race, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status... The Madison Scouts organization imposes a higher standard of rigor and excellence for itself and its participants and seeks to meet the dynamic needs of its community as those needs evolve over time.”³⁸⁸ This statement shows the thinking of many minds in the DCI organization at the time as INStep’s purpose shifted.

In 2020, INStep branched from its roots to become an all-encompassing DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) program.³⁸⁹ DCI began to tackle issues relating access to the activity for all. Acheson states, “the good history with DCI is certainly that we accept anyone,” but the activity has “evolved into these elite” ensembles requiring auditions and economically straining situations for individuals.³⁹⁰ The musical upbringing and socio-economic status required for participation provides an advantage for people living a upper middle class, privileged lifestyle, and DCI is attempting to help change this situation.³⁹¹ However, this topic of discussion was not a consideration when INStep was first announced. DCI had been discussing this issue for decades and realizes the activity is not yet equitable to all and that they cannot solve all issues; Acheson states that “they haven’t even scratched the surface” of what is possible.³⁹² Currently, DCI has established a Legacy Fund to support students who struggle to pay tuition.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ Drum Corps International, “Madison Scouts Will Open Ranks to All Genders.”

³⁸⁹ Acheson Interview.

³⁹⁰ Acheson Interview.

³⁹¹ Acheson Interview.

³⁹² Acheson Interview.

³⁹³ Acheson Interview.

At present, Acheson states that a major focus of INStep is to provide knowledge for best practices towards transgender student inclusion.³⁹⁴

Individual Corps Business

Though DCI's business is important, each individual corps operates as a separate entity. Much of their yearly work falls on the shoulders of those representing their corps in the DCI voting membership proceedings. Most frequently corps directors and/or executive directors of these organizations. Some of their yearly duties do not relate to DCI itself, instead these tasks uphold the general operations of their respective corps. Following are descriptions of some of these processes and how they were altered during the 2000s.

As opposed to a band director, a corps director operates differently by providing grounding for the other staff who fulfill a more specific role. The roles corps directors fill can be anything, but McFarlane reflects on them through the Colts Youth Organization. Currently, the Executive Director, Jeff McFarlane, works on the business side of the equation and the corps director, Vicki McFarlane, works more with the educational aspects of the corps.³⁹⁵ Prior to 2012, these positions were combined at this organization. Other corps follow a similar model today. McFarlane states,

In an Open Class environment, I would run full ensemble, I would teach on the field, I would take care of a little bit of everything. What I had to learn quickly for the World Class aspects is I need to be available for what anyone needs me to be for that day.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Acheson Interview.

³⁹⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁹⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

The role of the corps director has become primarily administrative in nature. They achieve administrative duties with the assistance of a close-knit team working on many tour-related logistical details. Ultimately, McFarlane views her role as being primarily available and adaptable to meet situations.³⁹⁷ The instructional staff consists of 60-80 professional educators who provide formal instruction.³⁹⁸

Financially, the role of corps director, executive director, or CEO for a given corps must help to manage accounts for the corps. They need communicate with their organization's board of directors to create annual budgets for spending and generate revenue, often through fundraising. Often corps are sponsored by various companies providing them with free or low-cost equipment, like uniforms and instruments. Arts grants can be a component to this as well, if applicable to a corps' situation.

From a business standpoint, the corps director must organize all necessary materials throughout the yearly season. Corps sell old equipment immediately post summer tour and begin to develop a show for the coming year.³⁹⁹ Beginning in February, all focus is shifted towards placing orders for the upcoming season and securing housing in the summer.⁴⁰⁰ The remaining tour prep occurs throughout May. McFarlane mentions that "if you don't have it done before you move into tour, it's really hard to get done," due to the surprises that occur daily that take up all the additional time on tour.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁹⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

³⁹⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁰⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁰¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

Organization and early preparation are paramount to the success of the corps. One timeline that has changed is the production timeline for equipment. Since the COVID-19, companies have had a more difficult time keeping up due to supply chain issues requiring corps to anticipate their needs sooner.⁴⁰² Additionally, the yearly costume changes for ensembles have caused some of these issues. McFarlane reflects that companies are typically “set up to do band uniforms every 5 years,” causing it to be difficult to meet the demands of the activity to create full changes continuously.⁴⁰³

Covid-19 and DCI

The entire world was impacted in 2020 due to COVID-19, an infectious disease that quickly spread with great devastation. Because of this, DCI promptly held emergency meetings, eventually resulting in the cancelation of the 2020 competitive season, a decision made by the voting membership on March 26, 2020.⁴⁰⁴ Their statement regarding the cancelation is as follows:

DCI’s voting membership unanimously reached the difficult decision with great regret after thorough evaluation of numerous factors affecting participant health and safety, travel requirements, logistics, venue availability, and other associated issues. The membership also agreed that in order to preserve the opportunity for this year’s class of age-outs, performers will receive additional eligibility based on existing age requirements with a one-year extension.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁰³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁰⁴ Drum Corps International, “Member corps vote to cancel the 2020 DCI Tour,” March 26, 2020, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/member-corps-vote-to-cancel-2020-dci-tour#>.

⁴⁰⁵ Drum Corps International, “Member corps vote to cancel the 2020 DCI Tour.”

The cancellation allowed for continued discussion regarding safety and the ability for members to conclude their time in DCI regardless of their age in the next scheduled season.

In lieu of the 2020 season, DCI initiated the “#MarchOn” social media campaign to raise funds and to support the participating corps by keeping the activity relevant in the public eye.⁴⁰⁶ Many designers and staff members were unemployed and without wages due to the cancellation, and DCI and participating corps worked to assist as they were able. Additionally, revenue for DCI and its membership organizations was significantly affected. Tour is the means by which organizations can operate yearly due to them gaining a majority of their financial revenue. Some corps arranged virtual projects and/or informational sessions to allow students to receive instruction in the marching arts, regardless of the shutdowns. Keeping the activity alive was a challenge throughout this time.

DCI leaders felt that they had a greater responsibility to the community at large. They were focused on being able to restart the touring system, so they created the Tour Reopening Task Force (TRTF) in September 2020.⁴⁰⁷ Through this process, DCI designed the Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines. This extensive document outlined at length various scenarios to mobilize corps in restarting their operations. The final revision was released on July 28, 2021, and was consulted on by CDC member Gail Hanson. The three main questions posed in the document were the following.

Is it [DCI participation] a meaningful experience for their participants?
Is it financially viable?
Is it possible to engage in a manner that keeps students, teachers, administrators, and volunteers safe?⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ Drum Corps International, “Member corps vote to cancel the 2020 DCI Tour.”

⁴⁰⁷ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 2021, 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 1.

Ultimately, the guidelines set forth in this document were a means to discuss strategies to keep everyone safe throughout a new tour season. Overall, they claimed that the organization does not provide any guarantees but would “shield” organizations from legal liabilities.⁴⁰⁹ More importantly, DCI encouraged all corps to be familiar with the guidelines presented by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and specified that DCI’s guidelines were simply that, and not mandates, since they believed that each corps remained an autonomous organization within the whole.⁴¹⁰

The policies reflect a few major factors that contributed to the act of restarting tours and corps life at large. One is that the corps would operate in a “bubble,” meaning that the people within each corps’ operations would follow protocols in relation to their physical environment to hopefully create an “infection free” set of conditions.⁴¹¹ Individuals were encouraged to interact only with other participants and not those outside of the bubble for tour. In fact, one component stated to “strictly avoid contact with people outside of your corps.”⁴¹² This prevented in-person visits by family or alumni throughout the 2021 season. Since DCI allows its corps to be autonomous, they highly recommended, but did not require, that corps participants (with includes membership, staff, and volunteers) become fully vaccinated.⁴¹³ They also suggested testing prior to arrival with a corps as well as weekly testing throughout the season.

⁴⁰⁹ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 2.

⁴¹⁰ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 3.

⁴¹¹ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 3.

⁴¹² Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 12.

⁴¹³ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 5.

Additionally, specific ratios were used to map safety of corps. Local positivity rates of less than five percent in locations for overnight stays and performance venues, a fourteen-day average of less than 100 new cases per 100,000 residents in event locations, access to affordable rapid testing, allowance of travel between states, and group size restrictions had to be met to allow for corps to safely meet.⁴¹⁴ These statistics were monitored by administration.

Beyond this, complex and thorough guidelines recommended isolation for anyone testing positive, contact tracing methods, and other options for people in close contact with those infected, including masking in various situations.⁴¹⁵ The daunting task of isolation was one of the most difficult encountered by corps due to the nature of daily life typically being conducted in a large group setting with communal living conditions for sleeping and eating. Luckily, throughout this time, outdoor gatherings and activities were strongly recommended as a means to gather, which fit into common drum corps practices.

One of the stipulations outlined was the tier system that described the roles of participants and aspects of their tour jobs that were allowed within bubble protocols. Tier 1 consisted of corps-facing members and Tier 2 consisted of public-facing individuals.⁴¹⁶ Operationally, individuals falling in the Tier 1 category were encouraged to stay within the bubble at all times; the largest alteration to this was that two individuals could be named to alter these protocols if fully vaccinated. The first team member would be allowed to interface with outside contacts (like housing officials) and the other would be allowed to run errands on behalf of the corps.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 5.

⁴¹⁵ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 9.

⁴¹⁶ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 13-14.

⁴¹⁷ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 13.

Masking and social distancing, especially in sleeping situations, was specified for these designated individuals. Tier 2 individuals did not work regularly with the corps membership but were occasionally on tour with the group, and they were held to more stringent separation policies.⁴¹⁸ Often, individuals identified as Tier 2 became members of Tier 1 by their continued stay with the corps.

Operations on the overall tour differed slightly. Many rehearsals became closed to the public. Though larger spaces are always favorable to DCI corps, they became a requirement to allow for further distancing in the event of indoor rehearsals or sleeping arrangements.⁴¹⁹ Careful consideration was taken to make performances logistically possible, including unloading protocols, warm-up and parking locations separated from other corps, post-show logistics occurring close to the corps parking and away from the general public, credentialing for all corps personnel, and other details.⁴²⁰ Rest stops for membership required the use of face masks, and corps did not take typical errand runs with the entire corps to get supplies.⁴²¹ Instead, the public-facing member did these runs for other students and staff. Corps benefited by including a hotel stay for members and staff for their housing location at championships. Additional considerations were outlined for food service and post-performance dismissals as well.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 14.

⁴¹⁹ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 16.

⁴²⁰ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 24-26.

⁴²¹ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 15.

⁴²² Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 17-24.

Ultimately, in July 2021, the last addition was noted to allow the DCI tour to restart. The stipulations outlined the following key factor for participation: “that vaccines [were] widely available [and] [p]articipants appear to be getting vaccinated at high rates.”⁴²³ The Delta variant had begun to emerge around this time period, making the tour continually uncertain. It was found that the vaccine was proven effective against this strain, easing the concerns of DCI personnel.⁴²⁴ The reopening of the tour provided hope regarding the years to come.

⁴²³ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 4.

⁴²⁴ Drum Corps International, “Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines,” 4.

CHAPTER 5: JUDGING, COMPETITION, AND INSTRUMENTATION

Rules Congress Proceedings

Paramount to the formation of DCI was the idea of corps determining their own destiny. Competitive rulings are essential for keeping DCI in agreement with its founders. Thus, rules congresses have become a biannual event that occurs concurrently with the DCI annual meetings. The DCI bylaws state, “The rules under which the corps compete are of the utmost importance and must therefore be formulated by the most knowledgeable of people available and must be approved by the membership.”⁴²⁵ Rules congress use a democratic approach where representatives from each corps convene for meaningful rule-making processes.⁴²⁶ Frequently discussing the rules of the activity enables corps to be informed about how they will be evaluated and to design shows based upon the outlined criteria. Alterations to rulings help to provide predictability and allow corps to consider potential impacts of the propositions.⁴²⁷

The processes that most effectively drives change in DCI is the alteration of the competitive rules. All rules must first encounter a proposal period prior to being voted into action by the member corps. Proposals are initiated by membership through the board of directors.⁴²⁸ The corps are allowed to have several attendees at the meetings preceding the vote to fully understand the rules under consideration, but each member corps only has one vote for their entire organization.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 29.

⁴²⁶ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 29.

⁴²⁷ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 30.

⁴²⁸ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 30.

⁴²⁹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 30.

Based on the rules congress proceedings, anyone is allowed to submit a proposal for an alteration. From there, the proposal must be approved by another member to take the next steps. Often proposals similar in nature are combined into a single proposal. The proposals are gathered and presented at the annual meetings, first to the instructors for discussion. The instructors then complete a preliminary poll that is meant to inform the voting membership. Finally, the voting membership casts a vote to approve or deny the alteration.⁴³⁰

Vicki McFarlane jokes through generalization that “through time, the instructors usually pass everything, and the directors vote against everything.”⁴³¹ To explain this phenomenon, she states, “Instructors are apt to go somewhere that the voting membership might not be ready for yet.”⁴³² Frequently, logistical concerns come into play in making changes, such as potential transportation needs that would be more extravagant. Though the rules congresses happen every two years, McFarlane notes that the voting membership of DCI “can really change anything at any time.”⁴³³ She notes the importance of respecting the governance process of DCI and making that a priority, regardless of this ability to make changes out of the prescribed timeline.⁴³⁴

Along a similar vein, in an impromptu phone conversation with former DCI board member and membership data collector Steve Auditore, he recounted the beliefs behind the rule change process. He said that although it is meant to be straightforward and potentially easy, it

⁴³⁰ Vicki McFarlane (Colts Corps Director) Interview with author, December 27, 2023.

⁴³¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴³² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴³³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴³⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

does not always produce fruitful change, due to resistance by some of the membership.⁴³⁵ More importantly, Auditore notes that the organizations most resistant to change are often corps that have the most to lose competitively.⁴³⁶

Though rules congress proceedings do not take place yearly, judges and instructors often meet at the DCI annual meetings regardless. On off years, the judge administration team works closely with the instructors in the activity to interpret the sheets and the philosophy that is ideal as they adjudicate ensembles in the DCI activity.⁴³⁷ The judge administration and director of competition offer feedback from their perspective regarding the previous competitive season and inquire insight from the corps perspective.⁴³⁸ Essentially, discussions are open ended to allow for all participants in the conversation to influence the interpretation of rulings that are passed.⁴³⁹ Many of the most integral changes to rules will be discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter in order to provide better understanding of how DCI has progressed competitively thus far in its existence.

Logistical Rules

Regulatory and logistical stipulations effecting competition in DCI. These considerations are documented and outlined in portions of the DCI bylaws and accompany the criteria on which corps are to be judged. One regulatory change that has varied over time is the number of

⁴³⁵ Steve Auditore (former DCI board member) in conversation with the author, January 17, 2024.

⁴³⁶ Steve Auditore conversation.

⁴³⁷ Dan Acheson (former DCI CEO) Interview with the author, January 20, 2024.

⁴³⁸ Acheson Interview.

⁴³⁹ Acheson Interview.

performing members allowed in each drum corps. The personnel maximum has progressively gotten larger. In 2001, any individual corps was allowed to have 128 participants.⁴⁴⁰ Later in 2001, leading up to the 2002 season, the ceiling was increased to 135 members allowing for larger sections in the brass, guard, and pit.⁴⁴¹ The number changed to 154 throughout the majority of the 2010s, and there is now an allowance for up to 165 members.⁴⁴² Many size changes have been financial and economic in nature. It is standard practice for drum corps to charter their buses for transportation. With 128 members, a corps needed to charter three buses for the membership; as the capacity on these buses provided room for 165 people, the maximum membership was increased accordingly, providing a more economical way to travel from place to place and giving the opportunity to more deserving students. Early in the 2000s, division II and III corps were determined based on the number of participants. In 2001, division II corps were allowed to participate with membership between 61 and 135; whereas the division III corps could participate with up to sixty members.⁴⁴³ Since then, the ruling has continued to adjust to make the lowest number for participation at the corps level to be fifty participants with all corps having the same upper limit. Though number of participants is restricted, there are no rulings that suggest which sections the members must be part of. This is left to the discretion of the individual ensemble.

⁴⁴⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁴¹ Rosalie Sward, "The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design," in *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 181.

⁴⁴² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁴³ Sward, "The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design," 181.

Additionally, the age restriction is firm. Twenty-one is considered an “age out” in the community, meaning that that age is participant’s final year to perform in their corps. The rule has one variation based on when an individual turns twenty-two. Under the current rules, any individual born after June 1st of that calendar year is eligible for membership that season, which means that some students with birthdays occurring over tour are still active at the age of twenty-two, which was not always allowed. The age out rule calls this a “bonus year” for a performer.⁴⁴⁴ In the grand scheme of competition, the age of competitors can increase.

Prior, junior corps established their importance in history throughout the 1930s. Now, junior corps are the primary contenders in the drum corps competitive realm. Students are required to provide proof of age verification. Rosters are submitted annually to DCI by June 1.⁴⁴⁵ The age of membership directly impacts the quality and atmosphere around the soundscape of the ensemble, meaning that the majority have not yet completed collegiate degrees. Although participation requires an audition to earn membership, members are still students and not considered to be professional musician. Therefore, not all students have significant training on their instruments prior to participation in a DCI ensemble which affects the sound of these ensembles described below.

Ensemble Instrumentation

The ensembles’ soundscape has been unique to drum corps since its inception due primarily to its limitations. Often, limits were placed on the particular instruments that were

⁴⁴⁴ Emily Tannert, “The Age Out Rule,” Drum Corps International October 24, 2005: <https://www.dci.org/news/the-ageout-rule>.

⁴⁴⁵ “Policy & Procedures Manual” (Drum Corps International), 7.

allowed in corps. Prior to 2000, instrumental limitations were very strict and outlined what was allowed in any given section. In the 2000s, many of the restrictions slowly began to lift. The precedents for instrumentation that had been established for brass and percussion are discussed in the forthcoming sections to provide the basis for understanding the changes that occurred in 2000 and beyond, especially in relation to the construction of shows in the upcoming chapter.

Percussion

Prior to 2000, percussion sections were a major area of fluctuation. An initial example is bass drums; they were first used in competition of standstill groups in a rudimental fashion, but moving drum corps used these instruments strictly for tempo maintenance.⁴⁴⁶ Rudimental drumming was initially reserved for snare drums only. The tenor drums were first introduced following World War I as a middle voice of the percussion section and were subordinate to snares, which were the primary voice.⁴⁴⁷ Bass drums would once again make their way into corps as a rudimental instrument in the 1960s.⁴⁴⁸

Drum lines eventually expanded rapidly to include many more musicians. However, by the 1950s, this section of the corps was restricted to four snares, three tenors, two bass drums, and two cymbals, and it would remain this size until the following decade.⁴⁴⁹ The 1960s saw expansion of the traditional lines to include as many as twenty individuals, further growing to

⁴⁴⁶ Beckham, "The Birth, Growth and Metamorphosis of Competitive Rudimental Drumming," 60.

⁴⁴⁷ Beckham, 60.

⁴⁴⁸ Beckham, 60.

⁴⁴⁹ Beckham, 60.

thirty-two in the 1970s.⁴⁵⁰ By the 1960s, marching timpani were even implemented on the field. The expansion of numbers led to the alteration of performance practices, lessening the need for stick height and full arm movements to carry the sound across the ensembles.⁴⁵¹ The size of the percussion section has frequently fluctuated over the decades.

Pre-2000 innovations to the percussion section changed the sound and scope of the instrumentation. One example of this is the notion of “back sticking,” which became a visually appealing aspect of performance technique that created showmanship.⁴⁵² Immediately prior to the 1960s, bass drums began to utilize rolls, thanks to Eric Perrillouz. The result was the re-establishment of these instruments using a rudimental performance style instead of being the mere timekeepers of the ensembles.⁴⁵³ From the modification came the acceptance of an influx of new instruments. In 1961, the use of other drums became acceptable, accompanied in the following years by congas and bongos.⁴⁵⁴ The new instruments changed the sound of the ensemble and allowed for some groups to have a hallmarked different sound compared to the groups within which they competed. Mounted/combination percussion became new options, alongside the use of marching timpani in 1967 and marching keyboards in 1969.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁰ Beckham, 62.

⁴⁵¹ Beckham, 62.

⁴⁵² Beckham, 61.

⁴⁵³ Beckham, 61.

⁴⁵⁴ Beckham, 61.

⁴⁵⁵ Beckham, 62.

The front ensemble, or pit, is a subsection in the overall percussion sphere that has undergone great change, significantly impacting drum corps throughout the 2000s. In fact, the existence of the front ensemble is relatively new to drum corps. Its origins are traced to the 1960s, when timpani were carried as field percussion.⁴⁵⁶ Bells, xylophones, vibraphones, and marimbas were introduced in a similar manner throughout the 1970s.⁴⁵⁷ “Grounding,” or making some of these instruments stationary, began in 1982 with the timpani.⁴⁵⁸

Grounding of percussion instruments continued to proceed throughout the period immediately following 1982, establishing the front ensemble in the drum corps. The “pit box,” was located in front of the football field from one forty-yard-line to the other.⁴⁵⁹ Summerlin describes the evolution of the front ensemble as being “driven by experimentation.”⁴⁶⁰ Ensembles developed percussionist who performed in an orchestral style and function as multi-percussionists playing various instruments throughout the show, only later in the progression to become specialists on a specific instrument.⁴⁶¹ The pit began with the same instruments that were used in marching, but it continuously expanded to include instruments that provided additional timbral effects that could not be achieved on the move, which also allowed for the expansion of

⁴⁵⁶ Erin K. Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International: Technological Change and the Meaning of Tradition” (MA thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), 19.

⁴⁵⁷ Maher, 18.

⁴⁵⁸ Maher, 19.

⁴⁵⁹ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 47.

⁴⁶⁰ Summerlin, 48.

⁴⁶¹ Summerlin, 48.

musical techniques and vocabulary for these performers.⁴⁶² Instruments most commonly seen in the pit include marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel, timpani, and general auxiliary percussion. Variations to the front ensemble location occurred throughout the 1980s and 1990s to allow for experimentation with antiphonal approaches to sound in the ensemble.⁴⁶³

Innovation in percussion continued into the twenty-first century. Ultimately, the precedent for change had been solidified prior to this time creating opportunity for discussions around further development of the percussive sound scape.

By the 2000s, the front ensemble saw some standardization, with roughly ten members on average.⁴⁶⁴ Though it has never been prescribed how many of any given instrument is part of the front ensemble, the Cavaliers began a model that was adopted by other corps, which included four marimbas and vibraphones symmetrical to the two sides of the field and timpani outside of the mallets.⁴⁶⁵ The development and experimentation continued to alter the percussive soundscape with larger front ensembles of twelve or thirteen by the late 2000s.⁴⁶⁶ Though some standardization became common, the exact division of corps membership was outlined by each individual corps and/or the show that they were performing throughout the given season.

In 2003, DCI's membership voted to legalize amplification in competition, which added a new feature for the ensemble for the 2004 season.⁴⁶⁷ This rule was not a new thought at this

⁴⁶² Summerlin, 53-54.

⁴⁶³ Summerlin, 63.

⁴⁶⁴ Summerlin, 78-79.

⁴⁶⁵ Summerlin, 79-80.

⁴⁶⁶ Summerlin, 98.

⁴⁶⁷ Maher, "The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International," ii, 1.

time. In fact, it was discussed, and advised against, in 1989.⁴⁶⁸ At the start, the ruling was mostly used to amplify voices that were more difficult to hear, primarily the front ensemble. Maher writes, “Resistance to amplification is fundamentally tied to anxieties about the direction in which drum corps is progressing, both as an art form and as an institution.”⁴⁶⁹ The primary concern prior to the successful introduction of amplification in 2003 was that it would lead to the use of electronic instruments, which were not allowed at first.⁴⁷⁰ Amplification trickled its way into all corps within a few years. For some, its usage was limited due to financial constraints.⁴⁷¹ Additional criticism was met with aesthetic, tradition, identity, and purpose of electronic use in drum corps.⁴⁷² Amplification was utilized in other marching arts spheres prior to its legalization in DCI and “is seen as a step toward the day when the two will be completely indistinguishable.”⁴⁷³ Regardless, it was quickly adopted by all corps in the years to follow.

From the new amplification stemmed additional needs for corps personnel. When the rule was originally passed, mixing of sound via sound board had to be done by an ensemble member so that all components of the show were truly student driven.⁴⁷⁴ In 2007, a separate stipulation

⁴⁶⁸ Maher, 28.

⁴⁶⁹ Maher, 7.

⁴⁷⁰ Maher, 28.

⁴⁷¹ Maher, 37.

⁴⁷² Maher, 1.

⁴⁷³ Maher, 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 95.

was passed allowing a staff member to operate and control these levels, creating the need for sound engineers as part of corps staff.⁴⁷⁵

Another new element with amplification was the use of amplified voice. Corps began to incorporate this in the early 2000s and still use voices in their productions today, live and prerecorded. In this way, the human voice became a component of the instrumentation of drum corps.

Technology on the field was taken a step further in 2009 with the approval of electronic instruments, like synthesizers.⁴⁷⁶ Synthesizers allowed for many sonic possibilities in the ensemble. Examples of this include reinforcement of lower-pitched frequencies already played in the ensemble, sounds for instruments that were not practical to travel with, and the use of sampling.⁴⁷⁷ The change was described by former Cadets director George Hopkins: “Music from instruments such as electronic keyboards, synthesizers, electronic drum sets, and all other electronic instruments [will be] allowed given that the instrument's performer(s) are present and performing live and in real time.”⁴⁷⁸ DCI did not see this as a radical change; instead, this was something that was no longer limiting to the designers.⁴⁷⁹ The inclusion of more than amplified acoustic sounds introduced what Lane Summerlin has named the “Age of Electronics.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁵ Summerlin, 95.

⁴⁷⁶ Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International,” 20.

⁴⁷⁷ Maher, 21.

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International,” 40.

⁴⁷⁹ Maher, 41.

⁴⁸⁰ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 100.

Technological changes altered the voice of the front ensemble to include more synthesized sounds, as opposed to acoustic ones. Acoustic instruments, like timpani, were no longer standard because corps could use synthesized sounds in a similar manner.⁴⁸¹

Logistically speaking, there are still parameters for the performance practice of sampled sounds in corps. Originally, speech could be performed using one key stroke, as a trigger, per phrase, but singing and other pitched/melodic samples must be produced by a performer playing each component individually.⁴⁸² At present, effects are often produced through the computer programs Logic or MainStage, and run through their respective synthesized instrument.⁴⁸³ Within the software, components are assigned on the synthesizer (keyboard or MIDI controller) that performers can trigger through specified keys. Various components of the show can then be grouped together as a scene, which can be changed throughout the production to assign new effects to the same keystrokes.

Amplification in the marching arts is a topic that has undergone extensive debate. Ultimately, it has fundamentally served as a way to change what corps do daily. Scoring for other sections changed due to the fact that front ensembles could be amplified to fit into the overall texture of the ensemble and not be overpowered by the masses of marching musicians.⁴⁸⁴ To most, amplification is primarily for the volume of a corps. Vicki McFarlane offered a different view:

⁴⁸¹ Summerlin, 105.

⁴⁸² Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International,” 21.

⁴⁸³ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 102.

⁴⁸⁴ Michael Klesch (Carolina Crown brass arranger), Interview with author, February 23, 2024.

I want to make sure that the authenticity of the fan experience is the sound that our students are providing and making. For Colts, we have done well with the more we carry that sound that our students are making [from] the field more naturally to the seats. It's not about being louder, it's being authentic and that also relates to the educational aspect. I think the educational aspect when we spend so many hours every day playing that it's being able to play in appropriate fashion, that's why the electronics and amplification is so critical.⁴⁸⁵

To McFarlane all electronic uses, even for sections other than percussion, are meant to provide a natural and comprehensive sonic ambiance. The use of electronics may be viewed from other professionals as a way to primarily enhance the overall volume of a corps. The approaches and philosophies towards electronics vary based on personal belief and the period in which they are used in DCI. Ken Mason's experience expresses, "After trying to preserve the prevailing ensemble balance for the first three years of amplification use (2004-2006), suddenly they all cranked the volume up in June of 2007."⁴⁸⁶ Earlier in its usage, decibel level was perceived as high importance and became a strong indicator for success. Differing perspectives towards volume are still debatable.

Brass

The brass sections of drum corps have gone through major changes as well. Initially, corps were required to utilize bugles pitched in G and alterations were not allowed. Many corps attempted to bend the rules by altering instrumentation but were disqualified if their choices were not pre-approved.⁴⁸⁷ Strict rules and regulations were laid forth by Dr. C.C. Hawke after World

⁴⁸⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁴⁸⁶ Quoted in Maher, "The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International," 45.

⁴⁸⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, "The Big Parade," 32.

War I.⁴⁸⁸ Many of these concerned the area of equipment use. The initial rulings began in 1929 to determine what instrumentation was acceptable. Modification was often deemed unacceptable. Some modifications attempted included the use of bass bugles (still without valves), variation to drums other than snares, and piccolos.⁴⁸⁹ Though these instruments were similar to those already in use, they were not permissible under the American Legion competition rules at first. Ultimately, the rules were often disputed or challenged by corps, but remained inflexible. In 1931, Dr. Hawke's adjustments to the rules were seen as confusing; they allowed for more variation like bugles with octave displacement and the use of a "D crook" to change the key, but the judges were not allowed to deduct for corps that were not able to use both crooks.⁴⁹⁰ Ultimately, the goal of the American Legion was to maintain the role of the bugle as part of field music's history.⁴⁹¹ Of course, alterations continued to include various sizes of bugles filling the different voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) within the marching ensembles.

The initial concept of accepting brass instruments with three valves was proposed in the 1985 rules congress, but was not passed until 1990; with this rule change, corps were allowed to use additional valves, still as bugles (keyed in G).⁴⁹² Corps were given a three-year time period to procure three-valve instruments as doing so immediately was a financial burden for some

⁴⁸⁸ Osheroff and Zinko, 34.

⁴⁸⁹ Osheroff and Zinko, 35.

⁴⁹⁰ Osheroff and Zinko, 37.

⁴⁹¹ Osheroff and Zinko, "The Big Parade," 37.

⁴⁹² Maher, "The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International," 15-16.

groups.⁴⁹³ At the turn of the century (2000), the “anti-key” rule was passed to allow Bb to become the standard key for brass instruments in DCI.⁴⁹⁴

In a conversation with Steve Auditore in January 2024, he mentioned that a major influence on the pivot away from bugles was financial in nature.⁴⁹⁵ His logic behind this move was that it would allow corps to more readily procure instruments as well as to sell instruments to other marching organizations.⁴⁹⁶ Auditore was an integral member of the DCI board of directors, and the first board member who was not the director of a specific corps. He worked with DCI to fundamentally change the business side of their logistics, in addition to casting a vote in this monumental alteration. Though the DCI community shifted towards allowing a standard Bb instrumentation, not all corps switched at once. Today, though, these instruments are seen in all corps operating within DCI.

Ultimately, this change has proven successful, in that all corps use the Bb lines in their productions. Additionally, it has been valuable from a music education perspective to allow students to remain on instruments more similar to what they are studying from the beginning of their instrumental careers through their professional training, should they choose to continue. Brass arranger Michael Klesch felt this alteration was “huge” to the activity particularly because

⁴⁹³ Maher, 16.

⁴⁹⁴ Maher, 16.

⁴⁹⁵ Auditore conversation.

⁴⁹⁶ Auditore conversation.

corps were able to play all pitches chromatically on each instrument.⁴⁹⁷ These instruments, even though not typical concert instruments, provided better stability in terms of intonation.⁴⁹⁸

In 2014, the rules for brass instrumentation progressed to allow all types of brass instruments in the ensemble soundscape and makeup.⁴⁹⁹ Most often, these new possibilities have been utilized in solo or soli moments on the field, as marching with instruments like trombones and French horns can be difficult in the tight drill formations of DCI groups. In 2014, though, Santa Clara Vanguard took full advantage of the rule alteration by having their entire baritone line perform on trombones for the opening hit of their show, *Scheherazade*. This excerpt is traditionally performed on the trombone, and the addition of this instrument within the ensemble provides new timbral colors that the marching baritone cannot. Another early example of this is found in the 2015 Cadets production, *The Power of Ten*, as their mellophone section changes to concert French horns to play as a soli. Despite the ability to use all brass instruments, this is still more limited than the ability to use all percussive and electronic sounds in that caption's soundscape.

Adjudication Methods

All DCI judges are overseen by the Judge Administrator, John Phillips, who has been serving as a drum corps judge since the 1970s and in his administrative role since the early 2000s. Phillips outlines the ideas behind DCI judging in a 2002 article on DCI's website. For the performance captions (brass and percussion), he states that they "concentrate on the individual

⁴⁹⁷ Klesch interview.

⁴⁹⁸ Klesch Interview.

⁴⁹⁹ Elizabeth Geli, "DCI's New 2014 Rules," *Halftime Magazine*, March 24, 2014, <https://halftimemag.com/noteworthy/dci-s-new-2014-rules.html>.

performer,” while the ensemble categories “look at the big picture.”⁵⁰⁰ The separation of the color guard sub-caption, though, was first divided off from strictly visual sheets in 2000. This category requires “judges [to] recognize the facility, training, excellence and precision of these performers. They must further evaluate the logic of the guard’s design and their musical interpretation.”⁵⁰¹ Over time, these concepts have remained, even with some of the verbiage changes to caption-specific headings that will be discussed in this section.

Because of these descriptions, competitive stipulations outlined by DCI are less strict and more ambiguously notated than the previously mentioned tick system. The rubrics are designed with a 50/50 relationship in mind.⁵⁰² This means that any given adjudicator in the field is commenting on performer achievement and design elements equally. Their score is also weighted evenly in that regard.

At each show, judges are located either on the field or in the press box. Many captions dedicated to recognizing individual performance achievement are judged at the field level, and the bigger picture captions are evaluated from the press box. Until 2019, there were no restrictions on where the field judges could move on the field, creating a potentially dangerous situation with potential collisions with performers. In 2019, judges were limited to only a few steps onto the field to ensure that interference with the quick-paced drill and movement would not injure any participants.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ Drum Corps International, “Judging and the Adjudication System,” *Drum Corps International*, July 29, 2002, <https://www.dci.org/news/judging-and-the-adjudication-system>.

⁵⁰¹ Drum Corps International, “Judging and the Adjudication System.”

⁵⁰² Richard Hinshaw (Colts drill designer), interview with author, January 9, 2024.

⁵⁰³ FloMarching, “The Drill Down: No More Field Judges in DCI 2019,” YouTube video, 30:34, March 1, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4vBiB5d_nE.

The judging community has continuously been disputed by corps. Drum corps situates itself as an educational activity, providing this experience for students to be challenged. Richard Hinshaw sees the educational nature reflected in judging mostly by the implementation of judging sheets. These sheets are representative of “educational rubrics.”⁵⁰⁴ Some of the judging alterations have been effective in asking the question, are we “promoting educationally appropriate challenges” for the performers?⁵⁰⁵

Though the sheets have continued to use a rubric style, they have changed since the early 2000s. Figure 4 provides several examples of how the judging sheet looked in 2005, with handwritten comments from judging panels for the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps.

⁵⁰⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁰⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

6 BRASS PERFORMANCE
 DCI World Championship Quarterfinals - Foxboro, MA
 Emphasis will be placed on the Achievement of Technique and the
Achievement of Musicianship by the brass players with respect to the active
 demonstration of skills in all facets of their presentation

NAME OF CORPS Colts DATE August 11, 2005

QUALITY OF TECHNIQUE
 - UNIFORMITY & METHOD OF ENUNCIATION
 - TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY
 - TIMING & RHYTHMIC ACCURACY
 - QUALITY OF SOUND
 - PITCH CONTROL & ACCURACY

some not clear moments
consistency the issue - overall strong w/ glitches.

100 84

MUSICIANSHIP
 - PHRASING
 - EXPRESSION
 - STYLE & IDIOMATIC INVOLVEMENT
 - COMMUNICATION
 - INVOLVEMENT

strong performance here

100 84

JUDGE Mark H. West MAXIMUM TOTAL 200 168

#99-006 Revised—March 1, 2004 © 2005 Drum Corps International

2 MUSIC EFFECT
 DCI World Championship Quarterfinals - Foxboro, MA
 Evaluate the effectiveness of the program and the performers. Repertoire is an effective,
 substantive development of content based on intellectual, aesthetic and emotional factors.
Showmanship is based on the effective communication of the performers.

NAME OF CORPS Colts DATE August 11, 2005

REPERTOIRE EFFECT
 - COORDINATION
 - CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION
 - VARIETY
 - ARTISTRY
 - CONTINUITY
 - CLIMAXES
 - ENTERTAINMENT

Some strong moments → belted!!
Good
1st 3rd of program → rep. or show?
- I think showmanship!

100 82

SHOWMANSHIP EFFECT
 - INVOLVEMENT
 - COMMUNICATION
 - EMOTIONAL RANGE
 - SPIRIT
 - PROFESSIONALISM

Very well done in belted
The 1st 3rd of program can be better

100 79

JUDGE John Fugate MAXIMUM TOTAL 200 16.1

#99-012 Revised—March 2004 © 2005 Drum Corps International

9 PERCUSSION PERFORMANCE 2	
DCI World Championship Quarterfinals - Foxboro, MA	
Credit the <u>Achievement</u> of Technique and <u>Musicianship</u> within the Percussion Ensemble. Inherent is the active demonstration of Skills in all facets of the percussion presentation.	
NAME OF CORPS <u>Colts</u>	DATE <u>August 11, 2005</u>
QUALITY OF TECHNIQUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TIMING / ACCURACY - CLARITY OF ARTICULATION - ENSEMBLE COHESIVENESS - TUNING - APPROPRIATENESS OF TIMBRES - QUALITY OF SOUND <p><i>Nice Solo Roll Snare</i> <i>See tape</i> <i>DD slurring at times - see tape</i> <i>excellent clarity in Keybd Perc.</i></p>	
100	82
MUSICIANSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PHRASING - EXPRESSION - STYLE & IDIOMATIC INTERPRETATION - COMMUNICATION - INVOLVEMENT - BALANCE & BLEND OF ALL ELEMENTS - TEMPO <p><i>nice orchestration moments</i> <i>very earthy membranophones</i> <i>Right on</i> <i>Ride cym sound - need more</i> <i>good dialogue / color of</i> <i>timpanic device</i></p>	
100	83
JUDGE <u>J. Properi</u>	MAXIMUM TOTAL 200
165	
#99-009 Revised—February 19, 2004	

7 ENSEMBLE MUSIC	
DCI World Championship Quarterfinals - Foxboro, MA	
Credit the <u>Achievement</u> with respect to <u>Musicality</u> and <u>Overall Sound Quality/Technique</u> . Inherent is the active demonstration of Skills in all facets of the audio presentation.	
NAME OF CORPS <u>Colts</u>	DATE <u>August 11, 2005</u>
MUSICALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EXPRESSION - PHRASING - STYLE & INTERPRETATION - QUALITY OF ORCHESTRATION - COMMUNICATION - INVOLVEMENT - BALANCE & BLEND OF ALL ELEMENTS - TEMPO <p><i>→ CONSISTENCY ACROSS SECTION</i> <i>THROUGH DYNAMIC CONTRAST / SHARPING</i> <i>Log</i> <i>THANKS!</i></p>	
100	83
OVERALL SOUND QUALITY / TECHNIQUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENSEMBLE COHESIVENESS - APPROPRIATENESS OF TIMBRES - TUNING / INTONATION - PITCH CONTROL / CLARITY / ACCURACY - RHYTHMIC CONTROL / CLARITY / ACCURACY - CONSISTENCY - FOCUS <p><i>→ LOT OF POWER TAKEN AWAY</i> <i>MUST PREVENT OR RECOVER SWIFT</i> <i>QUICKER</i> <i>TPP. AT SOFTER DYNAMIC LEVELS</i></p>	
100	80
JUDGE <u>Paul Rite</u>	MAXIMUM TOTAL 200
163	
#99-007 Revised—March 1, 2004	

Figure 5: Drum Corps International, “Music Effect/Brass Performance/Ensemble Music/Music/Percussion Performance 2,” revised March 1, 2004 (printed document, Colts Warehouse Archives, Dubuque, IA, 2005). *Permission granted by Jeff and Vicki McFarlane.*

Within this set of images, vague bullet points are utilized to provide rationale and grounding for adjudicated decisions.

The rubrics have since been expanded to include more detailed verbiage and uphold a more educationally driven approach towards adjudication as a whole. The most recent update occurred in 2016 to include two-sided sheets. The front of each sheet has basic bullet points and point denominations outlined for ensembles achieving scores in the categories of “rarely,”

“sometimes,” “usually,” “consistently,” and “always.”⁵⁰⁶ The five categories correspond with the jargon that corps personnel utilize consisting of Box 1-5. The back of these documents provides further explanation and questions that guide the adjudicator towards a correct number and ranking within the competition.⁵⁰⁷ Figure 5 shows some of this verbiage below.

VISUAL PROFICIENCY

CONTENT	ACHIEVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do all of the individual responsibilities of form, body, and equipment, including those responsibilities related to other members of the unit, contribute to the depth and range of the content? • To what extent do all of the layered responsibilities and environmental challenges of playing an instrument, moving to/from forms, and moving around the field while manipulating body position and equipment, contribute to the range and depth of the content? Consider variety, changes of direction, distance from other performers, proximity to other performers, and field conditions as examples. • To what extent do variations in time, direction, weight, and muscle variation given to members of percussion, brass, and color guard, contribute to the range and quality of expression through body, equipment, and form of the content? • To what extent do any of the musical challenges, including wide variations in meter, pulse and tempo, contribute to the range and depth of the the content? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the performers, whether as individuals or as a part of a collective group — large or small — demonstrating and achieving training and refined techniques? • To what extent, are the performers, through the use of the arms, torso, muscle flexibility, changes in speed and space, demonstrating and achieving expressive qualities with clarity and ease from one moment to the next or from one phrase to the next? • To what extent are the performers demonstrating and achieving significant clarity of timing and articulation of body, form, and equipment, and therefore, contributing to achievement? Articulation requires both a precision of timing and an understanding of pathways of body and equipment from the start, during a phrase, and to the end of a phrase. • Considering all challenges, to what extent and how do the performers demonstrate and achieve precision? • To what extent are the performers demonstrating, managing and achieving the challenges of the environment — distance, proximity, field conditions, etc.? • To what extent are the performers demonstrating and achieving concentration, an understanding of recovery, and sustained stamina?

How do ***each of these factors***, collectively and individually, ***compare*** to each and all the other units in the competition?

<u>RARELY</u> 1 - 29	<u>SOMETIMES</u> 30 - 49	<u>USUALLY</u> 50 - 69	<u>CONSISTENTLY</u> 70 - 89	<u>ALWAYS</u> 90 - 100
--------------------------------	------------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------------------

JS 003—LAST REVISED 31 MARCH 2016
© 2016 DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL

Figure 6: Drum Corps International, “Visual Proficiency,” revised March 31, 2016 (accessed electronically). *Permission granted by Dan Acheson.*

⁵⁰⁶ Drum Corps International, “Visual Proficiency,” revised March 31, 2016.

⁵⁰⁷ Drum Corps International, “Visual Proficiency.”

The categories on which each ensemble is judged have been altered as well. Seen in figure 4, the categories of Music Effect, Ensemble Music, and Percussion 2 all existed early in the 2000s. These categories have been altered to use a panel of eleven judges, evaluating General Effect 1 and 2 (two judges combine to make each of these scores), Visual Proficiency, Visual Analysis, Color Guard, Music Brass, Music Analysis, and Music Ensemble Percussion combined with Music Field Percussion. Technically speaking, the criteria by which performances are judged today reflect both design and achievement aspects, which is why the language on each sheet notates content and achievement, as seen in figure 5. Additionally, analysis captions outline a big-picture approach to judging concepts in opposition to the individualized sub-caption categories that are more based on specific achievement.

A more recent alteration to the concept of judging, concerns the general effect caption. Formerly, one person was assigned to a specific effect sheet with either a musical or visual expertise, hence the Music Effect sheet seen in figure 4. At present, the trend is moving towards two people judging the overall effect and not specializing in any particular field.⁵⁰⁸ Figure 6 shows one of the general effect sheets currently in use. Sheets 1, 1A, 2, and 2A are all identical, showing the non-specific effect caption.

⁵⁰⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

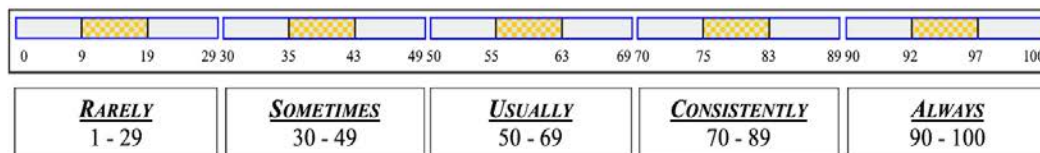
1

GENERAL EFFECT

REPERTOIRE EFFECT	MAX 100	SCORE:	PERFORMANCE EFFECT	MAX 100	SCORE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AUDIO AND VISUAL COORDINATION PROGRAMMATIC INTERPRETATION VARIETY OF EFFECTS CREATIVITY, ORIGINALITY, AND ARTISTRY 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENGAGED THE AUDIENCE DELIVERED/SUSTAINED THE EFFECTS EMBODIED/SUSTAINED CHARACTER, ROLE, IDENTITY, STYLE COMMUNICATED DETAIL, NUANCE, AND ARTISTIC QUALITIES 		

TOTAL
MAX - 200

JUDGE : _____



JS 001—LAST REVISED — 31 MARCH 2016

© 2016 DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL

Figure 7: Drum Corps International, “General Effect,” revised March 31, 2016 (accessed electronically). *Permission granted by Dan Acheson.*

Regardless of the time period, John Phillips gives an overarching definition of effect within the judging sphere:

The most global area of evaluation is known as Effect. Music and Visual presentations should create an effect unto themselves, triggering aesthetic responses to the intellectual and emotional design and performance. In essence, this is how we determine what is entertaining about a particular program. Effect captions are the most *subjective* to judge and yet there are established principles of design and performance practices which can determine what is truly effective. Effect judges are looking at the actual design of the

show, the peaks and valleys of excitement throughout, and how the performers made the show successful.⁵⁰⁹

This definition was given with respect to the two distinct sheets, but the judgment of the effect caption still reflects the subjective nature of entertainment in general.

One perspective on the judging of DCI was commented on by interviewee Richard Hinshaw, who believes the emphasis has slightly shifted back towards the old-fashioned tick system, though the sheets do not support this notion. Hinshaw says, “We’re in a bit of a time now where derived achievement is not rewarded the way it used to be. I think that comes from our digital world.”⁵¹⁰ Going further, he states that “what is perceived as effective is only the purity of the precision [which in turn] is perceived as effect,” to which Hinshaw compares effect and corps adjudication to be more similar to drum corps prior to DCI (the tick system).⁵¹¹ This has caused the activity to be slightly less risky than it had been. Though not explicitly outlined in the rules, this is a perception that Hinshaw feels. The regulatory aspects of the competitive sphere speak more to the devaluing of the tick system at large.⁵¹²

Different classes of corps, in the early 2000s, utilized different adjudication criteria than their World Class counterparts leading to one small change to the adjudication criteria. In 2014, Open Class began to utilize the same sheets as the World Class corps, enabling a consistent approach to judging for all corps in DCI throughout all events. The paradigm-shift for adjudication prevented a drastic reduction in the total scores of Open Class ensembles once they

⁵⁰⁹ Drum Corps International, “Judging and the Adjudication System.”

⁵¹⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵¹¹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵¹² Klesch Interview.

competed with the World Class ensembles, which has occurred since 2011. Ultimately, it eased the transition for the preliminary night of DCI championships, allowing for the scores of the Open Class ensembles to remain more consistently aligned with the rest of their summer events in any given season.

Competition Information

Competition policies outlined by DCI are stated succinctly to provide clarity. For example, tie breaking will not occur at events, whether in a final score or subcaption.⁵¹³ Interestingly, International Class participants can earn finalist positions, but may not displace another corps from a position if they are not compliant with all DCI rules and restrictions, making there an option for thirteen finalists instead of twelve.⁵¹⁴ DCI has added to their policy the ability to have a second percussion judge, located in the press box during competition, and that they can employ a double panel of General Effect Judges at any premier event.⁵¹⁵

Competition often thrives on placement of performance slots. The order in which corps perform at large regional events can be paramount to their competitive success. In policy 513, DCI outlines the procedure for performance order. It states that prior to the Southwest Championship (San Antonio, Texas), order will be based on World Championship placement in the prior year and will be drawn in groups of three at random, with the host corps performing last.⁵¹⁶ The first major regional event will be performed in reverse order from placement the year

⁵¹³ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 14.

⁵¹⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 14.

⁵¹⁵ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 16.

⁵¹⁶ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 15.

prior.⁵¹⁷ From there, the Southwest Championship will be drawn based on the reverse-order groupings of three.⁵¹⁸ Events to follow will be based on the most recent regional event groupings.

Tour Alterations

The changes in many competitive rules were paralleled with organizational alterations to the tour schedule. Over the years, there have been several large changes to the way groups tour and classify themselves.

Beginning in 2000, tour life started to operate differently. At this point, several regional organizations existed (East-DCE, Midwest-DCM, South-DCS, and West-DCW) that then consolidated into DCI.⁵¹⁹ Initially, the consolidation took place in the western region, with the corps asking in 1999 if DCI would operate their region's business which eliminated the use of two distinct seasons, that of DC-region and that of DCI.⁵²⁰ By 2004, all regional circuits had come together under the DCI umbrella, allowing for more "efficient and smarter scheduling."⁵²¹ The other benefit to the merger was consistency across the promotional and governance aspects of drum corps.⁵²²

⁵¹⁷ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 15.

⁵¹⁸ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 15.

⁵¹⁹ Acheson Interview.

⁵²⁰ Acheson Interview.

⁵²¹ Acheson Interview.

⁵²² Acheson Interview.

In 2009, DCI began to standardize tours more explicitly for its participating groups by holding championships in a consistent location. Prior to this time, the championship event was held in various locations throughout the United States. In 2009, though, Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, became the regular championship location. Dan Acheson stated, “The deal actually took place in 2006. We had been talking with Visit Indy,” which was responsible for attracting business and large events to Indianapolis.⁵²³ Their goal and strategy in having DCI in Indianapolis was to attract other music events like Music for All, Bands of America, and the Percussive Arts Society.⁵²⁴ Acheson mentions that the largest challenge to moving to Indianapolis for the championship venue was not the consistency aspect; instead, it was that the corps did not want to compete in a dome, they were looking for “an open-air stadium.”⁵²⁵ The problem was rectified by the fact that the new stadium had a retractable roof. To this day, the roof has remained closed for a majority of DCI events, and corps design their shows around this environment.⁵²⁶ Acheson continues by stating that the consistency of the “controlled environment [allows them to] know the event [is] going to go on.”⁵²⁷

In conjunction with this decision, early tour events frequently became localized to the home region of a corps. Additionally, a “regional” competition system was developed where all corps converged at singular DCI-sponsored events as major stops on the tour circuit. All World Class corps tour schedules now include Minneapolis, Minnesota (no longer considered a

⁵²³ Acheson Interview.

⁵²⁴ Acheson Interview.

⁵²⁵ Acheson Interview

⁵²⁶ Acheson Interview.

⁵²⁷ Acheson Interview.

regional); Denver, Colorado; San Antonio, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; and Allentown, Pennsylvania.

This standardization provided many advantages, such as a regular audition process, move-in times, and total tour schedule that most corps follow. Though it may seem unimportant, this change enabled corps to better estimate their monetary expenditures and plan shows for a known location, aware of how that musical venue would react to sounds and sights within the show.

Dan Acheson then states that 2010 “challenged” drum corps due to “the top corps [being] frustrated.”⁵²⁸ Ultimately, these corps felt that they deserved more shares of DCI revenue because their success was “bringing the crowds into the stadium[s],” while also believing that they needed to compete against each other more often throughout the summer.⁵²⁹ This resulted in the “Tour of Champions” events, where the top eight corps from the prior year would be in attendance at a few pinnacle shows in the season. DCI then used this as a way to provide for the needs of all organizations. Though all individual corps had different needs, they all needed something to continue to thrive, meaning DCI brought “more of a balance there, top to bottom.”⁵³⁰

When the DCI organization outlined more specific goals for the future in 2017, a major goal for the organization was to provide an effective touring model for all involved. For DCI itself, areas such as event management and effectiveness were vital to continued success.⁵³¹ They

⁵²⁸ Acheson Interview.

⁵²⁹ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁰ Acheson Interview.

⁵³¹ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 6.

also looked to provide insights into sustainability and growth of events. Sadly, some of this was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but since then, it has mostly recovered. As DCI looked forward, it sought to form a task force of directors to advise DCI officials. In 2019, a committee was created to review options for tour events to be specifically run by DCI instead of by individual corps, though this notion was not a new one at that time.⁵³²

Moving to new locations, like Texas, requires much consideration from DCI officials. Decisions were once venue based, but the decision process has expanded. Aspects DCI considers when looking for a host for its events include the stadium, parking lot space for larger numbers of corps vehicles, distance from parking to the stadium, sufficient warm-up zones, and housing for participating corps.⁵³³ No detail in these proceedings is insignificant. The evolution of technology has played a vital role in location scouting. Dan Acheson comments that the development of Google Maps now helps to plan events with more ease and less travel.⁵³⁴

Access to the DCI tour events was mentioned in chapter 4 as highly favorable for membership corps, but all corps are not allotted the same access level. For example, World Class corps are prioritized at events over the other classifications.⁵³⁵ The number of corps at a competition determines whether an Open Class corps can participate. Corps with home bases close to the competition site often take priority over those that are non-local.⁵³⁶ In addition to this notion, DCI does not require corps to go to certain locations. Typically speaking, DCI suggests

⁵³² Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 8.

⁵³³ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁴ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁵ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁶ Acheson Interview.

what might work for a corps, but does not insist on their final tour locations until they have signed off on the decisions unanimously.⁵³⁷ Ultimately, the corps and DCI have a conversation about the best locations or directions for travel to allow for things like free time in favorable areas of the country.⁵³⁸

Regardless of individual groups' access to the tour, DCI has a set tour designed for Open Class competition. These events occur later in the season, from late July through early August, and lead to the Open Class championship location, now in Marion, Indiana, after being in Michigan City, Indiana, through the 2018 season. The term "Open Class," as a distinctive sector, was coined in the 2008 season with the Santa Clara Vanguard Cadets as the first crowned champion. The event was held in Bloomington, Indiana, that year, prior to moving to Michigan City. Mirroring World Class, these championships were a three-day event occurring from Wednesday through Friday to successively eliminate corps and crown a champion.⁵³⁹ Since 2011, the championship events have been moved earlier in the week (Monday and Tuesday) to allow all Open Class corps to compete as part of the first night (Thursday) of World Class competition at Lucas Oil Stadium and earn a chance to qualify for further competitions. Dan Acheson describes this shift as being an "all skate" opportunity to "compete with the rest of the world."⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁸ Acheson Interview.

⁵³⁹ Darcy Wallace, "Open Class Launches 2010 World Championships Week at Opening Ceremonies," Drum Corps International, August 10, 2010, accessed January 5, 2024, <https://www.dci.org/news/open-class-launches-2010-world-championships-week-at-opening-ceremonies>.

⁵⁴⁰ Acheson Interview.

Open Class emerged from what was formerly known as the Division II/III classification. These two distinctions were based on the size of the ensemble, but were not always indicative of their overall success, as many Division III corps “were just as good as Division II corps.”⁵⁴¹ The distinction of Open Class allowed ensembles over fifty members to compete together and earn their title of “best in class” on a smaller scale while consolidating the Division II and III system into one category.⁵⁴²

Non-Competitive Years

As mentioned in chapter 4, the traditional competitive season was disrupted in 2020. When COVID-19 became a global pandemic, DCI and its respective corps turned towards national and global guidelines to gauge the safety for operations throughout the 2020 summer season and chose to cancel all competitive events. Each corps handled this differently. For example, the corps initially canceled their in-person March events in hopes that they may still make it to the field in the summer, though this ended up not being possible due to the state of the disease as it continued to spread worldwide. Throughout the summer, education still occurred virtually for many corps, and many released one or more compilation videos from various sections of their membership performing.

The pandemic unfortunately altered many plans for the 2020 and future seasons. Some corps decided to honor all contracts that were given for membership in the 2020 season for their next eligible year of marching. Additionally, DCI became lenient with the age of performers in 2021 to allow any person their right to “age out” with a corps. This extended membership an

⁵⁴¹ Acheson Interview.

⁵⁴² Acheson Interview.

additional year for prospective members who had already reached the age of twenty-one for the 2020 season. It did not, however, allow students with additional marching eligibility to gain access to continue marching past their age-out year in future seasons past 2021. For example, if 2021 was a student's age-out season, they would continue to age out of their organization at that time and not receive any additional eligibility as had been the case for the 2020 membership.

The transition from the COVID-19 pandemic into post-pandemic operations did not start immediately. As mentioned earlier by Vicki McFarlane, planning for any competitive season begins immediately upon the conclusion of the previous season's championship event in August. Therefore, August 2020 did not allow for definitive procedures going forward with the activity. Virtual events were still considered to be standard, especially for large gatherings of people from a diverse set of locations, so most auditions for membership turned from a hybrid of in-person rehearsal camps to strictly online endeavors. Corps produced more online assignments to gauge student progress in the off season and enable students to be ready once their next active season came up.

DCI worked closely with health officials and with one another to devise a plan of action for corps to operate and tour again. Their decision for the 2021 season was to hold a condensed, non-competitive season. The season of instruction and show learning began in early July, with show events beginning on July 24th.⁵⁴³ DCI labeled the season a "Celebration Tour," meaning that all corps would perform at all shows. This mostly affected the week of championships in

⁵⁴³ Drum Corps International, "Schedule of 2021 Events Leading into Indianapolis," March 31, 2021, accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/schedule-of-2021-events-leading-into-indianapolis>.

Lucas Oil Stadium, where corps were not eliminated on a nightly basis based on their performances. Twenty-one total corps participated in these events.⁵⁴⁴

The tours for summer 2021 were limited. For example, the Midwest and other regional combines made a resurgence where corps performed with only a small subset of other performing ensembles which was designed to limit contact outside of each group's individual “bubble.” Corps did not travel to new housing sites daily for their performances. Instead, they found housing in a limited area with minimal contact with the world outside of their corps. Each performance was within driving distance of their respective housing sites until they made the final push towards Indianapolis for the final round of celebration performances. Contact between corps and audience members at shows was almost non-existent. COVID testing occurred on a regular basis in attempts to mitigate illness. This type of tour proved to be successful for the reduction of the spread of illness.

Since not all active corps came to these events, they found alternative ways to participate in the drum corps activity. Groups such as the Blue Devils, Santa Clara Vanguard, and Carolina Crown all rehearsed and put together shows that were produced via video without any formal exhibition show component to their seasons.

Post-Pandemic Competition

For the 2022 season, DCI resumed operations as a competitive circuit. The hope leading into the season was to operate as similarly to pre-pandemic life as possible and to celebrate its fiftieth year. DCI released a statement on November 24, 2021, stating,

After a canceled 2020 Tour due to the COVID-19 pandemic and an exciting — albeit abbreviated — return during the summer of 2021, the 2022 DCI Summer Tour will mark

⁵⁴⁴ Drum Corps International, “Schedule of 2021 Events Leading into Indianapolis.”

the first “full” season since 2019, bringing the excitement of performance and competition to audiences in more than 30 states.⁵⁴⁵

Though this is true, the coronavirus still hindered some of the happenings for individual corps. Corps still operated as a bubble separate from one another, but with fewer strict restrictions. A few corps had to drop out of events due to high rates of positive COVID testing in certain sections producing conditions that affected the feasibility of their performances. Understanding how to mitigate, isolate, and rehabilitate members and staff became vital to reentering competition quickly.

Along with the return to a competitive season came a season schedule that was slightly altered from before the pandemic. In 2019 and earlier, almost all corps participated in events prior to July. For this season, there were only two competitions that occurred in June, in Pasadena, California, and Detroit, Michigan.⁵⁴⁶ Many corps found that this gave them the benefit of being able to rehearse longer, which provided an opportunity for more refinement at the beginning of the season.

The Open Class competition also saw minor variations this season in comparison to pre-pandemic life. The tour concluded for Open Class corps at a new venue in Marion, Indiana.⁵⁴⁷ Essentially, other factors in these corps’ seasons remained the same with the updated finals location.

⁵⁴⁵ Drum Corps International, “2022 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule,” November 21, 2021, accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/2022-drum-corps-international-tour-schedule>.

⁵⁴⁶ Drum Corps International, “2022 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule.”

⁵⁴⁷ Drum Corps International, “2022 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule.”

By the 2023 season, operations returned to as close to “normal” as they could. Of course, each season is unique and poses its own challenges as the tour and the competitive process evolve. For example, one of the most successful corps, Santa Clara Vanguard, encountered financial issues that caused them to withdraw from the competitive season. Nonetheless, operations for DCI and its corps returned to a schedule like a well-oiled machine in this competitive season.

Overall Competitive Success

Competitive success is not always the indicator of a great drum corps, but the twenty-first century provides ample statistics related to corps that have continuously been at the top tier of the activity. The most decorated corps, the Blue Devils, repeated their gold medalist status for eleven of the past twenty-three years.⁵⁴⁸ Other champions crowned multiple times in the twenty-first century include the Cavaliers with five gold-medal-winning shows and the Cadets with three season-winning performances.⁵⁴⁹

Santa Clara Vanguard is another significant corps. Prior to 2000, they were often a top-placing organization. In the 2018 season, they were crowned champion.⁵⁵⁰ More importantly, throughout DCI’s total history, they have been named a finalist every season they have participated, making them the only corps to have achieved this in DCI’s history. However, they did not field a corps for the 2023 season, losing their prestigious status.

⁵⁴⁸ Drum Corps International, “Official Scores: Past Champions,” accessed March 19, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/scores/past-champions>.

⁵⁴⁹ Drum Corps International, “Official Scores: Past Champions.”

⁵⁵⁰ Drum Corps International, “Official Scores: Past Champions.”

Other corps that have been named champion in this century include Phantom Regiment (2008), Carolina Crown (2013), and Bluecoats (2016).⁵⁵¹ Both Carolina Crown and Bluecoats achieved this status for the first time in their corps history and continued to pave the way for more corps in the DCI sphere.

Not only are competitive placements important, but excellence is highly regarded in the DCI community. Therefore, participating corps and personnel can earn various honors annually. Dr. Bernard Baggs and Dr. David Kampschroer Leadership Awards are presented to the outstanding World Class and Open Class directors, respectively. Similarly, the George Bonfiglio Chairman's Award is presented to the person who "demonstrated extraordinary leadership, service and effort on behalf of Drum Corps International."⁵⁵² For membership, the Jim Jones Leadership Award is presented to both World and Open Class drum majors with unparalleled leadership.⁵⁵³ Additionally, each caption is presented with an award for best in class in that season. The awards are: John Brazale Award for Best Visual Performance (starting in 2012), George Zingali Best Color Guard Award, Donald Angelica Best Overall General Effect Award, Fred Sanford Best Percussion Performance Award, and Jim Ott Best Bass Performance Award.⁵⁵⁴

Subsections have reputations in the DCI community. One of the most well-known is the Carolina Crown Brass. From 2010 to the present, Crown has won the Jim Ott Award for best brass eight times. Each time they did not win, they took second, proving significant success and

⁵⁵¹ Drum Corps International, "Official Scores: Past Champions."

⁵⁵² Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 16.

⁵⁵³ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 16.

⁵⁵⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 17.

consistency for the activity.⁵⁵⁵ Other dynasties in the DCI community include a commanding amount of visual and color guard wins from the Blue Devils, and the Cavaliers, Cadets, and Santa Clara Vanguard have often been top contenders in the percussion caption. Table 2 outlines the overall winner and each subcaption champion for each year from 2000 onwards.

Table 2: DCI Champions and Caption Awards Since 2000

Year	Overall Champion	Ott (Brass)	Sanford (Perc)	Zingali (Guard)	Brazale (Visual)	Angelica (GE)
2000	Cadets/Cavaliers	Cadets	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Cavaliers
2001	Cavaliers	Blue Devils (BD)	Cadets	BD	BD	Cavaliers
2002	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Cadets	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Cavaliers
2003	BD	BD	Cadets	BD	BD	BD
2004	Cavaliers	BD	Santa Clara Vanguard (SCV)	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Cavaliers
2005	Cadets	Cadets	Cadets	Cadets	Cadets	Cadets
2006	Cavaliers	Cavaliers	Phantom Regiment	BD	Cavaliers	Cavaliers/ Phantom
2007	BD	BD	BD	Cavaliers	BD	Cadets/BD
2008	Phantom	BD	Phantom	BD	BD	BD
2009	BD	Crown	BD	BD	BD	BD
2010	BD	BD	Phantom	BD	BD	BD
2011	Cadets	Crown	Cavaliers	BD	Cadets	Cadets
2012	BD	Crown	BD	BD	Crown, BD	BD
2013	Carolina Crown	Crown	Cadets	BD	Crown	Crown
2014	BD	BD	SCV	BD	BD	BD

⁵⁵⁵ Klesch Interview.

2015	BD	Cadets	BD	BD	BD	Crown
2016	Bluecoats	Crown	SCV	Crown	Crown	Bluecoats
2017	BD	Crown	SCV	SCV	BD	BD
2018	SCV	SCV	SCV	Boston Crusaders	SCV	SCV
2019	BD	Crown	SCV	Boston Crusaders	BD	Bluecoats
2022	BD	BD	Bluecoats	Boston Crusaders	BD	BD
2023	BD	Crown	Cavaliers	BD	BD	BD

Sources: Michael Boo, “John Brazale Visual Caption Award Winners of the 2010s,” Drum Corps International, March 4, 2020, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.dci.org/news/john-brazale-visual-performance-caption-award-winners-of-th-2010s>; Drum Corps International, “2023 DCI World Championship Caption Award Winners,” YouTube video, 1:33, August 17, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIZf46_aEJY; Drum Corps International, “DCI Awards Ceremonies of the 2000s,” YouTube video, 1:25:29, August 6, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epnr67VdnfU>; Drum Corps International, “Every Best Visual Performance Caption Winner of the 2000s,” March 9, 2022, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://dci.org/news/every-best-visual-performance-caption-award-winner-of-the-2000s>; Drum Corps International, “Every DCI Percussion Caption Award Winner of the 2000s,” YouTube video, 6:39, April 20, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkZgcoeXnZY>; Drum Corps International, “Every Donald Angelica General Effect Caption Award Winner of the 2010s,” YouTube Video, 3:11, March 12, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh5r3j1g8-0>; Drum Corps International, “Percussion Caption Award Winners of the 2010s,” Facebook, February 20, 2020. 3:11, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=184116022898318>; Jeff Griffith, “George Zingali Color Guard Caption Award Winners of the 2010s,” Drum Corps International, February 19, 2020, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.dci.org/news/george-zingali-color-guard-caption-award-winners-of-the-201s>; Tez, “List of All Caption Winners,” Drum Corps Planet, July 28, 2014, <https://www.drumcorpsplanet.com/forums/index.php?/topic/160326-list-of-all-caption-winners/>.

Close inspection of these statistics reveals a few additional trends. One is that the overall champion of any given year has already won at least one subcaption. Importantly, the winner of the Don Angelica Award for general effect often, but not always, ends up winning the entire competition due to the heavy weighting in this caption on the judging rubrics. One announcer in

2001 stated, “The GE score works almost every time. It works about 80% of the time, especially in the bigger shows,” as an indicator of overall winning status.⁵⁵⁶

The rules and judging procedures work closely with the way that corps design their shows. The show design content will be discussed in the upcoming chapter. Ultimately, the artistic nature of the activity is defined by the rulings to be presented in this chapter. Often, the artistic direction of DCI designers further influences the alteration of the competitive rules, making adjudication and design a revolving door of influence on one another. These two concepts truly work in tandem. Some of these innovations and processes will be discussed in more depth in chapter 6.

⁵⁵⁶ Drum Corps International, “DCI Awards Ceremonies of the 2000s.”

CHAPTER 6: SHOW DESIGN: MUSICAL AND VISUAL

Dan Potter, long time announcer and podcaster for DCI, comments that in the past twenty-three years he has seen the finished products produced by corps grow immensely. He states that “both from a design and an achievement standpoint, the growth has been unimaginable”⁵⁵⁷ in DCI. In fact, this is the primary evolutionary aspect on which he comments. He goes further to state that DCI had no idea of “what people that age will truly [be] capable of achieving.”⁵⁵⁸ Potter compares the performers in DCI to “elite athletes” and says that these types of students differ from those of previous generations.⁵⁵⁹ He attributes DCI’s evolution to many aspects in the process, such as the correct “design, programming, instruction, and time” in order to create products that are continuously intensified.⁵⁶⁰

The evolution of show design has stemmed from a variety of factors. Looking back at the period prior to 2000, Dr. Rosalie Sward provides a list of what was influential for the evolution of drum corps:

⁵⁵⁷ Dan Potter (DCI Announcer), interview with the author, January 2024.

⁵⁵⁸ Potter Interview.

⁵⁵⁹ Potter Interview.

⁵⁶⁰ Potter Interview.

- Social culture of the times
- Political environment of the times, including war and patriotism
- Function/purpose of the drum and bugle corps
- Evolution and improvement of the bugle and additions to the percussion section
- Influx of professional instructors, arrangers, trained musicians and creative designers into the activity and their impetus to create change
- The tick system vs. the absence of the tick system, i.e. the build up system
- Other rules and restrictions as well as the design of the judging sheets
- Improved musicality
- Increasing concern that music supports the drill and vice versa
- Changing the time limit of shows⁵⁶¹

Many of the reasons listed above remain factors in the design process post 2000 as well. Cultural and societal shifts create new interests and thematic concepts. At present, the continued expertise of DCI's creative personnel and pedagogues in the activity drive the new direction of the drum corps ensemble. With the various rule alterations, as discussed in previous chapters, shows have evolved immensely since 2000. Michael Klesch, brass arranger for Carolina Crown, mentioned that visual elements have experienced the most growth in this century.⁵⁶² Even as visual evolution has exponentially expanded, musical developments have been more related to the various soundscapes allowed.

In addition to the competitive rules, the logistical components of touring are another significant element in evolutionary design that helped to propel DCI shows forward. Dan Acheson mentioned that when the DCI championships were moved to an indoor location, corps directors felt it was “going to change the activity... And indeed, it has.”⁵⁶³ The change first perceived as a potential negative impact on the activity but has since proven to be the

⁵⁶¹ Rosalie Sward, “The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design,” 97-98.

⁵⁶² Michael Klesch (Carolina Crown brass arranger), interview with the author, February 23, 2024.

⁵⁶³ Dan Acheson Interview.

opposite.⁵⁶⁴ Weather is no longer an added stress to DCI championship events, allowing for altered costuming, props, and electronic usage during the final performances.⁵⁶⁵ However, weather is still a factor for most rehearsals and performances throughout the season.

Changes in the DCI environment are often met with criticism from the fan base. Dan Potter understands fans taking issue with changes, but also notes that “[they’re] not the target audience.”⁵⁶⁶ Instead he defends the evolution by stating that the “core experience, both CORE and CORPS, [it] doesn't change. No matter how the production might change....”⁵⁶⁷ He continues by stating that the purpose of the activity is to “bring out the excellence in young people,” and therefore, artistic changes add merit to the excellence being performed on the field.⁵⁶⁸ More importantly, Potter states, “I've never had a participant tell me, ‘I wish it was more like it used to be.’”⁵⁶⁹ Potter and other staff members attest that the activity is about and for the members themselves, and that some of the changes make more sense when viewed with that lens. Ultimately, “We as an audience get to take that journey with them [the members] and enjoy it” for what it is.⁵⁷⁰

In a similar vein, drill designer Richard Hinshaw combats the critique of drum corps’ evolution: “There are so many opinions out there that all the newer things are all negative. Yet,

⁵⁶⁴ Acheson Interview.

⁵⁶⁵ Acheson Interview.

⁵⁶⁶ Potter Interview.

⁵⁶⁷ Potter Interview.

⁵⁶⁸ Potter Interview.

⁵⁶⁹ Potter Interview.

⁵⁷⁰ Potter Interview.

the reality is, it's all really equal. It's just different."⁵⁷¹ He reflects that previous time periods had "bad ideas" and good ones, like now.⁵⁷² Hinshaw acknowledges that DCI currently has "new toys" that change the field and enable people to write, perform, and interact with shows in ways that were not possible earlier in drum corps history.⁵⁷³

Ultimately, Hinshaw notes that the largest aspect of drum corps' evolution in the twenty-first century "is what we put on [the] field."⁵⁷⁴ He recognizes that every facet of productions has progressed in some way, including the categories of music, visual, theatrics, and entertainment value.⁵⁷⁵ This chapter will outline the details of design alterations throughout the years.

The Design Process

Though shows now look different than they did in 2000, the design process is relatively similar, a sentiment echoed by many of the individuals currently working in the field. Minor aspects can change over time due to the specific team working together; overall, Vicki McFarlane explains that the process has become more "sophisticated."⁵⁷⁶ This is due to the "interactiveness between all the different elements" and early preparation on all fronts to be "able to connect more of those pieces of productions better."⁵⁷⁷ Overarchingly, productions are "woven to interact visually and musically" more sustainably than previously, and this results in

⁵⁷¹ Richard Hinshaw (drill designer) in discussion with author, January 9, 2024.

⁵⁷² Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁷³ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁷⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁷⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁷⁶ Vicki McFarlane (Colts Corps Director) Interview with author, December 27, 2023.

⁵⁷⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

further attention to a production's details, no matter how small, creating a more emotional and connected final product.⁵⁷⁸

The design process for any given show often includes multiple individuals with a wide variety of ideas. As McFarlane put it, “on the adult side of it, our ability to bring more people into the tent” was heightened throughout the 2000-2023 time period.⁵⁷⁹ Like instructional staff, drum corps design teams have been expanding since the beginning of the century. Design teams are often spearheaded by the Program Coordinator, who combines all ideas together. For all intents and purposes, this individual is the manager of all designers.⁵⁸⁰ They are joined with visual professionals that write and/or design drill, choreography (often separated by color guard, brass, and percussion), graphic/set design personnel, and other consultants. Musically speaking, arrangers for the following subsections are paramount to each production: brass, battery (field percussion), front ensemble, and sound design. As seen on each individual corps website, there is not a prescribed number of designers in any given corps. Further, specialization of some designers can be split into multiple roles for a more specialized approach to writing. One example of specialization is seen in the front ensemble. The Blue Devil's lists an arranger for this section of the drum corps and an additional writer for the drum set only.⁵⁸¹

The distinctions between position titles can be convoluted in recent show design processes can be somewhat unclear. Designers and writers/arrangers have been recognized interchangeably in the past, but this is not necessarily true anymore. “A designer is someone

⁵⁷⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁵⁷⁹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸¹ “2024 A Corps Staff,” BDPA, Blue Devils Performing Arts, accessed May 9, 2024, <https://www.bluedevils.org/programs/a-corps/seasons/?module=staff>.

who's helping put together the 'big picture' ideas, who's coming up with the thoughts and riffing on that," suggests Hinshaw.⁵⁸² At times, the roles of these people can overlap, but not always. Therefore, there can be team members who are producing ideas but not writing components of the show at all.⁵⁸³ The variation to structure is reflective of the people on a design team more so than of the evolutionary process.

Work styles and structure can vary depending on the staff structure in place. Weekly meetings are often set up for all involved. Different personnel can be needed at each meeting, at which discussion occurs that influences the progress of the production. Hinshaw states, "I am a big believer personally in being involved with as much of it as I can."⁵⁸⁴ His sentiment speaks to the collaborative aspects of show design as well as maintaining and developing his own individual craft.

Hinshaw comments on one component of the process that has changed throughout the years: "There are way more of us who are visual professionals than [there] used to be."⁵⁸⁵ Until recently, people pursuing a career using solely visual design, in a full-time and meaningful manner were fairly rare. Now, this is seen more frequently, since such professionals are able to write for various types of marching arts activities year-round. Drum corps is an integral component for individuals in the visual design profession. Michael Klesch even comments on this by stating, "There's a lot of people [on the visual side of design] that have learned through

⁵⁸² Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸³ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

the trade and the craft and the pageantry of it, and they've developed into really great creators of the things that they do," despite their education not traditionally adhering to this line of work.⁵⁸⁶

Consultants are also among the people in the design rooms. Klesch describes these individuals as often being composers working with the arrangers to adapt their original works for the field, or to write new portions of shows altogether.⁵⁸⁷ These people bring new ideas that can be different from the professionals entrenched in the marching band domain.

In the end, good ideas drive the progression of the activity forward. Hinshaw comments that each subcaption – brass, percussion, and color guard – can be maximizing their achievements and still not doing well competitively since design ideas are paramount to the scoring within the activity.⁵⁸⁸ Klesch notes, "the quest for perfection is nearly what it was," and design is more integral for competitive success.⁵⁸⁹

The design process is often thought of as occurring prior to the season. It begins as early as September upon the completion of the prior championship competition. Corps will meet and debrief about their previous season and quickly aim to propose new themes for the next year. Meetings occur weekly until Memorial Day, or when the corps moves in.⁵⁹⁰ In general, September and October are devoted to determining a show, and November through February is dedicated to writing as much music as possible.⁵⁹¹ While this is occurring, the staff are designing

⁵⁸⁶ Klesch Interview.

⁵⁸⁷ Klesch Interview.

⁵⁸⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁸⁹ Klesch Interview.

⁵⁹⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹¹ Hinshaw Interview.

elements like props and uniforms.⁵⁹² Finally, February through May is dedicated to visual writing, like the drill.⁵⁹³ Edits are continually being worked throughout the process.

When the corps arrives at their full-time tour in May, it is not the end of the design process. In fact, it is just the starting point to apply all of the ideas of the show into a live situation. Editing occurs continually, with new pitches, articulations, drill sets, choreography, or anything else that is possible for the performers. Essentially, “the best teams are honing their show all the way to the end.”⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, Hinshaw believes designers are vital to include in addition to writers.⁵⁹⁵ He states, “When you’re writing for your specific thing, you have to separate that from what’s best for the whole as far as an ideas standpoint, and not everybody does a great job of that.”⁵⁹⁶ Each part of the design serves the whole. This process proves to be a year-round endeavor.

Musical Innovation

“No matter how good the visual program is, the musical program makes the more powerful impression,” states Sward.⁵⁹⁷ By the 1990s, the state of DCI had left musical programming to include much music that is “aggressive, disjunct, percussive and biting or even

⁵⁹² Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹³ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹⁶ Hinshaw Interview.

⁵⁹⁷ Sward, “The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design,” 165.

angry in nature.”⁵⁹⁸ However, programs had musical variety that provided some contrast.⁵⁹⁹

Largely, these musical trends are still common threads found in shows.

Musical thematic material became integral to the show design process. Large scale “sophisticated music” was introduced and, while it “pleased some of the intellectuals in the audience” fans believed that corps championed artistry over entertainment at large.⁶⁰⁰ Critiques of the shifts prior to the 2000s is that the music became too dissonant and that artistry became the main focus of the design process.⁶⁰¹ Regardless of this notion, it is noted that “design, training and performance are far beyond” any previous time period in DCI.⁶⁰²

The landscape in which music is selected is a combination of both the artistic and entertainment sides to the dissonant philosophies of drum corps’ purpose. Klesch identifies the importance of a hook or recognizable musical moment to drive at least a portion of a show.⁶⁰³ People will be more willing to buy into newer musically thematic content with the addition of some familiarity, often movie music or other music with ties to popular culture.⁶⁰⁴

Klesch is a musical designer who has been privy to competitive success in DCI many years prior to 2000 but has also remained relevant throughout his work in the 2000s. When the Garfield Cadets frequently won DCI championships in the 1980s, Klesch was in serving in

⁵⁹⁸ Sward, 165.

⁵⁹⁹ Sward, 146.

⁶⁰⁰ Sward, 145.

⁶⁰¹ Sward, 146.

⁶⁰² Sward, 146.

⁶⁰³ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁰⁴ Klesch Interview.

several roles. In their first championship title year, 1983, he was the drum major. From there, he quickly made his way into the teaching side of the corps and ended up arranging the brass books for their 1985 and 1987 winning seasons.⁶⁰⁵ His success continued in the corps with which he has spent much of his time in this century, Carolina Crown. Klesch arranges for the renowned Crown Brass and works with the Harloff team of educators to produce sounds idiomatic to a symphonic brass section. In 2012, Klesch was inducted into the DCI Hall of Fame for his integral contributions to the field.

For Klesch, the process of for designing for brass has not changed significantly, but the importance of certain musical elements has.⁶⁰⁶ The musical outputs are directly reflective of the technique programs and the way the students are taught to produce sounds. Klesch describes this as a “symbiotic” relationship.⁶⁰⁷ He speaks to the innovative nature of Carolina Crown in the overall brass soundscape of DCI. He states that their staff poses the question, “What can we do that no one else has done before?”⁶⁰⁸ The features that many brass lines perform regularly have added heightened technicality to brass playing since the turn of the century. This was inspired by Carolina Crown’s design and performance with “virtuosity that no one else can do.”⁶⁰⁹ Klesch sums up Crown’s contribution as “we play more, we do harder stuff,” which gets rewarded.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁰⁶ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁰⁷ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁰⁸ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁰⁹ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹⁰ Klesch Interview.

Most importantly, Klesch adheres to arranging pedagogically for each instrument in terms of technical abilities and ranges.⁶¹¹

When writing for the brass lines, Klesch utilizes a few overarching principles. He states, “clarity of intent, clarity of sound, of pedagogy; clarity is like the overriding thing.”⁶¹² From there, Klesch believes in writing with the percussion in mind by potentially including cue lines.⁶¹³ He feels that “you can absolutely hear it in the shows that they write in their goggles,” meaning the shows are written with a narrow focus on only the section at hand.⁶¹⁴ Finally, Klesch chooses to write with integrity by adhering to the following statement: “I try to do it in a way that if a composer ever came to our rehearsal and heard it, they would be happy with what we did with it because we’re trying to be respectful.”⁶¹⁵ This does not mean an exact transcription, but instead writing within the same style the original composer intended.

The fact that all brass instruments are now permitted has helped the progression of the brass palette to expand. Yet brass is not the sole driver of musical ingenuity. For Klesch, the grounding of the front ensemble (prior to 2000) helped to bring a wider range of instrumentation to the soundscape.⁶¹⁶ This catalog, as described by Klesch, is much wider and more varied, especially when electronic instruments are added into consideration.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹¹ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹² Klesch Interview.

⁶¹³ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹⁴ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹⁵ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹⁶ Klesch Interview.

⁶¹⁷ Klesch Interview.

The orchestral front ensemble was the precursor to the color and timbral effects that electronic sounds bring in present-day drum corps shows. For example, “keyboard instruments would often play the role of string instruments or woodwind instruments” by performing runs and ostinati.⁶¹⁸ But prior to the 2000s these sections would provide sound effects that created further texture in the ensemble as a whole.⁶¹⁹ When the 2000s arrived, “the performance level of front ensemble members began to grow at a much more rapid rate,” which was called the “four-mallet revolution” due to the ensemble instructors becoming more highly educated and performers having a higher skill level.⁶²⁰ Therefore, instrumental experimentations became more profound in the early 2000s and provided more of a precursor to sound design elements that would be implemented through technological advancements.

As amplification became a new voice in the musical soundscape of DCI ensembles, the writing for the front ensemble became drastically different. Its first inception is called the “Age of Amplification” by Summerlin.⁶²¹ The initial intention was for amplification and electronic instruments to be used in moderation and not affect the drum corps medium in a significant manner.⁶²² Amplification was only allowed for pit and voice, which essentially brought these instruments into the design of shows as “an equal voice” to other musical sections in the corps

⁶¹⁸ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 67.

⁶¹⁹ Summerlin, 67.

⁶²⁰ Summerlin, 74.

⁶²¹ Summerlin, 82.

⁶²² Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International: Technological Change and the Meaning of Tradition,” 56.

like the brass and battery percussion.⁶²³ The amplification allowed the colors of the ensemble to be altered because the front ensemble could use wider pitch frequencies and softer mallet utilization while still being heard within the entirety of the production.⁶²⁴ This, in turn, allowed arrangers to write parts that “resembled literature from the solo marimba, vibraphone, and percussion ensemble repertoire” and create “sound effects” with softer percussive instruments that were previously considered unusable due to their sound not carrying in large venues.⁶²⁵ Consequently, the newfound ability to hear the front ensemble section provided grounding for corps to feature their pits musically, enabling them to carry moments of the show without utilizing the marching members.⁶²⁶ The front ensemble can now effectively carry musical moments in a prominent fashion, especially in transitional sections of shows.

Ultimately, the intention of amplification was “focused on broadening both the participant and audience base by giving the activity more mainstream, commercial appeal,” as electronics have continued to play a heightened role in mainstream musical production.⁶²⁷ Electronics have likewise become heightened in the DCI mainstream.

Along with the inclusion of this “instrument’s” timbre, the human voice was added to the ensemble textures. This provided for the expansion of story in design elements. Maher writes that “text can make the intended meaning of a show clearer to the audience” by providing a

⁶²³ Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 82.

⁶²⁴ Summerlin, “85.

⁶²⁵ Summerlin, 88, 91-92.

⁶²⁶ Summerlin, 92.

⁶²⁷ Maher, “The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International,” 61.

script to follow, and this often happened.⁶²⁸ This relates back to the activity's Broadway influences, which expanded the overall production aspect of show design. Voice was originally used in moderation, but the Cadets broke boundaries with their use of the human voice in their heavily narrated 2007 show, *This I Believe*, which described elements throughout the production.⁶²⁹ Like the Cadets, lower-ranked corps added voice to their productions to attempt to add artistic merit to their productions. Narration occurred throughout the Colts 2014 and 2015 shows, for example, but it is not a trend that all corps have followed regularly.

The 2009 ruling allowing electronic instruments opened up the writing to possibilities including all percussive and electronic sounds. Arguably, the new addition known as sound design, is one of the most drastic changes to musical production in DCI in the 2000s. As Dan Potter provides some indispensable names that in the drum corps community, he brings up Vince Oliver's revolutionary design.⁶³⁰ Potter goes further to state:

You got to look at those individuals now as major influencers going forward in the activity, right? Because soundscape and sound reinforcement, all of that is now, is just so tightly woven into the productions. It's not like it's an afterthought anymore. It used to be you hire your staff and it's like, okay, we're gonna get to do sound. Now you're hiring your sound designer at the same time you're hiring your drill writer and your program coordinator.⁶³¹

The introduction of electronics into the full soundscape of the ensembles was innovative in the early 2000s. Now, it can also incorporate all sorts of sounds that are added to heighten the

⁶²⁸ Maher, 54.

⁶²⁹ Maher, 56.

⁶³⁰ Potter Interview.

⁶³¹ Potter Interview.

acoustic performance around it. Even the show announcements can be included as a prerecorded voice instead of a live component.

Sound designers became inventive and creative in order to use all of the possible options at their disposal while still adhering to the “one stroke per sound” rule.⁶³² For example, prerecorded sung excerpts and other sounds from non-acoustically played instruments (those that might be banned in DCI) could be used as long as their pitches were triggered separately by a musician on the field. This continued to transform into the use of soundscapes and triggers for sounds that resemble other daily, non-musical, sounds.⁶³³ Electronic sounds are now generated in a more blurred manner. The inclusion of time limits on sampled patches and the rhythmic intent of these sounds now plays into what is allowed, which is not necessarily one stroke per sound in nature. Summerlin states, “Drum corps are now capable of electronically creating the sonic atmosphere of any place in the universe. Soundscapes can make the establishment of a mood very effective.”⁶³⁴ Virtually, the possibilities for designers are now “limitless.”⁶³⁵

Speaker placement is most commonly at the front of the field with the pit musicians, has been a way to create different soundscapes and panning effects.⁶³⁶ The 2015 Bluecoats’ production of *Kinetic Noise* is an example of this. More recently, the Bluecoats have been known to move their front ensemble away from its typical location on the field, beginning with their

⁶³² Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International,” 109.

⁶³³ Summerlin, 111.

⁶³⁴ Summerlin, 111.

⁶³⁵ Summerlin, 111.

⁶³⁶ Summerlin, 99.

2017 production, *Jagged Line*. Throughout the next two seasons, they continued to experiment with alternative placements, causing further demands on their performers and the need for devices such as “in-ear” monitors. Alternative front ensemble placements are not exclusive to the Bluecoats, and this has been a conversation topic for ensembles in the design process at times.

The percussion outside of the front ensemble did not drive the arrangement and show design concepts, since these instruments were already utilized in standard ways. The marching percussion, or battery section, consistently uses snare drums, bass drums, tenor drums (5-6 groups of pitched drums), and sometimes cymbals. Nick Miller discusses innovative approaches to battery arranging from the 2000s to the present through analyzing approaches in one DCI ensemble, Santa Clara Vanguard, which has regularly been a top percussion contender.⁶³⁷

Some major developments in percussion writing are reported throughout Miller’s thesis. The first is the concept of melodic writing for the battery, which is explained further from a quote by percussion arranger Jim Casella: “Our responsibility now raises from not only backing the rest of the corps rhythmically, but also all the melodic and harmonic content is now coming out of the percussion ensemble.”⁶³⁸ An additional concept that battery sections must fill is the rhythmic intensity of the ensemble. This is described by Miller as Casella creating density within wind-sustained moments, which produced “rhythmic motion and interest.”⁶³⁹

Similarly to the harmony of traditional melodic instruments, consonance and dissonance can be used in percussive writing. Miller describes “intentional use of opposing rhythms to build

⁶³⁷ Nicholas Joseph Miller, “Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion: Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps, 1968 to 2023” (DMA thesis, University of Iowa, 2023), 42.

⁶³⁸ Quoted in Miller, “Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion,” 42.

⁶³⁹ Miller, “Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion,” 50.

tension or dissonance, and [Casella's] use of unison rhythms to provide resolution."⁶⁴⁰ Musical moments are often driven by dissonance and consonance. In DCI, dissonance often continues through the conclusion of the show to heighten energy levels at the end.

Another common percussive rhythmic device that can be heard in arrangements throughout DCI and other marching arts activities is the use of displaced accented figures, which occurs in the writing of Paul Rennick.⁶⁴¹ Additionally, metric modulations are extremely prevalent in transitional moments in DCI, which Miller described as a technique used by Santa Clara Vanguard. Metric modulations create "excitement and build" while highlighting the percussion and transitioning to (potentially starkly different) sections of shows in a meaningful musical way.⁶⁴²

Ultimately, experimentation is noted in almost all attempts at musical show design. Designers look to try things that have not been done before or to present similar material in a new and creative way, providing for new musical trends in DCI, like the process of ingenuity in other musical mediums.

In terms of the actual arranging process, Klesch feels that all parties must leave space for each other's sections to be highlighted throughout the musical production.⁶⁴³ Arrangers are constantly thinking about the endurance of various sections during this process as well. Speaking plainly, Klesch says, "You're just trying to find the best way to orchestrate the intent of the

⁶⁴⁰ Miller, 53.

⁶⁴¹ Miller, 88.

⁶⁴² Miller, 94.

⁶⁴³ Klesch Interview.

music. And sometimes that's with brass and sometimes that's with the percussion. Sometimes it's with both, the ensemble."⁶⁴⁴

The percussion arrangement process occurs in various levels of influence. Brian Mason mentions, "I write the thing that needs to be the main event. I write for that section first, and then I write the accompaniment or the supporting material to that."⁶⁴⁵ This type of process can go back and forth between the various percussion sections and/or the brass. A seemingly important distinction is suggested by Paul Rennick, who "believes percussion arrangers write section features with little to no accompaniment, because depending on the frequencies of additional instruments, the supportive material often overpowers the primary material."⁶⁴⁶ Therefore, arrangers must trust each other in their own creative processes to accomplish the best musical product for the ensembles for which they are write.

Many of the names listed throughout this section are individuals that have gained of their fields. Additionally, composers within the wind band medium had joined corps staffs in the design process. Robert W. Smith, who has written works extensively for wind bands, often took on an arranging role in various corps. The arranging process is muddled by composers creating original works for drum corps ensembles instead of translating the works from other mediums. In 2024, John Mackey will also be joining the regime of respected drum corps creative teams by

⁶⁴⁴ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁴⁵ Quoted in Miller, "Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion," 71.

⁶⁴⁶ Miller, 86.

composing an original work for Carolina Crown.⁶⁴⁷ Though this composition will not be the first of its kind, it will solidify the marching arts activity as an avenue for musical creativity. Additionally, the question will be posed if this will occur more frequently in the future. The arrangers found in DCI are composers, in their own right. Direct transcriptions of the original works are rarely heard in any given show. Ultimately, all musical designers work to provide their own voice through the music they arrange. They also generate linking tissue between most of the musical moments of a show creating more connection, from start to finish. This notion also hints at musical themes and motifs being performed frequently. Drill designer Richard Hinshaw comments on his components and overall production as follows: “There’s not cool drill if you don’t have good music and good design.”⁶⁴⁸ Productions hinge on the music and it is the first step in creating general show concepts throughout the season.

Copyright

In conjunction with musical evolutions comes the legal issues surrounding drum corps and other marching arts activities. Copyright, the set of laws protecting intellectual property and original authorship, affects countless activities in and outside of the marching arts. For DCI, copyright has been at the forefront of numerous discussions. Many pieces performed by drum corps are derived from other genres and often are not intended to be synced with movement or recorded and distributed for profit. For music and sound recording, though, federal copyright

⁶⁴⁷ Carolina Crown, “Carolina Crown to Collaborate with Composer John Mackey,” February 18, 2024. <https://www.carolinacrown.org/news/carolina-crown-to-collaborate-with-composer-john-mackey>.

⁶⁴⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

laws date back to the 1970s, and some state laws were created earlier. Therefore, copyright has always been a factor in DCI.

Though copyright is an ever fluctuating and complicated matter, DCI's bylaws state that they "will be responsible for acquiring and maintaining the necessary licenses for any content provided" when it comes to the reproduction, distribution, and sale of copies.⁶⁴⁹ Simply put, DCI intends to "secure and pay for the licenses necessary for DCI events and Audio/Visual products."⁶⁵⁰ This includes synchronization licenses for music and media. Each corps, though, must obtain rights to arrange music as needed through a representative company. Additionally, corps that wish to sell their own audio and visual products must procure their own licensing in the synchronization category to do so.⁶⁵¹

One distribution issue began in the 2015 season, when DCI did not produce sync licenses for corps that placed outside of finals, or the top twelve. Therefore, the corps had access to edited and unedited footage of their group, as outlined in the bylaws, but the distribution to others was no longer available, including the membership of these corps.⁶⁵² After 2015, the first volume (with the top twelve competitive corps) was the only recording sold publicly on their website.

Because streaming has become a popular way to engage with entertainment sources, 2017 was the last year DCI produced physical DVD sets of its performances. By then, they were

⁶⁴⁹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 31.

⁶⁵⁰ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 7.

⁶⁵¹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 32.

⁶⁵² Drum Corps International Bylaws, 32.

working through the FloSports company to stream performances and content through FloMarching. At present, this streaming service offers DCI, WGI, and BOA events.⁶⁵³

Because DCI's policies outline that the arranging rights fall onto the corps themselves, each year, it sets dates for corps to submit their musical selections and acquire arranging licenses for the works. Traditionally, the company Tresóna has been the most common means of accessing the rights. Looking forward, DCI has encouraged corps to utilize a new company, ClicknClear, to go through a similar process. Sometimes, though, the rights are reserved by the composer themselves, requiring corps to reach out to this individual and/or their team for special permission.⁶⁵⁴

Visual Innovation

Visual changes have become even more commonplace in DCI productions than musical advances. Brass arranger Michael Klesch notes that “now it's very visually driven,” in regard to the programmatic elements of drum corps productions at large.⁶⁵⁵ He comments:

They move a lot more than they ever have. The environmental demands of where people are in the field, that is change. What I do as a player, [is] like, I just don't stand there and play anymore, brass or percussion. That's choreographed. There is all kinds of movement to that, that was never part of it.⁶⁵⁶

Visual elements collaborate with performers, designers, and educators in the modern era of drum corps to produce extravagant productions. Klesch highlights these innovations over that of musical progressions in the activity.

⁶⁵³ FloMarching, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.flomarching.com>.

⁶⁵⁴ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 7.

⁶⁵⁵ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁵⁶ Klesch Interview.

Sward mentions that even prior to the turn of the century “Drill was growing further and further away from the old military definition of marching and maneuvering and was becoming more interpretive of the music.”⁶⁵⁷ Emphasis on “flow and continuity” of movements and “insanely fast-moving drill” styles were often stressed as innovations prior to 2000.⁶⁵⁸ These ideas continued to evolve further towards movement becoming even quicker and transitions between sets lasting only a few counts. Bringing this into the present day, drill movements are often continuous and fast-paced stemming from the innovations occurring prior to 2000, being further revolutionized in an exponential way. More innovations to visual elements have had a great impact as well.

Dance has exponentially increase as part of the visual performance climate. Performers are now regularly asked to incorporate dance into their skill sets. Hinshaw notes that the use of “contemporary movement” is a way that drum corps are proceeding away from the “pure military” roots of the ensemble.⁶⁵⁹ The motivation for new styles of movement stems from other marching arts activities, like WGI, that were adopted into drum corps by Star of Indiana and Santa Clara Vanguard in the 1990s.⁶⁶⁰ In the twenty-first century, performers are regularly called to produce a large magnitude of dance skills. Hinshaw correlates the specialization of other marching arts organizations with a larger conglomeration of ideas on the football field in DCI events, showing DCI’s interconnections with other marching arts fields.⁶⁶¹ Ultimately, the

⁶⁵⁷ Sward, “The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design,” 115.

⁶⁵⁸ Sward, 115, 135.

⁶⁵⁹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶¹ Hinshaw Interview.

contemporary approach to movement is implemented when the corps moves from point to point rather than remaining static on the field.

The most recognizably visual component to productions is the color guard, which has evolved significantly in the twenty-first century. Hinshaw recognizes the skill sets of individuals who drive innovation in this area.⁶⁶² Though they are still utilizing traditional equipment like flags, rifles, and sabres, they are “doing wild stuff with it” and creating a “wow” factor that makes it feel completely new.⁶⁶³

Another integral aspect of visual innovation is what Hinshaw calls “set pieces,” or props. The interactive nature of these pieces changes what drum corps do to be less characteristic of a football field production and more similar to that of a theatrical production with its interconnected elements.⁶⁶⁴ Many of these pieces are quite large—becoming larger by the year—and require extensive setup. The graphics seen on each piece are often very detailed and visually appealing.

Probably the most recent phenomenon is the use of costuming. This was already standard for color guard units but has recently branched into the corps proper. Uniforms are now a more collaborative way to build on the thematic material of the show. Dan Potter’s view of this is two sided. On the one hand, he states, “Visually, as an old visual guy, when you see what a costume like a Bluecoats costume can do visually depending on how they move their bodies, God, I love it.”⁶⁶⁵ But on the other hand, despite the costume innovations, Potter misses the time of

⁶⁶² Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶³ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶⁵ Potter Interview.

traditionally identifiable corps uniforms. Regardless, the new uniform styles have been created enhance each shows and. to be more interactive with the overall product.

Excitement revolving around the yearly presentation of uniforms and other visual components is integral to create anticipation for productions. Though this is the case, it is met with difficulty by corps as consumers. Hinshaw comments:

We're running the companies that make all the uniforms and the vinyls in the [ground]. There's not enough of those people to fulfill all the orders, especially after COVID, we lost a few of the companies. But the actual demand is higher than it was before.⁶⁶⁶

The companies Hinshaw mentions create great products that are difficult to acquire yearly, due to the low number of companies that exist for this purpose and the timelines that were previously established as commonplace for DCI and other marching arts activities.

Hinshaw indicates that the next steps for what is being produced in DCI are a matter of adaptation rather than "pure innovation."⁶⁶⁷ His take on the design process is to "do things that have been done but do them differently."⁶⁶⁸ Older traditional techniques now look different because they can be rearranged or presented differently. They are also perceived in a new way with the use of costuming alterations.

Comparing shows produced in the early 2000s to more recent ones, a viewer can perceive the productions leaning towards the extravagant. This is not based simply on the physical materials (costumes and props), but also on the experience of productions having something visually stimulating in any given moment. No matter the place on the field, some component of the show is progressing in a quick manner. Movement was emphasized in earlier eras of DCI as

⁶⁶⁶ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶⁷ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁶⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

well; Hinshaw says of being a drill writer, “I’m still a believer in some of the military aspects and some of the things that have been done to create excitement through motion.”⁶⁶⁹ This motion, though, has become considerably more involved.

Hinshaw believes his job is to be mostly engaging with the staging of performers. “The main thing, which is even more important, is staging the music. It’s paramount,” and he believes that can often be ignored.⁶⁷⁰ His belief supports the notion of a cohesive package, as described further in the following section.

General Effect

Overall, the progression of rules has made all components of show design evolve. At present, a holistic approach to designing is desired, as indicated by the point allotment for certain subsections. The general effect category accounts for 40% of the total score.⁶⁷¹ Hinshaw states “general effect is all about having good ideas that work regardless of what the trumpets are playing or what the flags are spinning.”⁶⁷² Therefore, more corps are designing for the effectiveness of a cohesive show that is also engaging for all involved.

Ultimately, Sward notes that corps were thinking of the effectiveness of their productions as it relates to their audience around the 1980s.⁶⁷³ She stated that they wanted to “incorporate more subtle forms of audience response into their show[s]” which created “anticipation” and

⁶⁶⁹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷¹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷² Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷³ Sward, “The Evolution of Musical and Visual Design,” 135.

further “appreciation” for the shows.⁶⁷⁴ Often general effect is built upon to create and release tension within a production, a reaction that is sought after and continues to drive the DCI community at large. In relation to the shows performed in 2001, Sward mentions that, “It seems like many of today’s moments are swift, sudden expressions that can still hit you like a ton of bricks...” ultimately, “allow[ing] the anticipation to build to a climax, creating an incredible rush...” becomes integral in terms of the general effectiveness of shows.⁶⁷⁵ Overall, fans want to experience shows that impact them by “get[ting] goose bumps and elevated blood pressure so they’ll stand up and cheer... Most fans want to experience a common type of emotional response to all corps performances, excitement.”⁶⁷⁶ This constitutes general effect.

Hinshaw firmly believes that corps should not “sacrifice accessibility for artistry.”⁶⁷⁷ He contends that the creative and artistic side of show design is how corps engage their audience through being “thought-provoking and interesting and different.”⁶⁷⁸ The interconnected layers of participants affect the design process, including designers, members, and even the audience. Potter highlights that successful corps engage the crowd. He says, “You look back at the biggest moments in drum corps and there are definitely moments when the crowd was involved,” while also mentioning Phantom Regiment’s 2008 show, *Spartacus*.⁶⁷⁹ Designers work to give their membership moments of effect that bring large numbers of spectators to their feet, serving

⁶⁷⁴ Sward, 135.

⁶⁷⁵ Sward, 136.

⁶⁷⁶ Sward, 146.

⁶⁷⁷ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁷⁹ Potter Interview.

multiple purposes. Designers want to give the students a crowd response and the crowd an engaging experience with the art.⁶⁸⁰ The outcome of these two components aligning is successful scoring in the effect captions.⁶⁸¹ More importantly, designers look to make people “emotional” and have them “moved by something in the show.”⁶⁸²

Klesch both echoes and contradicts the above notion with his explanation of Carolina Crown’s vision. He says, “Jim Coates’s vision [is] that he wanted to be a fan favorite. Whatever we did, we wanted people to get it, and not to be scratching their heads.”⁶⁸³ Ultimately, corps can take varying stances towards innovation, creativity, and their relationship to the general effect category in scoring and audience engagement.

General effect is also indicative of the way staff members conceptualize design as a whole. Klesch states, “Now it’s like short attention span theater. You got a minute of this, and then you’re doing something that’s in no relation to that, and then it’s over here.”⁶⁸⁴ Short fragments make their way into the entirety of the story arc and help tie bigger pieces of the show together in a different way than earlier generations of drum corps.

Notable Shows

Competition drives the design of shows. This section outlines several post-2000 DCI shows that are considered innovative from a design perspective. Not all these shows were DCI

⁶⁸⁰ Potter Interview.

⁶⁸¹ Potter Interview.

⁶⁸² Klesch Interview.

⁶⁸³ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁸⁴ Klesch Interview.

champions, but their contributions are significant regardless. Additionally, not every show is examined in detail in this document, and text cannot do justice to a live or recorded viewing of the shows. Becoming a fan that regularly watches DCI events is the best way to keep up with the most recent trends and formulate opinions about the continued artistic merit of the events. Much of the following discussion is guided by the interviews with designers Michael Klesch and Richard Hinshaw.

2000-2006

Throughout the early 2000s, the reign of the Cavaliers kingdom was strong. This group took a piece of the championship title in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2006. Notably, winners often exemplified innovation and highly influenced design elements that other corps would come to incorporate to achieve their own competitive successes. Therefore, the Cavaliers' productions carry weight in discussing the period's innovation.

When asked about pinnacle shows or corps from various time periods, both Klesch and Hinshaw mentioned the Cavaliers as the major corps of this period. Klesch said, "That's where I think that one of the big shifts visually came. They could have played just about anything, but they were visually so fresh and so different back then that I think that was a big change in the activity."⁶⁸⁵ Furthermore, Hinshaw explains the period's visual innovations: "I think that that was a time where what Michael was doing with the software and the ability to create a set every two counts, and the way he used that to sequence ideas around the field, was revolutionary at the time."⁶⁸⁶ The software Hinshaw alludes to is the drill notation software Pyware. These

⁶⁸⁵ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁸⁶ Hinshaw Interview.

innovations are noted in the Cavaliers' productions *Four Corners* (2001) and *Spin Cycle* (2003), even though they were not a crowned champion in that season.⁶⁸⁷ The show's two-count sets and subsets create a fast velocity of motion that is visually appealing, and the motion between sets creates energy more than the shapes themselves. Often, the moves created additional demand for musical difficulties as well.

At times, the Cavaliers' visual programs took precedence over their musical elements in some of the design. Around the third minute of their 2006 show, *The Machine*, the motion created through each performer's drill directly reflected the musical moment that was in the front ensemble. It created a "winding up" effect that was perfectly matched musically and visually. The cohesion of the group's musical and visual elements here added to the overall effectiveness, or general effect caption.

One further shift that took place with the Cavaliers during this time is the use of characterization. This was not brand new to drum corps but was taken to a new level in their 2006 production: from beginning to end, performers in each section embodied robotic movements. Extensively choreographed moments are present throughout the *Four Corners* introduction as well.

20007-2009

There is one show from the second half of the 2000s most drum corps fans discuss or idealize more than others: the 2008 gold medal production by Phantom Regiment, *Spartacus*, which had many different facets that contributed to its overall success. The production had always been a top contender for the championship title, but had not officially scored highest until the final night of competition, making their win that much more exciting to the performers and

⁶⁸⁷ Hinshaw Interview.

spectators alike. Throughout DCI championship weekend, the corps inched their way closer and closer to success by finishing third on the first night of competition, then second on the penultimate night, and finally beating their competition, the Blue Devils, by a narrow margin of .05 to conclude the 2008 competitive season.

A component of Phantom Regiment's success was the intensification of storyline in their performance. An iconic moment in this show was its closing selection, where the corps staged the death of their head drum major on the football field. This type of drama enhanced the storyline of future shows and became a standard for portrayal of theme.

Fan engagement with this production was unparalleled. As a viewer of this show, Klesch thought that the overall impact of *Spartacus* was "from an emotional/audience connection standpoint," and he thought, "that was big."⁶⁸⁸ He personally watched the audience and their reaction on finals night from the back sideline in Bloomington, Indiana, and recognized that the pieces had come together perfectly to "nail" this type of response.⁶⁸⁹

By the time, the sound of Phantom Regiment, and that of other corps, had evolved into something more sonically similar to a concert ensemble. This is partially due to the adoption of three-valve Bb brass instruments. The players approached these instruments with the technique and finesse of orchestral performers. Phantom also experimented with various facings for their ensemble throughout the show to promote balance or different sonic concepts suited to larger stadiums. The notion connected to the practices of another influential corps in this time period, Carolina Crown. Klesch feels the 2009 Crown was integral for drum corps and the overall sound concept in terms of brass because it was when they started to become frequent winners of the Jim

⁶⁸⁸ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁸⁹ Klesch Interview.

Ott Award for best brass performance.⁶⁹⁰ This put the ensemble at the forefront of brass development and made them something other corps attempted to emulate. Additionally, it assisted in making this corps a destination for many musicians who aspired to perform on brass instruments at their higher level.

Though 2008 was a pinnacle year for Phantom Regiment, Hinshaw felt another show contradicted their success by also being extremely notable and innovative; this was the runner-up from that season, the Blue Devils.⁶⁹¹ As mentioned above, the Blue Devils only lost by five hundredths of a point in 2008. To Hinshaw, “they did such a great job of zigging when everyone else was zagging and we all bought it.”⁶⁹² This corps has often been perceived as having a reputation that pushed beyond traditional expectations; Hinshaw says that “from a design standpoint, that was where they really started taking risks.”⁶⁹³ He continues by noting the use of poles as a distinctive choreographed prop, and the corps’ character use was integral to the activity’s scene.⁶⁹⁴ In other competitive seasons the Blue Devils had mostly won based on their cleanliness, but the 2008 season “sticks out” to Hinshaw as the beginning of what the corps still does on an innovative playing field.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁰ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁹¹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁹² Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁹³ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁹⁴ Hinshaw Interview.

⁶⁹⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

2010-2016

The next era brought forth a few more extravagant changes, the first of which is the use of props and set pieces as part of the overall visual design. The use of props began to be paramount early in the decade with another Blue Devils production, *Through a Glass Darkly* (2010). Props make corps look larger and provide more opportunities for the interaction of performers. In the case of the Blue Devils' 2010 show, the props were used to alter the perception of the field, hide members, and/or enhance the thematic storyline. These props were mirrors that were mobile and moved throughout the performance to create variation to the audience's perception.

Another performance of high merit in this era was Carolina Crown in 2013. At this time, DCI had not established a new corps as a champion since before 2000.⁶⁹⁶ Klesch described elements of his involvement in this show that could be construed as novel. For him, "the whole point of that was how can we inject romance into this storyline," while including both known and unknown musical inspirations.⁶⁹⁷ Dialogue was added from the original poetic prose from Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* that was integral to the story; the production began a trend of voice in drum corps in conjunction with the other amplified events, which led to the overall soundscape becoming a marriage of acoustic and electronic.⁶⁹⁸ Narration became standard practice to help propel shows forward and enhance the understanding of the musical and visual productions. Another component of this show that encouraged change was their uniform.⁶⁹⁹ It

⁶⁹⁶ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁹⁷ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁹⁸ Klesch Interview.

⁶⁹⁹ Klesch Interview.

began to move corps towards no longer being identified by what they wore, but fitting their attire into their show.

Crown was not the only corps to explore uniforms in the early 2010s. In fact, the Cadets produced a stimulating new type of uniform use in *Between Angels and Demons* (2011).

Throughout this production, color was manifested differently, with a color scheme for the two dichotomies of the ensemble: the angelic side was represented in white, and the demonic side wore red. The costuming occurred within the traditional uniform the Cadets had worn for decades, but it stimulated more uniform changes like Carolina Crown's, as mentioned above, and which would be pushed further by the Bluecoats in 2016 by putting the corps proper in color guard-like costumes.

Hinshaw draws heavily on the Blue Devils' 2015 show as being integral to this time. This show, *Ink*, "made us think of Broadway," proving the theatrical nature of the activity and where it had ended up.⁷⁰⁰ Hinshaw believes that it was more accessible in terms of creativity and more emotional.⁷⁰¹ He describes the production as a "tearjerker."⁷⁰² Ultimately, they cast one member throughout final competitive shows as a child to produce the innocence of the story.

In the 2015 season, a popular show for fans was the Bluecoats' *Kinetic Noise*, production that truly leaned into sound design. Previously, the use of electronics allowed the front ensemble to be heard without the use of hard mallets, which mellowed out their sound. Now, electronics were being utilized to timbrally alter the ensemble. The 2015 production had speaker stacks congregated in various locations on the field to produce samples and loops first performed by

⁷⁰⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

⁷⁰¹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁷⁰² Hinshaw Interview.

ensemble members and brought into the electronics. Effects were added to some of the acoustical components of the performance.

This effect was not new for the Bluecoats. In fact, it stemmed from its work with *Tilt* the previous year. This show was not only important to the electro-acoustical musical soundscape but also helped the group gain audience popularity. In terms of field orientation, they framed the field asymmetrically to reflect the show title and provided movements that aligned with this notion as well. This show began a trend of thematic material in drum corps that did not necessarily resemble a story, but rather a thought. Ultimately, the Bluecoats reached a new high point in 2016 when they, too, entered into the new status of DCI champion with their show *Down Side Up*. What is most notable in the 2016 season for the Bluecoats, thought, was their uniform. Seen below in figure 7, the corps proper and color guard both were wearing costumes instead of traditional attire.



Figure 8: Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps, “*Down Side Up Uniform*,” 2016 (accessed electronically). *Permission granted by Mike Scott.*

Shifting all members of the corps to have costumes took away a singular corps identity but opened further opportunity for design creativity within DCI. The materials used were also more breathable making the change more integral to the modern performance sphere. This innovation will be noted in the next section as some of the more fully “produced” components of the activity.

2017-2023

In recent years, drum corps have pursued the notion of modifications to what was done earlier in the century. For example, the 2018 Santa Clara Vanguard’s production of *Babylon* made use of a massive prop stage that could be moved to various locations and create several

varied visual effects.⁷⁰³ Klesch believes that, “again, I think another thing of the visual [was] how that dominated. What Michael Gaines was able to do with that kind of dominated the activity.”⁷⁰⁴ It should be noted that Michael Gaines worked on the visually captivating shows from the early 2000s of the Cavaliers as well.

Richard Hinshaw sees the Bluecoats as continuing to be the largest driver for innovation through the most recent years. He views this as having started in 2016 with their stark change to the use of costumes instead of traditional uniforms, which shocked the audience from night one of competition which is seen above in figure 7.⁷⁰⁵ Their subsequent shows’ production value and musical moments have also “take[n] risks,” which have created esteem for them.⁷⁰⁶ Hinshaw also notes that “they are also really good at keeping secrets and that has been really good for them,” in terms of adding the appeal of the unexpected to what they do.⁷⁰⁷

Though props had been in use throughout a majority of the 21st century, part of the Bluecoats appeals was the magnitude of props, or set pieces, as Hinshaw refers to these. Figure 8 features two images that show a massive stage unit utilized by the Bluecoats to alter the field.

⁷⁰³ Klesch Interview.

⁷⁰⁴ Klesch Interview.

⁷⁰⁵ Hinshaw Interview.

⁷⁰⁶ Hinshaw Interview.

⁷⁰⁷ Hinshaw Interview.

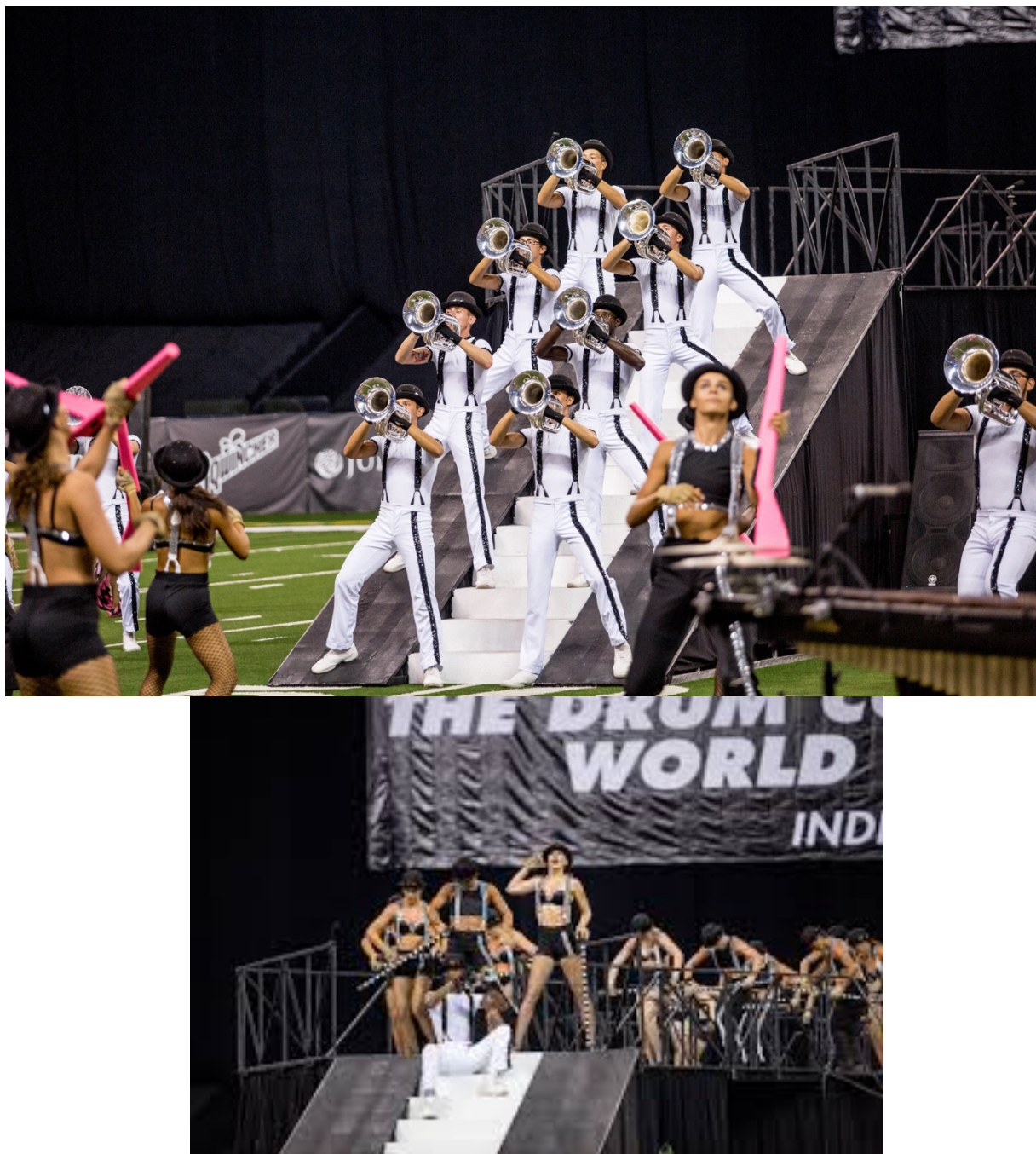


Figure 9: Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps, “Jagged Line Prop,” 2017 (accessed electronically).
Permission granted by Mike Scott.

In the use of this prop, the Bluecoats were able to add an additional access to the visual concept on the field by adding height to performers. Additionally, the stage acted as a means to hide members and allow them to reveal performers again, as a way to draw the audience’s eye

towards important moments both musically and visually. Other corps have used a variety of different props to accomplish similar effects throughout time. Since the use of this stage in 2017, props have trended towards matching the large scale that this provided for the corps. Each prop, though, is meant to be a component of the show's thematic material and aid to enhance the effect of the corps' show.

Overview

Two interviewees, Klesch and Hinshaw, highly commended innovation in Blue Devils shows, which they considered to be top tier in the twenty-first century. Klesch states:

They've been so dominating in what they do anymore. It's partly the performers. I think they perform better than anybody. And when I say that, I don't mean technically. I mean, you could follow any kid on the field for the entire show and they look like a performer the entire show. They don't break character. They don't look like they're ever under duress. They just, they do that part of it so well that – and this is not a knock on the Blue Devils, but you don't sometimes pay attention to the rest of the stuff. But it's that stuff, and how it affects the viewers and the adjudicators as well.⁷⁰⁸

Overall, the Blue Devils have been highly influential for drum corps.

Another shift in recent DCI productions is the utilization of alternative scoring. Many shows have more percussively driven moments that are integral to their musical style and the development of pacing within shows. Often front ensembles carry melodic motifs with brass interjections and vice versa. The brass retains the majority of the melodic content, but not for the entire show any longer.

With changes in scoring also came a shift to more through-composed music. Therefore, the music rarely comes to a complete stop from the beginning to the end of the show and instead continuously engages members and audiences alike. Often, there are applause points factored in to allow for reaction, but they are metered and finite.

⁷⁰⁸ Klesch Interview.

Designers have often noted that they are not writing to specific rules outlined by DCI. Instead, they offer suggestions to the rules congresses to allow them to incorporate the creative means they desire to use. Hinshaw mentions, “It’s more about the rules are the rules of what it takes to achieve the skill sets to score the points.”⁷⁰⁹ Limitations have been included which specify what not to include in the field as well as time guidelines for performances.

Like the notion of writing to the rules, judges in the activity were once allowed to move all over the field to adjudicate the content of the performer. Recently, though, their movement has been more limited. Klesch describes that “getting the judges off the field has changed what they do.”⁷¹⁰ The change has allowed more expansive drill, movement, and tight pass-throughs. It has also altered how certain sections are evaluated, and it requires a more conscious effort in regard to the staging needs of the ensemble to allow judges to experience the most important moments in a show.

Although complex, design is still an organic and creative process. Regulatory aspects of performance criteria are not always at the forefront of a designer’s thought process. Michael Klesch states, “I think if you’re undeniably great at what you do and you’re doing things of substance, then it should be able to be looked at and be rewarded.”⁷¹¹ All successes, though, are subjective in the drum corps community and are heavily dependent upon what others value.⁷¹²

New and innovative techniques often are a major catalyst for change in the drum corps activity. In spite of occasional pushback, drum corps has taken creative directions and will

⁷⁰⁹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁷¹⁰ Klesch Interview.

⁷¹¹ Klesch Interview.

⁷¹² Klesch Interview.

continue to do so after 2023. Corps have the freedom to push creative boundaries due to DCI's inception and its continued commitment to rule congresses allowing for alteration and growth regardless of the potential popular appeal. From a design perspective, there is no way to predict what the future might hold as there are limitless possibilities.

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP LIFE

What is drum corps without the performance? And what's more, who are the individuals tasked with these performances – the membership? Dr. Jay Kennedy stated in his DCI Hall of Fame induction speech, “Drum corps to me, is above all, about the student performer experience.”⁷¹³ The experiences each corps and DCI are able to provide for students is of the utmost importance to the continuation and success of drum corps.

Carman Cluna referred to the notion of the membership experience prior to 2000, describing her experience as a “way of life.”⁷¹⁴ Though hard work and long hours were put into rehearsals, the reward of the experience was rooted in the memories and friendships made along the way. Pride was also a large factor in the drum corps life. In fact, it was noted that, paralleling other militaristic traditions, male members of corps often wore their uniforms to special events like balls, church services, funerals, and their weddings, and were even buried in them.⁷¹⁵ Although special uniformed events are no longer commonplace, the pride members take in their experience still rings true today. It is at the forefront of the minds of many prominent figures in the community.

The longevity and advancement of drum corps rests on corps championing the member experience and as a top priority, as Vicki McFarlane of the Colts Youth Organization discussed. This chapter is dedicated to the experience of members participating in DCI, which is essential

⁷¹³ Drum Corps International, “Jay Kennedy – DCI Hall of Fame,” January 26, 2008, accessed January 7, 2024, https://www.dci.org/static/jay_kennedy.

⁷¹⁴ Cluna, “The Movement Starts to Grow in the 1950s,” 308.

⁷¹⁵ Da Silva, “Uniforms and Colors,” 46.

for understanding the organization at large. This chapter discusses such topics as life in a drum corps, recruitment, personal costs, safety, and pedagogy.

Daily Life

Daily life in drum corps can be viewed as a life-changing experience for those involved.

Dan Potter reflects on his experiences with corps members by stating:

I've literally been there when a parent has seen their kid for the first time in almost two months. Like in the middle of July, and have literally not recognized their own child. So that [I mean] speaks to drum corps being an activity that changes you mentally and physically faster than anything I've ever seen.... That says something about how hard you work.⁷¹⁶

The activity is ultimately designed for both rapid learning and rapid results. Its biggest alteration is often one of mindset: Potter notes, “That performance mindset, that way of locking in and being in the flow, becomes muscle memory,” with the work ethic used in daily life of drum corps being able to flow back into their daily life at home as well and provide the ability to be high achieving individuals.⁷¹⁷ Students in the activity learn to develop skills needed to live as a fully-fledged adult in society at large. Potter continues by stating that society is “better at raising good humans” that become part of DCI.⁷¹⁸

Beginning in 2006, DCI began to regularly ask the members in corps to participate in surveys that helped DCI know more about their constituents and the survey has continued through today. Membership reports on their personal demographics as well as potential products that they utilize frequently, like social media/internet usage, print media use, and even musical

⁷¹⁶ Dan Potter (DCI Announcer) in discussion with the author, January 29, 2024.

⁷¹⁷ Potter Interview.

⁷¹⁸ Potter Interview.

instrument products. In 2012, DCI's surveys began asking about participants' overall experience. Approximately 82% of respondents expressed that they agreed or strongly agreed that their experience was excellent, and even more would recommend their experience to others.⁷¹⁹ Though this is the case, it is important to mention that not all individuals share these feelings towards the activity. Below, I will outline a few stories shared in my own survey related to the positive nature of the activity.

One of the most common themes among members is the relationships built over time. One person responded, "[I] met some amazing people, many of which I'm still in contact with 20+ years later,"⁷²⁰ highlighting how influential these relationships can be. Other members reflected on the educational experience they received. One stated:

My summer marching corps was one of the most educational experiences I ever experienced through college. As an instrumental music education major, most colleges really fail at preparing you for teaching a competitive marching band. So much of my success as a band director can be directly linked to my time in corps.⁷²¹

Both the writer and other survey members shared a recollection of learning self-discipline and perseverance throughout a summer of drum corps.

The feelings surrounding the experience of performing was another recurring theme, often involving crowd involvement. For example, one member stated, "One of my proudest memories was when we released the last note of the show finals night and the amount of

⁷¹⁹ Steve Auditore, *2012 Project Persona* (July 2012), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷²⁰ Kara Metzger, *History of DCI 2000-2023, Participant Survey* (March 2024), distributed by Kara Metzger.

⁷²¹ Metzger.

emotions that flooded out was indescribable.”⁷²² Many other stories relate to the emotions that people felt at a heightened level throughout their performances, rehearsals, or odd moments on tour.

Overall, though, one statement mentioned by a former member often rings true for corps participation at large. Member testimonials state that participating in drum corps is “life changing to say the least.”⁷²³ Many of the stories shared throughout my survey were specific to moments in the individual’s minds that became core memories altering their experiences to become truly life-long in nature. Ultimately, the respondents often would share very detailed memories that exhibited core memories for their overall life experiences.

In addition to these stories, the survey I conducted provided relevant data surrounding winter commitments and daily life on tour. Throughout the full timeline (2000-2023), most respondents reported some sort of monthly camp requirement. Differences were often found in the color guard section, as they were more heavily involved in winter guard programs. Additional responsibilities were added to pre-season work after 2010 but were more frequently reported after 2015. These responsibilities were considered assignments to help the student’s progression towards learning their show and were mostly conducted on virtual platforms. Many camps began in November prior to the anticipated marching season. The early events were mostly a first audition or call-back audition; from there, the focus shifted to learning and rehearsing for the show. One person responded that these events “felt serious and professional.”⁷²⁴

⁷²² Metzger.

⁷²³ Metzger.

⁷²⁴ Metzger.

The activities of each day during tour were essentially prescribed for members. One response described most days as: “Rehearse, eat, rehearse, eat, rehearse, and eat.”⁷²⁵ This description is representative of everyday corps life. Frequently, mealtimes were described as being an hour in length, and there would be three blocks of rehearsal time daily. Different sections had various activities throughout rehearsal segments, but visual/drill setting, music, and full ensemble work were typically accomplished. Often, physical training and/or stretching were daily components. Rehearsal chunks were described as lasting between three and five hours each, for a total of approximately eight to twelve hours. People described these days as “tense, exhausting, and fast paced.”⁷²⁶ For the most part, the days were described consistently throughout the 2000s. Some Open Class participants reported part-time corps membership, creating some variation to the schedule noted above.

For show days, there was often a truncated version of a regular rehearsal day. Prior to shows, members would engage in what was called “EPL” or “Eat, Pack, Load,” which was reported to last from one and a half to two hours. During this time, the corps would get ready to leave their rehearsal site, often not to return. Since corps travel in the evening, often after their shows, survey participants often commented on the fact that they received “floor time,” or sleeping on a gym floor, after their bus travels. Such days were described by some as “stressful,” as much of the non-rehearsal time was still spent moving quickly to accomplish various vital tasks, like crews (jobs or extra responsibilities assigned to each student on tour), show hair/costuming, packing, and other pre-show rituals. Though many participants responded that they engaged in crews, not all members had extra responsibilities. Prominent crew tasks reported

⁷²⁵ Metzger.

⁷²⁶ Metzger.

by many people included field lining, loading (bus, food truck, props, etc.) scaffolding assembly/disassembly, cleaning (bathrooms, sleeping areas, hallways, etc.), carrying rehearsal supplies or props, and other needs.⁷²⁷

When asked about what has changed over their years marching, many responses stated they only marched a single season. Others mentioned such elements as uniforms, competition levels in different corps, electronics/amplification, instrumentation, increase in membership numbers, cost, technology (cell phone usage), and increased membership abilities. Another thing that was celebrated was personal growth, like confidence and self-esteem.⁷²⁸ In addition, throughout these years, the show progressions changed from full-corps retreats at each show, to drum-major-only retreats, to only score announcements. Tours developed from the regional competition circuit to a more complete coverage of the country as DCI merged with the regional circuits (see chapter 5).⁷²⁹

Additionally, students could see the struggles of DCI. One person stated, “I could tell that DCI was shrinking over the five years I marched. There were less corps each year that made the trip to finals to compete, and we always lost at least one corps that went inactive or folded entirely every year.”⁷³⁰ That being said, many highlighted improvements of corps in terms of awareness, tolerance, and inclusivity, which were heightened by the code of conduct. Ultimately, performers were more able to see significant change due to corps handling any incident that may arise in an efficient and proper manner. Protection of minors and safety was highly noted by all,

⁷²⁷ Metzger.

⁷²⁸ Metzger.

⁷²⁹ Metzger.

⁷³⁰ Metzger.

not just DCI staff. Not only this, but some also mentioned that general daily life in DCI has become “much more laid back and focused on student recovery than over killing the rehearsing.”⁷³¹

The act of touring, or moving between locations, is described by Tim Hinton, founder of Marching Arts Education. He created a podcast (*Marching Roundtable*) that discusses important information regarding various components of marching arts, including how corps travel. Drivers essentially drive all night and sleep all day for the safety of the corps. Moving an ensemble from place to place is a huge operation. Often there are three member buses, one or more buses for staff and volunteers, an equipment truck, a prop truck, a food truck, and other small vehicles operating as part of a convoy.⁷³²

Vicki McFarlane, Director of the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps, identifies “professionalism” as one of the pivotal features of DCI at present.⁷³³ In order to achieve a professional level, the age of performers is trending towards older students. Additionally, the “skill set increase” has grown exponentially, which has assisted in the way of the innovations to show design.⁷³⁴

McFarlane outlines some of these skill increases in her interview. She states, “In 2001, and even 2005, if you could throw a 5 on a weapon, you were in the weapons line. Now, if you

⁷³¹ Metzger.

⁷³² Tim Hinton (interviewee), Mykah Burroughs, Melissa Burroughs, Brian Creswell (interviewers), Episode 1182: Getting Crown Down the Road, *Marching Arts Roundtable*, podcast audio, <https://marchingartseducation.com/1182-getting-crown-down-the-road/>.

⁷³³ Vicki McFarlane (Colts Corps Director) Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷³⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

can't throw a 5, you're not considered for the weapons line.”⁷³⁵ The activity now draws students with more experience than in prior generations.⁷³⁶ For most, private instruction was instrumental to getting them into the activity. In fact, when the Colts leadership was polled, “every single one of them had had private lessons of some sort.”⁷³⁷

Outside of expanded skill sets, McFarlane notes her transition into the World Class director scene as being a shift in perspective. Tradition is often highly regarded in the drum corps community, but some traditions need to be altered as time goes on. She mentions that “sometimes some of those traditions, or what people might call tradition, were really more personally based and not organizationally based,” and therefore, the culture within corps has often been addressed over the past ten years to allow for an organizational strengthening.⁷³⁸ This, in turn, helped the Colts specifically enhance themselves competitively as well.⁷³⁹ Overall, she mentions a solid foundation being necessary for success in the activity.⁷⁴⁰

Membership Statistics

Over time, DCI began tracking various trends related to its activities. Steve Auditore, former DCI board member, volunteered his time to compile and break down many of these statistics. The study, created in 2006, was originally called *Project Persona*. The intentions of the

⁷³⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷³⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷³⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷³⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷³⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷⁴⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

project were to increase knowledge for DCI and its corps regarding their target audiences. The data it discusses comes from the surveys conducted in all years of DCI beginning in 2006 except, 2009, 2020 (COVID, research not conducted), and 2021. The survey questions were sometimes altered year to year, reporting general demographics in membership. Additionally, the survey asked questions regarding the student's uses of certain products as part of the activity. The data was collected from willing participants in that season's current membership. It does not include all membership for any given year, and often reports information from anywhere from 25% to 60% of any given corps participants.⁷⁴¹ Some years, corps did not participate at all. In fact, many corps opted out of participation early in the data collection process. In 2008, these surveys were opened to more participants and included reports from Open Class participants. The results were shared in separate reporting categories. Information outlined here provides only the findings from the World Class participants.

A series of charts that follows provide a clearer picture of how the statistical data to related to the timeline of this study. Some data points remain stable, while others reveal change. An example of this is Table 3, which indicates the average age of DCI participants throughout several consecutive seasons.

Table 3: Average Age of Participants

2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
19.4	18.5	18.4	19.4	19.4	19.1	19.4	19.3	19.5	19.3	19.3	19.3	19.5

Source: Steve Auditore, 2006-2019 Project Persona, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁴¹ Steve Auditore, *Project Persona* (2006-2019), distributed by Drum Corps International.

Age of the participants is an important number to note due to the fact that student age varies between sixteen and twenty-one years of age. Steve Auditore's 2010 "Persona Factoids" mentions that data had been collected for each individual corps. Older average ages tended to correlate with more competitive success. In fact, from 2006 to 2010, the oldest corps won each year except in 2008.⁷⁴² Higher age of membership in a specific corps often correlates to that corps placing higher competitively; a statistic that was expressed past the 201 season as well. Regardless, the average age of participation in drum corps has not fluctuated much over the timeframe presented in this project.

Table 4 shows the breakdown of participants' gender identification from 2006-2019. The final reports do not indicate the percentage of students that identify as gender nonconforming at present.

⁷⁴² Steve Auditore, *2010 Project Persona* (2010), distributed by Drum Corps International.

Table 4: Gender Identification

Year	Male	Female
2006	69%	31%
2007	71%	29%
2008	71%	29%
2010	68%	32%
2011	64%	35%
2012	70%	30%
2013	67%	33%
2014	68%	32%
2015	68%	32%
2016	67%	33%
2017	66%	34%
2018	70%	30%
2019	68%	32%

Source: Steve Auditore, 2006-2019 Project Persona, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

The percentages demonstrate the predominance of male participation in corps. Figures for individual sections are not reported in the chart above; however, each year, the largest percentage of female participation is seen in the color guard, while sections with larger equipment tend to be male dominated. The 2019 survey showed there were slightly more women participating in percussion and brass instruments than previous years.⁷⁴³

The slight increase in women was around this time as the inception of INStep, meaning there was more data collected around staff positions as well. Males often reported a higher

⁷⁴³ Steve Auditore, *2019 Project Persona* (September 2019), distributed by Drum Corps International.

likelihood of continuing as a staff member after being a member of a corps, and the representation of staff paralleled that of each caption's participants (brass, percussion, color guard) membership in many respects.⁷⁴⁴ Because of membership safety procedures that paralleled INStep, 2019 also asked respondents to report how aware they are of their corps policies.

Ethnicity is commonly reported in other surveys to help map diversity and changes over time. Table 5 indicates the ethnicity reported by survey respondents throughout the years of Auditore's surveys.

⁷⁴⁴ Auditore, *2019 Project Persona*.

Table 5: Ethnicity Reporting

Year	White	African-American	Asian	Hispanic/Latino	Multi-racial	No Response	White (Not North Am)
2007	79%	3%	3%	9%	3%	1%	Not Asked
2008	76%	2%	5%	10%	3%	2%	Not Asked
2011	75%	2%	5%	9%	4%	1%	Not Asked
2012	71%	2%	6%	12%	4%	-	4%
2013	68%	2%	6%	11%	5%		7%
2014	63%	3%	6%	12%	5%		9%
2015	63%	4%	6%	11%	4%	1%	10%
2016	58%	3%	5%	11%	5%	1%	12%
2017	68%	2%	3%	13%	3%	1%	2%
2018	67%	2%	3%	12%	3%		2%
2019	67%	1%	4%	12%	3%	1%	2%
2022	60%	3%	8%	15%	6%	1%	5%

Source: Steve Auditore, 2006-2019 Project Persona, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

The statistics for race show the steady reporting of performers identifying as white, with Hispanic and Latino respondents reported at the second highest rate annually. When added, the non-North American category was able to show the significance of students traveling from overseas to participate in DCI.

The 2013 survey added questions about the home states of participants. Overwhelmingly, California, Texas, and Florida recorded the highest numbers of total members with 231, 226, and 119 respectively.⁷⁴⁵ Though the exact numbers changed yearly, these three states remain hubs for

⁷⁴⁵ Steve Auditore, *2013 Project Persona* (September 2013), distributed by Drum Corps International.

producing membership in corps. Other significant contributors include many states in the Midwest, East, and Pacific Northwest, according to the 2014 survey.⁷⁴⁶ The additions from the Pacific Northwest can be understood considering the development of some newer corps in this area, such as the Seattle Cascades and Oregon Crusaders. However, Texas has become a major hub for producing talented members, often contributing over 20% of corps members.⁷⁴⁷ Outside of the United States, there are often participants from around the world who join DCI corps. Countries including Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Mexico, Germany, France, and Taiwan were all reported to have representation in the 2018 season.⁷⁴⁸

Though not always gathered using the same methods, Auditore accounted for familial demographic information in his surveys. For the years 2006 to 2011, information was provided regarding parental marital status, parental education, potential payment sources, and familial previous experience with DCI. Table 6 outlines some of these key details.

⁷⁴⁶ Steve Auditore, *2014 Project Persona* (September 2014), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁴⁷ Steve Auditore, *2018-2019 Project Persona* (September 2018-September 2019), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁴⁸ Steve Auditore, *2018 Project Persona* (September 2018), distributed by Drum Corps International.

Table 6: Household Factors

Year	Marital Status	Parental Education Level	Payment for Drum Corps	Previous Marching Experience in Family
2006	70% Married	68% College Graduate or Higher	42% Family Support 29% Work	70% None
2007	72% Married	67% College Graduate or Higher	81% Family Support 49% Work	70% None
2008	71% Married	67% College Graduate or Higher	81% Family Support 53% Work	68% None
2011	70% Married	69% College Graduate or Higher	82% Family Support 43% Work 43% Sponsorships	82% None

Source: Steve Auditore, *2006-2011 Project Persona*, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

Table 6 shows that many students identify in categories that are indicators of affluent lifestyles with high percentages of parental education and strong familial units. These families are often supporting their students financially to pursue drum corps in some way. Familial participation in drum corps is not traditionally an indicator of joining. Therefore, most students did not report high levels of prior marching experience from their relatives in DCI, which shows a high level of interest in drum corps for participants to leave their homes for great lengths of time, choosing to pay high prices to participate. These families must put their personal faith in DCI and the perceived benefits that performers gain from yearly participation. By 2017, 87% of

individuals reported no familial ties to the organization.⁷⁴⁹ This further increased from what is indicated in table 6.⁷⁵⁰

The findings regarding family structure and status showed that students often came from households with strong familial units that were highly educated and affluent. The average household income was reported in the 2015 survey overview as \$68,701, which was above the national average at that time as mentioned by Auditore.⁷⁵¹ In 2016, the median (not average) income rose to \$71,507.⁷⁵² Auditore notes in his 2017 survey results that family support remains a primary means of funding the drum corps experience, many students work to assist with this, and those using student loans are a small portion of the community.⁷⁵³ Though the overall average income stayed somewhat stagnant, 2019 revealed that 24% of families in the activity earned \$75,000-\$99,999.⁷⁵⁴

Table 7 shows the number of seasons people report participating in DCI. First year membership consistently represents the largest number of students. Year two to three retain a similar number of students. Fourth year members quickly begin to drop off, and fifth year even more so. Past the fourth and fifth years of a member's career, it is less frequent for them to

⁷⁴⁹ Steve Auditore, *2017 Project Persona*, (2017), Distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁵⁰ Auditore, *2017 Project Persona*.

⁷⁵¹ Steve Auditore, *2015 Project Persona* (July 2015), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁵² Steve Auditore, *2016 Project Persona* (September 2016), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁵³ Steve Auditore, *2017 Project Persona* (2017), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁵⁴ Auditore, *2019 Project Persona*.

participate. A few factors for this could be age of introduction to the activity. Often, high school is when students first participate in marching bands and hear about other marching arts activities. Therefore, if they learn about DCI and begin participation as a junior or senior, they may only have five years of participation eligibility. Additionally, cost is likely a factor prohibiting continued participation. Overall, Table 7 shows the number of seasons of drum corps involvement students report.

Table 7: Number of Seasons Participated

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
2006	32%	25%	18%	14%	6%	3%	1%			
2007	36%	26%	17%	11%	6%	3%	1%			1%
2008	39%	23%	18%	8%	7%	3%	1%			1%
2011	42%	25%	14%	9%	4%	3%	1%	1%		
2012	47%	25%	15%	7%	3%	2%		1%		
2013	41%	27%	16%	8%	4%	4%				
2014	59%	24%	11%	4%	2%					
2015	59%	24%	10%	4%	2%	1%+				
2016	55%	19%	11%	7%	5%	2%	1%	1%+		
2017	47%	31%	9%	8%	2%	5%+				
2018	48%	24%	16%	8%	3%	1%				
2019	47%	31%	11%	5%	1%	.5%+				

Source: Steve Auditore, 2006-2019 Project Persona, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

Throughout time there is a gradual trend of increasing first and second year membership.

Proportionately, the gradual decrease in the percentage for students continuing for over three seasons in DCI is reflected in table 7 as well.

Access to drum corps was discussed by a few of the interviewees in this research. They indicated that the level of student achievement has risen and often that can be an indication of their ability to have private instruction on their personal instrument to learn the skills that allow them to earn a spot in a corps. Table 8 shows the level of private instruction for students from 2006-2011.

Table 8: Private Instruction

Year	Yes	No
2006	48%	52%
2007	46%	54%
2008	46%	54%
2011	38%	62%

Source: Steve Auditore, *2006-2011 Project Persona*, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

Data on private instruction stopped being collected after 2011. Prior to that time, significant numbers of students were taking private lessons. Interviewees have commented on this more recently, but there is no raw data to support this claim. McFarlane noted that 100% of the student leadership team at Colts currently identifies as having received lessons at some point on their instruments.⁷⁵⁵

Table 9 indicates the number of attempts that it took students to be accepted into their corps. Additionally, table 9 highlights what these individuals chose to do if not accepted into a corps right away.

⁷⁵⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

Table 9: Audition Statistics

Year	Made corps on first attempt	Made corps on second attempt	After not making a corps....
2008	76%	18%	Another World Corps 39% Open Class 15% Did not march 34%
2011	74%	17%	Another World Corps 36% Open Class 12% Did not march 36%
2012	81%	15%	Another World Class 39% Open Class 14% Did not March 35%
2013	80%	15%	Another World Class 60% Open Class 11% Did no March 26%
2014	80%	15%	Another World Class 44% Open Class 18% Did not March 38%
2015	66%	25%	Another World Class 39% Open Class 17% Did not March 48%
2016	75%	20%	Another World Class 51% Open Class 14% Did not March 40%
2017	55%	31%	Another World Class 38% Open Class 11% Did not March 30%

Source: Steve Auditore, 2006-2017 Project Persona, Distributed by Drum Corps International.

Dan Acheson mentioned the possibility of adding additional areas of competition to help grow and sustain DCI. Reports show that in 2013, over 60% of participants had not taken part in an Open Class corps prior to their World Class experience. The data above also indicated that among those who are unsuccessful at auditioning for a World Class corps, most choose not to march rather than to participate in an Open Class corps. By 2013, DCI added questions about joining specific corps and not just becoming involved in drum corps more broadly. In that year, many individuals reported that their single most important factor in selecting a corps was being part of that specific corps.⁷⁵⁶

By 2010, 15% of students had participated in another World Class corps, and 71% had prior experience in World Class.⁷⁵⁷ Participants' previous experience helps in providing continued success in the DCI activity. In 2014, there was more intra-corps movement among participants, indicating that fewer were sticking to their original organization than in the past.⁷⁵⁸ The data suggests that individuals do not always remain in their original organization any longer and often quickly move between the corps in which they participate.

By 2018, the survey categories had changed from what is shown on the chart above. At this point in time, DCI began to ask how many different corps a student auditioned to join. Though most auditioned for only one corps, 29% of students auditioned for two or more corps.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ Auditore, *2013 Project Persona*.

⁷⁵⁷ Auditore, *2010 Project Persona*.

⁷⁵⁸ Auditore, *2014 Project Persona*.

⁷⁵⁹ Auditore, *2018 Project Persona*.

The numbers of participants choosing another World Class corps, an Open Class corps, or not to march at all remained relatively similar.

Outside of the data presented in table 3 through 9, other statistical information should be reported on DCI. For example, as early as 2006, the concept of local drum corps appeared to be a nonexistent, as the average student traveled five hundred miles for their winter commitments; this distance remained similar in the following years.⁷⁶⁰ By 2007, 58% of students traveled 251+ miles to camps, with the most commonly selected survey option being 251-500 miles.⁷⁶¹ Many participants were not concerned about costs. In fact, 47% of students rated cost as being neutral or not important to their corps decision.⁷⁶² In 2012, though, corps radiuses became slightly closer to the individual's home due to travel cost and other financial considerations.⁷⁶³ The concern about travel costs did not persist: for the category of average mileage corps members indicated 500+ miles of travel, from 2013 on.⁷⁶⁴ The average mileage from a member's home to their corps continued to increase at a slow, yet steady rate. This distance climbed to over 600 miles beginning in 2017.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶⁰ Steve Auditore, *2006 Project Persona* (June 2006), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁶¹ Steve Auditore, *2007 Project Persona* (June 2007), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁶² Auditore, *2007 Project Persona*.

⁷⁶³ Auditore, *2012 Project Persona*.

⁷⁶⁴ Steve Auditore, *2013 Project Persona*, (2017).

⁷⁶⁵ Auditore, *2017 Project Persona*.

Online forms of communication were also emerging in popularity by 2006. Many students in the activity had access to devices with internet access, and information was most commonly dispersed via email, DCI.org, or corps-specific websites.⁷⁶⁶ By 2007, participants still used print media, but this survey option was selected less frequently than online platforms. In the case of the DCI magazine, for example, people noted that they preferred the actual website for information over the print source.⁷⁶⁷ Websites stayed relevant until 2011, when social media, particularly Facebook, was reported to have become a larger component for communication.⁷⁶⁸ By 2014, 25% of respondents reported using Facebook as an information source.⁷⁶⁹ Other media platforms were mentioned, but they did not have the status of Facebook. Additionally, questions about smartphones and streaming platforms (such as Hulu and Netflix) were added to the surveys beginning in 2011.⁷⁷⁰ In 2014, there was a large surge in the use of YouTube, where students looked for footage and clips of their favorite corps.⁷⁷¹ By 2015, Snapchat and Instagram began emerging as important platforms for engagement as well.⁷⁷²

Auditore's research provided further data about corps participation. Early on, the quality of educational programs was noted as the top factor in selecting a corps to march with, followed

⁷⁶⁶ Auditore, *2006 Project Persona*.

⁷⁶⁷ Auditore, *2007 Project Persona*.

⁷⁶⁸ Steve Auditore, *2011 Project Persona* (May 2011), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁶⁹ Auditore, *2014 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷⁰ Auditore, *2011 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷¹ Auditore, *2014 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷² Auditore, *2015 Project Persona*.

by the corps being well managed.⁷⁷³ These attitudes substantiate the idea of drum corps as an educational business that provides services for its members, even in the early 2000s. The statistics remained stable throughout the survey's timelines, though as reported, cost became more heavily weighted in the decision-making process, in 2014.⁷⁷⁴ By 2008, students began to report corps placement more highly in the survey, though still below the elements of education and management.⁷⁷⁵ However, this did not supersede the roles of education and management perceived for the corps. For the most part, instructional recommendations stayed above any other influence, but dwindled slightly over time. By 2012, the following items were top-rated factors for choosing a corps: quality of education, being well managed, attention to performer needs, rehearsal style, reputation of subsection, and cost.⁷⁷⁶ In another question asking about the single most important factor for participation, corps proximity to home and friends' and/or family's prior experience were heavily reported, with over 20% in each category.⁷⁷⁷

Increasingly in 2018, staff became specifically appealing to members. When staff move to a different corps, students are more likely to migrate, perceiving their change as a path to further excellence.⁷⁷⁸ Therefore, much like student engagement with private instructors in other

⁷⁷³ Auditore, *2006 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷⁴ Auditore, *2014 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷⁵ Steve Auditore, *2008 Project Persona* (January 2009), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁷⁶ Auditore, *2012 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷⁷ Auditore, *2012 Project Persona*.

⁷⁷⁸ Auditore, *2018 Project Persona*.

music fields, students pursued their corps of choice based upon the teaching and pedagogy that they would receive. Often, the staff was also linked to a group's competitive success as well.

Later in the survey's development, DCI started to inquire about how certain factors weighed into the overall experience for individuals. Factors such as performing in front of audiences, road travel, and friendships ranked highest.⁷⁷⁹ Competition and positive feedback from instructors were still highly ranked but were not considered as vital towards the members' overall experience.⁷⁸⁰

Participants have regularly been high-achieving students who are invested in music. In 2006, 73% of students reported a 3.1 GPA or higher. In that same year, almost 60% of students were planning to pursue music at the collegiate level. These statistics remain high throughout the survey results. By 2010, the percentage of students expecting to study music at the collegiate level reached 67%, and just three years later, this increase leaped further to 71%.⁷⁸¹ Additionally, students continued to pursue academic excellence, with an increased number of 79% reporting a 3.1 GPA or higher; over the course of time this statistic consistently stayed above 70%.⁷⁸²

In addition to the above educational statistics, a person's teachers seemed to be a highly influential component in their participation in the drum corps activity. Band directors and instructors are often the reason someone is introduced to drum corps. For 2007, these two categories combined to create 42% of the first source of participants' first introductions to the

⁷⁷⁹ Auditore, *2015 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸⁰ Auditore, *2015 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸¹ Auditore, *2010 Project Persona*; Auditore, *2013 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸² Steve Auditore, *2007-2019 Project Persona* (September 2007-September 2019), distributed by Drum Corps International.

activity.⁷⁸³ This may suggest that music educators respected the activity more than in previous decades, as several interviewees mentioned. Another important factor in DCI participation is a student's friends, a category that often rivals that of band directors in level of influence. Family members and former participants often rank this highly in their decision process, but not as high as the previously mentioned categories. That source of introduction to drum corps eventually declined, and instead students followed DCI and/or specific corps heavily before their initial participation. All of the sources of introduction to drum corps, paired with access to live viewing opportunities, have become integral for future participation. By 2018, live viewing of events live was rivaled with YouTube as a means of introduction.⁷⁸⁴

One other prominent statistic reported in these surveys is the prevalence of other musical activities prior to DCI participation. Not surprisingly, in each year of the survey, over 85% of respondents reported participation in high school marching band as a precursor to joining a DCI corps.⁷⁸⁵ In 2016, it was discovered that 93% of World Class performers had participated in scholastic marching band.⁷⁸⁶ A few new questions comparing drum corps with marching band were asked in 2010 providing additional context. Astoundingly, for the question of whether drum corps should be more reflective of marching band, 50% answered "strongly disagree."⁷⁸⁷ This highlights the notion of corps being innovative in nature and people looking to this activity as

⁷⁸³ Auditore, *2007 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸⁴ Auditore, *2018 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸⁵ Steve Auditore, *2006-2019 Project Persona* (June 2006-September 2019), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁸⁶ Auditore, *2016 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸⁷ Auditore, *2010 Project Persona*.

being at the forefront, not on par with marching band trends. People also ranked drum corps traditions and experience as highly important.⁷⁸⁸

Following the COVID-19 shutdown, surveys that were conducted after the season included a few different questions to the membership regarding how their expectations had been met. This was a more reflective process. In the 2022 survey, students were asked questions regarding DCI's involvement in and commitment to membership safety and their DEI initiatives. For example, DCI asked questions about the comfortability and knowledge of the formal reporting processes that members can use for their corps and DCI at large whilst also inquiring about the participants knowledge of the policies their corps upholds regarding interpersonal relationships and behaviors between staff, volunteers, and members.⁷⁸⁹ They went further to anonymously ask if students had encountered any unwarranted encounters, and if ye, if they had been able to report these to the proper channels.⁷⁹⁰

Recruitment

Recruitment of members is essential to fielding a corps each year. Essentially, without the membership, the performances cannot exist. In a year in the life of a drum corps, there is no rest upon the completion of the tour: corps directors immediately shift their focus to recruitment for the following season.⁷⁹¹ This includes audition information and packets, which are released in September in order for a group to “remain competitive.”⁷⁹² McFarlane mentions that recruiting

⁷⁸⁸ Auditore, *2010 Project Persona*.

⁷⁸⁹ Auditore, *2022 Project Persona* (2022), distributed by Drum Corps International.

⁷⁹⁰ Auditore, *2022 Project Persona*.

⁷⁹¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷⁹² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

never stops, but the perspective changes throughout the year, September through November is mostly a period of recruitment; November and December reflect a more audition-based focus while also beginning the rehearsal timeline for the production that continues throughout the off season.⁷⁹³ McFarlane states that changes to this timeline over the years have mostly not been due to actual need for alteration; instead, it changes based upon the team that they are working with.⁷⁹⁴

Changing technology has affected both the means of communication with potential members and has also affected the audition structure. Since the late 2010s, technology has allowed for video auditions as a viable means for students to gain entry into the activity.⁷⁹⁵ World Class corps have been shifting towards events where “we have the capacity to go reach them where they're at.”⁷⁹⁶ For these corps, “it really becomes a pursuit of talent and not as much just like any sheer number.”⁷⁹⁷ However, this mindset is not as prevalent in the Open Class circuit which can still attempt to be more locally based, having students come to them.

Many corps have preseason requirements that both determine membership and help with the rehearsal process. Oftentimes, these events take place on weekends to avoid conflicts during the week. Corps hold full weekend or one-day events. For the most part, weekends are associated

⁷⁹³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷⁹⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁷⁹⁵ McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

⁷⁹⁶ McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

⁷⁹⁷ McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

with rehearsal for upcoming productions, and single-day events are mostly associated with auditioning people for membership.

In 2022, DCI's fiftieth anniversary season, the organization began a recruiting initiative to fully stock all corps with the members they needed, called the Fill Every Corps movement. This movement, which is still active, "focuses on matching prospective performers, regardless of their current audition status, with available positions in corps nationwide."⁷⁹⁸ The initiative provides a weekly post of available positions in DCI's various captions and meaningful information for students in order to be well-informed about finding the correct home for them. As the initiative began, Madison Scouts executive director Chris Komnick commented that "DCI's corps are experiencing similar challenges reengaging students" as other activities were seeing post COVID-19."⁷⁹⁹ The Fill Every Corps initiative has continued through other seasons of DCI.

Over time, DCI has undertaken several ways of connecting to people outside of the community. Booths at band events provide useful information, and there have been multiple ways to see DCI performances on video. Formerly, DCI's performances and segments were broadcast on television networks PBS and ESPN2. However, these platforms began to dwindle in influence by 2011, with only 10% of participants reporting viewing drum corps via these platforms.⁸⁰⁰ Videos were later moved to be available through a subscription service called DCI

⁷⁹⁸ Drum Corps International, "'Fill Every Corps' Project Aims to Help Corps #MarchForth Into 2022 with Full Ranks," March 3, 2022, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://www.dci.org/news/fill-every-corps-project-aims-to-help-corps-marchforth-into-2022-with-full-ranks>.

⁷⁹⁹ Drum Corps International, "'Fill Every Corps' Project."

⁸⁰⁰ Auditore, *2011 Project Persona*.

Fan Network. At present, DCI works with an outside subscription streaming service, FloMarching, to get events to those interested in watching several streamed events throughout the summer. Additionally, certain DCI events are shown in movie theaters around the country. These are important ways to give students the ability to see what drum corps is all about. However, most students see a live DCI event prior to participation in corps.⁸⁰¹

Financial Considerations

Currently, a larger barrier to entry is cost. Corps vary significantly in cost per summer, but raising the money to fund their membership is no small task for anyone between the ages of sixteen to twenty-one. Not only are tour fees expensive, but the potential for loss of revenue from not earning additional funds through employment during the summer can be daunting. McFarlane states that it has been customary for students to “pay approximately 50% of what it [actually] costs to be in a drum corps.”⁸⁰² Furthermore, inflation rates and increased spending have caused fees to significantly increase throughout the years (see chapter 4). All corps have encountered increases in their operating costs, often seen in food, transportation, and housing. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the corps and their boards to provide fiscal stability and be creative to produce revenue, often through fundraising.⁸⁰³ Regardless of the increases, the value of the organizations has stayed high. McFarlane states that “drum corps is more affordable than most activities” when taking into account the fees of drum corps with its timeline and items provided.⁸⁰⁴ Corps provide instruments, equipment, uniforms, food, housing, transportation,

⁸⁰¹ Auditore, *2006-2019 Project Persona*.

⁸⁰² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁰³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁰⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

instruction, and so much more throughout an intensive tour lasting around eighty days per summer.

In the 2011 Project Persona survey, respondents were asked to report the total cost of their participation for the first time, which did not include travel expenses, audition/camp fees, summer tuition, and other needs. That year, 50% of responses indicated \$2,500-\$3,500 as the total cost.⁸⁰⁵ The following year, DCI gathered data reflecting the individual breakdown of fees. Audition fees, camp attendance, and travel to camps often was reported as \$100-\$250 each, and tour fees were reported at \$2,000+.⁸⁰⁶ By 2013, two years later, the overall cost had grown to around \$3,700 per participant.⁸⁰⁷ Though average tour fees were reported as similar to those in previous years, other factors continued to increase; moreover, the average may not reflect the cost accurately due to some corps charging significantly more.⁸⁰⁸ By 2019, tour fees averaged in the \$2,500 range, but total cost averaged \$4,213.⁸⁰⁹ Corps fees can vary greatly from the averages described above and expenses have continued to rise. Based on the survey I conducted, fees in the early 2000s were approximately \$1,000 or less. These shifted quickly to the \$2,000 range as described by the Persona Project surveys. From there, many responses in the late 2010s reported fees as being closer to \$4,000-\$5,000 for some corps. The highest figure collected was \$5,400.

⁸⁰⁵ Auditore, *2011 Project Persona*.

⁸⁰⁶ Auditore, *2012 Project Persona*.

⁸⁰⁷ Auditore, *2013 Project Persona*.

⁸⁰⁸ Auditore, *2013 Project Persona*.

⁸⁰⁹ Auditore, *2019 Project Persona*.

DCI sponsors scholarships to help members have access to financial viability. The aforementioned Legacy Fund is one example. There are additional opportunities for individuals meeting specific guidelines. To receive scholarships, students must be prepared ahead of time, as most deadlines are in early March of the given marching year.⁸¹⁰ DCI's 2024 website states that a total of over \$85,000 of scholarship funding will be provided to deserving candidates in the upcoming season.⁸¹¹

Though scholarships are only awarded to some students, many others raise funds through sponsorship. In doing this, members often write personalized letters to family, friends, and/or businesses to ask for donations towards their fees. The letters detail the experiences and skills a student will receive over the summer and help to provide persuasive reasoning towards the individual or company's donations, many of which are considered tax deductible contributions.

There are other resources to assist students in earning money to pay for their summer tuition. Ultimately, students do not need to fund the entire summer by themselves and can find information about fundraising to help support their seasons. Tim Hinton, the founder of Marching Arts Education, has a video series on how to raise money for corps fees called "The Dues and Don'ts of Paying for Drum Corps."⁸¹² His educational resource is free and covers aspects related to budget planning, asking for sponsorships, and borrowing money.⁸¹³ The

⁸¹⁰ Drum Corps International, "Scholarship Opportunities 2024," accessed March 12, 2024, <https://dci.org/static/scholarship-opportunities-2024>.

⁸¹¹ Drum Corps International, "Scholarship Opportunities 2024."

⁸¹² Tim Hinton, "Dues and Don'ts of Paying for Drum Corps," Marching Arts Education, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://marchingartseducation.com/paying-for-drum-corps/>.

⁸¹³ Hinton, "Dues and Don'ts of Paying for Drum Corps."

perspectives provided can be helpful not only for the drum corps process, but they can also help with lifelong financial stability.

What Corps Provide for Membership

Not only have performers become more professional, but operations also have become a heightened component of drum corps. Vicki McFarlane states, “Drum corps is not allowed to *not* focus on any area anymore.”⁸¹⁴ By no means is daily life luxurious. Members sleep overnight on buses and roll into schools in the middle of the night, staying on various types of sleeping equipment on gym floors. Nonetheless, members expect certain things out of their experiences while on tour, including charter buses. McFarlane reminisces that in the early 2000s and before, it was standard that corps owned their own buses, which would often become run-down.⁸¹⁵ Now, the use of chartered coaches provides a higher standard of transportation for membership. Members also have expectations regarding housing conditions. These may not always be glamorous, but air conditioning is considered a standard need.⁸¹⁶ Another expectation is the openness of the community to accept and accommodate all students. This has always been important, but corps have been responding more consciously in recent years. Aspects like dietary needs and additional locker room availability for students are important.⁸¹⁷ Restructuring shower times to afford staff and students to separate uses is a small, yet vital, component of these considerations. It provides comfortability while also considering potential gender variance. Just

⁸¹⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸¹⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸¹⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸¹⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

as important as these needs is the concept of heightened theatrical productions, an experience that members have come to expect.⁸¹⁸ Students expect corps to “push the envelope” as DCI has constantly done during its evolution.⁸¹⁹

Each of the preceding factors has evolved to have what Vicki McFarlane described as “layers of support.”⁸²⁰ In general, it is more detailed and substantial. She states, “We might have been flying by the seat of our pants in some ways 22 years ago... [but] it would just be unacceptable” based upon the expectations now.⁸²¹

What else might an individual corps provide for its membership on a daily and yearly basis? According to McFarlane, one is the notion of World Class corps members being treated like customers.⁸²² Though they are still students, they are paying for an educational experience where they too will be treated as professionals.⁸²³

Pedagogy and Teaching

Pedagogy in drum corps has evolved alongside the activity. In the earliest eras of the drum corps activity, the corps were not typically composed of the top musicians which aligned with the judging systems of the time. Members were usually entering the ranks of corps without

⁸¹⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸¹⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸²⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸²¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸²² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸²³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

any prior musical knowledge or foundation in marching fundamentals.⁸²⁴ The numerous rehearsal hours and relentless training made up for the initially lacking skill sets. It was noted that “what was lacking in musicality was made up for in enthusiasm. As the movement matured, eventually there was involvement of creative musicians and directorship positions.”⁸²⁵ It is important to note that much of the original teaching in the drum corps community was done by young and/or untrained musicians, like the ensemble members.⁸²⁶ As pedagogy progressed, staff positions have shifted to be considered experts in their field in the modern era of DCI, regardless of its ensemble members are not all aspiring to be professional musicians.

The initial drum corps pedagogy was rooted in a rote teaching style where music was passed down by memory and not notated for performers. John Philip Sousa, composer and military band leader, first revolutionized musical pedagogy through his commitment to educational and notational systems in the drum and bugle tradition by documenting aspects of traditional performance practice in military settings which became a catalyst to the pedagogy to move towards a notational style.⁸²⁷ One aspect of the rote learning tradition was that of percussion rudiments. These rudiments were often expected to be played perfectly in time with control. Earl Sturtze became a face of the rudimental precision for judging by not allowing his students to move on from any given skill without demonstrating complete mastery.⁸²⁸ In 1932, a

⁸²⁴ Carmen Cluna, “The movement starts to grow in the 1950s,” in *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, WI: Drum Corps World, 2002), 308.

⁸²⁵ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 9.

⁸²⁶ Waerzeggers, *Drum Corps International: The First Decade, 1972-1981*, 10.

⁸²⁷ Osheroff and Zinko, “The Big Parade,” 23.

⁸²⁸ Beckham, “The Birth, growth and metamorphosis of competitive rudimental drumming,” 58.

group of prominent leaders in the American Legion system banded together to dictate this standardization in *The 26 Standard American Drum Rudiments*, where the initial thirteen rudiments were required.⁸²⁹ This decree came from NARD, the National Association for Rudimental Drummers (later to be taken over by the drum company Ludwig), which developed alongside drum corps through the late 1970s.⁸³⁰

Moving into the modern era of drum corps, pedagogy and training became a significant advancement beginning in the 1990s, with corps from 2000 to the present reaping the benefits. According to Dan Potter, the 1990s was a time where the educational staff became sought-after music educators.⁸³¹ These educators propelled corps life in the modern era of drum corps to enable students to learn and grow in a more meaningful way. Potter states, “It’s professional educators, it’s experience with people running tours and large groups. As opposed to 40 or 50 years, when it was largely volunteers just trying to do their best.”⁸³² These are the people making a difference in the drum corps world today. Potter continued:

[And] by the 2000s that was the norm [professional music educators] instead of the exception. So, I think that’s probably been the biggest driver of innovation in the activity has been the marriage of the drum corps and band world. We saw it starting to happen in the nineties. It really started to pay off in the 2000s. When I marched, and you probably have heard this, there was a real palpable division between high school music educators and drum corps and drum corps staff members. They didn’t come from the same place. They like each other very much. Band directors couldn’t understand how you can play one of these out of tune bugles all the time. It drove them crazy. It wrecked embouchures if you marched all the time, etc.”⁸³³

⁸²⁹ Beckham, 58.

⁸³⁰ Beckham, 59.

⁸³¹ Potter Interview.

⁸³² Potter Interview.

⁸³³ Potter Interview.

Some of these perceptions still live on between the music education and drum corps worlds. Without doubt, the quality of education in drum corps is better today. Often people are taught by professionals and those earning degrees in the field of education or a specific instruments' pedagogy. Additionally, Vicki McFarlane notes the expansion of the educational staff, describing that at the Colt Cadets (2001-2012), there would be days "where there'd be 3 of us at rehearsal. And as the corps grew, people actually took lesser salaries to have expanded teams."⁸³⁴ She mentioned that this change "really allowed [us] the educational aspects [to drive] our competition."⁸³⁵

In addition to expanding staff units, corps often employ educators with higher degrees. This began in the 1990s, but has since evolved to encompass not just the involvement of music educators, but also people earning up to doctorate degrees in their field to help provide pedagogically sound instruction.⁸³⁶ In the end, McFarlane reflects that 50% of a corps' competitive success is related to design and the other 50% reflects its pedagogy, as most corps do not have students who all already possess the necessary performance skills.⁸³⁷

The approach to education in the drum corps activity is described by McFarlane as "more scholastic," specifically when compared to some of the physical punishments that may have been used in earlier eras.⁸³⁸ Though some running and physical exertion is inevitable, it is not related

⁸³⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸³⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸³⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸³⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸³⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

to issues of listening or memory, but instead as a means of building the necessary stamina.⁸³⁹

Truly, though, education in the activity has reached the ability to find what McFarlane calls “peak performance level.”⁸⁴⁰ Educators still prescribe repetition in the activity, but not in a brute force nature.⁸⁴¹ In a similar vein, where profanity was once commonly directed at participants during rehearsal, educators now show more respect.⁸⁴²

The scholastic emphasis reaches further into the business avenue of the activity. Each 501(c)(3) corps was founded on its educational status, not on the support of the entertainment aspects of corps, as is often argued.⁸⁴³ The constant refinement of these practices is paramount to the evolution of the activity.⁸⁴⁴ Being “conscientious minded people” is an important aspect of pedagogy to further DCI’s future vision and to add initiatives with regard to the “diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusiveness aspects” of the organization.⁸⁴⁵ Of course, these issues affect more than just DCI, but in the long term, McFarlane states that the “vision is to make sure all students have access to what we do” and provide that “privilege” to all.⁸⁴⁶

From a purely musical perspective, McFarlane continues to ponder the sound quality ensembles achieve through pedagogy. Loud volume is still important, but not the sole approach

⁸³⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁰ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴² McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁶ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

to instruction. Instead, she suggests that members are often being coached to play with a more refined sound that is “appropriate for even your collegiate concert experience.”⁸⁴⁷ Amplification, facilitates this refinement, as the advancement of audio engineers can aid the acoustic nature of their performance.⁸⁴⁸

Similarly, in the percussion caption, amplification allows performers to naturally play with good technique and still be heard in the context of the entire ensemble. That being said, the instruments utilized can be of higher quality since they will no longer be damaged in daily practice. Some corps utilize both Acoustalan and Rosewood bars for their marimbas. McFarlane states, “There is a slight shift to the performer [between the two performance surfaces], but I think learning to shift between those two is part of the experience and that way we can offer what I would consider an excellent concert education.”⁸⁴⁹ Environmental concerns limit this at times. Providing instruments of high quality is important to student development, though.

Like in many other areas of drum corps life, there has been a shift in how information is delivered, aided by technology. McFarlane states, “This timeline of drum corps that you’re looking at really encompasses the transition from paper to digital.”⁸⁵⁰ One resource that has heightened the teaching of the activity is UDB or Ultimate Drill Book, which has simplified and streamlined the daily process of education.⁸⁵¹ Other means of technology are utilized for

⁸⁴⁷ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁴⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁵⁰ McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

⁸⁵¹ McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

preseason learning and assessment to ensure students are developing appropriately prior to the start of the summer. Some of these technologies have included Soundslice, Google Classroom, and SmartMusic.⁸⁵² Corps essentially utilize a conglomeration of teaching tools to help them to produce successful corps membership and allow them to have checkpoints in the preparation process.

Membership Safety

“Daily life is much safer than it was even 20 years ago,” says Dan Potter.⁸⁵³ “It is different now, it’s more professional.”⁸⁵⁴ The professionalism of drum corps has been enhanced through safety protocols and procedures. Potter mentions safety as a factor in both tour operations and pedagogy. Ultimately, corps gear their summer experience towards their performers. Many positions have been developed as a means to increase this experience and safety.

Throughout the interview undertaken for this dissertation, it was consistently mentioned that the corps member experience has been heightened since 2000, additional focus on the safety and protection of participants.⁸⁵⁵ Dan Acheson comments, “It’s always hard to say this because it sounds like we didn’t really have a focus on it in the past; we did, but not as formally as we do today.”⁸⁵⁶ DCI’s previous stance regarding this issue was that it was “deemed the responsibility

⁸⁵² McFarlane Interview, March 15, 2024.

⁸⁵³ Potter Interview.

⁸⁵⁴ Potter Interview.

⁸⁵⁵ Dan Acheson (former DCI CEO) in discussion with the author, January 20, 2024.

⁸⁵⁶ Acheson Interview.

of the corps.... There was no regulation to the degree that we would get into anybody's business related to their policies."⁸⁵⁷ In the current climate of DCI, that has shifted to DCI taking a more formal stance regarding the safety of members. Still today, "we [DCI] don't tell the corps what their policy should be. But we do give them guidelines as to what we would expect them to be."⁸⁵⁸ DCI's participating corps are asked to comply with its safety policies and will intervene with corps that are not in compliance with their suggested guidelines "as soon as [they] know something," says Acheson.⁸⁵⁹ The ensemble services branch oversees participant safety in DCI.⁸⁶⁰ At present, they have one full-time staff member devoted to intake and management of complaints through DCI's whistleblower page.⁸⁶¹ This page provided a process for individuals to systematically report issues pertaining to safety concerns like "fraternization, sexual harassment, nondiscrimination, smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, and concealed weapons."⁸⁶²

Since its release, DCI has received reports about several types of concerns through their whistle blower platform. As part of their response, they first determine the severity of the infraction. For example, corps food programs can be tricky to operate, and complaints can range from a lack of a peanut butter and jelly station to an actual meal/food shortage. Acheson states that the first action taken is calling the corps administration to figure out what the issue is, if it is

⁸⁵⁷ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁵⁸ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁵⁹ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁰ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶¹ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶² Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 10.

a recurring issue, and if there needs to be assistance to rectify it.⁸⁶³ More stringent lenses are placed upon corps that have multiple complaints filed about the same infraction. Interventions occur mostly through DCI monitoring the issues as the corps itself works to fix its actions.⁸⁶⁴

When it comes to member specific safety, complaints involving forms of harassment, neglect, and other serious concerns are met with immediate concern even if only one complaint is filed. Acheson mentions that they heard of the recent issues within Spirit of Atlanta (as outlined in chapter 4) directly from the complainant, and that their first step was to advise the corps to take care of the situation on their own.⁸⁶⁵ Since the corps did not do so, DCI stepped in by placing a probationary status on the organization, which has recently been lifted, as DCI continually monitors the progress and steps the corps has taken to achieve a healthy environment again.⁸⁶⁶ These proceedings can be difficult to handle due to the public nature of the activity. Often, social media portrays the public perception of “DCI is not doing anything and the corps is not doing anything” in a situation some instances, but that is not necessarily true.⁸⁶⁷ The inner workings of all parties involved are often not publicly appropriate to share, which parallels other legal circumstances found in American society today.

Education related to safe and healthy relationships is ongoing and is provided to all corps, not just those in violation of the code of ethics. Additional information is devoted to overall

⁸⁶³ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁴ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁵ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁶ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁷ Acheson Interview.

health of participants, including mental health.⁸⁶⁸ Heat-related illness and concussion protocols are at the forefront of concern for corps to monitor making it integral to employ a full-time medical team member is now integral to daily tour operations.

As mentioned in chapter 4, 2017 marked a time when DCI set out to implement a strategic plan and outline specific goals for its future in great detail. Their intent was to “strengthen the health & wellness of the DCI community.”⁸⁶⁹ Actionable items that helped to accomplish the standards they set forth to achieve occurring at the levels of corps personnel (member, volunteer, and staff), participating organization, and DCI as a whole. Requirements at the bottom tier that all participating DCI affiliates now follow include a background check process for staff, code of ethics, and health and wellness initiatives.⁸⁷⁰ According to DCI policy, background checks are required to be administered no less than every two years.⁸⁷¹ At the corps level, additional items like membership structure, operational standards, financial health, and succession plans were added to help provide longevity and the ability to sustain the organization as a whole.⁸⁷²

On a specific level, the “Me Too” movement that was a term coined by the media in 2017 in regards to many prominent figures in the performing arts and other fields speaking out as victims of abuse. As mentioned in this section, this had been paralleled in the drum corps

⁸⁶⁸ Acheson Interview.

⁸⁶⁹ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 16.

⁸⁷⁰ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 16.

⁸⁷¹ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 9.

⁸⁷² Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 16.

community in 2018, due to allegations against a prominent corps leader dating back several years.⁸⁷³ Though the initial incident was not the only one reported and litigation is ongoing against many of the individuals accused, the events spurred discussion in the community and resulted in policies that changed drum corps life for the better.

New policies were outlined in the 2017/2018 strategic plan as well as the 2018 Community Code of Conduct & Ethics Guidelines for DCI. The policy was placed into effect as a separate document, but also incorporated into DCI's overall policies under 126.⁸⁷⁴ In conjunction with the Membership Affairs Committee, DCI set out to make a commitment to performers' physical safety.⁸⁷⁵ The "conduct expectations" outline that each individual is responsible for their own actions and that all should contribute to an environment without "conduct that interferes with or disrupts the professional work, education, performance, or other functions of DCI," including the organization's reputation as a whole.⁸⁷⁶ In conjunction with the higher safety measures, DCI has explicitly outlined a few integral components to their policies and procedures documents. First, DCI requires criminal background checks to be completed on all individuals who are directly in contact with corps members, which includes staff and

⁸⁷³ Jacii Farris, "Charges Filed against Former Allentown Cadets Director," *WFMZ TV 69 News*, November 27, 2018, updated September 24, 2020, https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/charges-filed-against-former-allentown-cadets-director/article_71ab0fea-04c9-5054-9ded-015afd14ca03.html.

⁸⁷⁴ Drum Corps International) Policies & Procedures Manual, 6.

⁸⁷⁵ Drum Corps International Strategic Plan, 10.

⁸⁷⁶ Drum Corps International, "Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations," 3.

volunteers.⁸⁷⁷ They also require all students, staff, and volunteers with DCI at large (including membership corps) over the age of eighteen to complete training through SafeSport prior to starting with the organization.⁸⁷⁸ Since incidents can occur on tour, DCI also requests that membership organizations report any such happenings within twenty-four hours of their occurrence. Incidents can be medical, legal, or mechanical in nature and can include vehicle accidents, dismissal of personnel, illness, or serious injury.⁸⁷⁹ They also require on-site medical professionals for all daily tour activities.⁸⁸⁰

Each participating corps now must have policies addressing sexual relationships and harassment, hazing and disrespect of others, and discrimination. Ultimately, the goal is to recognize and condemn unequal power dynamics between individuals and to prohibit staff or volunteer involvement with students.⁸⁸¹ Because instructors and students can be very close in age (as little as one year apart, with most students being over the legal age of eighteen) this awareness had not always shaped standard proceedings for all corps, though restrictions had already been enforced by others.

The SafeSport training system helped to provide insights into how to identify misconduct based on power differentials between individuals. DCI states that the training should occur

⁸⁷⁷ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual, 9.

⁸⁷⁸ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual), 10.

⁸⁷⁹ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual), 10.

⁸⁸⁰ Drum Corps International Policies & Procedures Manual), 9.

⁸⁸¹ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 3-4.

annually.⁸⁸² It aligns with the concept of mandatory reporting status for criminally chargeable offenses. As in many educational settings, DCI allows all individuals (not just staff) to take responsibility for mandatory reporting of inappropriate incidents, like the formerly mentioned “whistle-blower” page.⁸⁸³ The new policies also allow for anonymous reporting and for corps to keep as many accounts confidential as possible. Regardless of anonymity, no one, under DCI guidelines, can face retaliation for their reporting.⁸⁸⁴

Through these means, additional allegations have been investigated in a serious manner, and overall responsibility has heightened. Due to increased oversight, other staff members and corps have faced punitive action, not discussed here, based on DCI’s internal investigations. DCI’s corps operate separately, but DCI can and does intervene, as outlined in chapter 4 with Spirit of Atlanta. The process requires that corps respond to any allegations “promptly.”⁸⁸⁵ DCI expects that units will vary in their responses and handling of situations as well, including requiring additional training, serving verbal warnings, and dismissing accused parties from participation, making each level coincide with the “terms of their authority.”⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸² Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 6.

⁸⁸³ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 7.

⁸⁸⁴ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 7.

⁸⁸⁵ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 8.

⁸⁸⁶ Drum Corps International, “Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations,” 8.

Membership safety has also been taken a step further to include more aspects of the daily physical health of the performers. These stances are necessary due to the evolution of the corps technique, as described below:

Corps style has evolved significantly over the past 20 years, which has increased the technical and physical demands placed upon the marching athlete. The movement techniques have grown to include extremely complex and varied motions including interactions with large and small props on the field. Although they create a very engaging performance for the audience, they require more training and physical conditioning to perform safely.⁸⁸⁷

DCI has often been viewed through an athletic lens, with many of its participants experiencing physical injuries similar to athletes during the summer. Many professionals are at the forefront of research regarding these types of injuries and truly understand the work exerted daily on tour. Studies have been conducted to better understand the daily physical exertion performers are asked to accomplish and to provide feedback on training and nutrition for individuals. In conjunction with Dr. Steven Rock's work, a doctor conducting research in the marching arts field, the community was able to procure a \$25,000 grant for medical study that helped corps to understand the biometrics of the physical activity.⁸⁸⁸ In turn, this affected the food programs for corps in order to provide the correct fuel and nutrition for students to sustain life on the road.⁸⁸⁹ The research showed that the total caloric expenditure of members often exceeds 5,000 calories per day.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁷ Steven Rock and Serena Weren, "Care of the Marching Musician," in *Performing Arts Medicine*, ed. Lauren E. Elson (St. Louis: Elsevier, 2019), 3.

⁸⁸⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2024.

⁸⁸⁹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁹⁰ Rock and Weren, "Care of the Marching Musician," 2.

Formerly, even in the early 2000s, many drum corps personnel were considered “hardcore” or ignorant of what rehearsing and operating at “peak performance level” entailed.⁸⁹¹ This is where the MASH (Marching Arts Safety and Health) began in 2011 with a segment that aired on ESPN2 featuring Dr. Jeff Edwards of Indiana State University.⁸⁹² Even then, medical professionals were able to track the athleticism of the activity through various monitors. In fact, the sympathetic nervous system operates similarly to that of an athlete in a race; it prepares the performer for the actual performance regardless of being out for any given rehearsal segment, or “rep”.⁸⁹³ Dr. Edwards describes the oxygen intake as equivalent to that of a well-trained marathon runner, but compares the heart rate to a sprinter running a 400-meter with the added stress of the precision of the activity.⁸⁹⁴ Daily activity for members has also been compared to completing a “half marathon every day for 80 days,” with a minimum of twelve miles daily between rehearsals, performances, and walking to food or fields.⁸⁹⁵

Dr. Rock has increased the understanding of drum corps further. In his presentation “Health and Wellness for Marching Band,” he notes a few common conceptions that have become integral to marching arts over the years. He challenges both the notion of doctor’s visits meaning a performer’s summer has concluded and the idea that resting for multiple weeks is the

⁸⁹¹ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁸⁹² Drum Corps International, “The Athleticism of a Drum Corps Marching Member,” YouTube video, 3:14, September 30, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuP8O-KYok0>.

⁸⁹³ Drum Corps International, “The Athleticism of a Drum Corps Marching Member.”

⁸⁹⁴ Drum Corps International, “The Athleticism of a Drum Corps Marching Member.”

⁸⁹⁵ McFarlane interview, December 27, 2023.

only way for recovery in the activity.⁸⁹⁶ Ultimately, Rock and Higgins are focused on the idea of incremental growth for performers and treating the drum corps activity as an athlete would.⁸⁹⁷ Performers and medical staff must be proactive about injury rather than reactive, meaning that students should communicate injuries quickly and that corps should develop non-punitive cultures around recovery, including modifying activities of performers or limiting their activity level when needed.⁸⁹⁸ Part of being proactive is preparation for the summer, which is often overlooked. Dr. Rock recommends that students get participation exams to identify and address any bone, joint, or biomechanical issues summer and allow participants to get physically prepared for the heightened daily workload in the summer.⁸⁹⁹ Dr. Rock feels all activities are more helpful than starting from nothing but highlights aerobic and strength training as being especially helpful.⁹⁰⁰

Rock and Weren proposed that because corps performance is “highly repetitive, unnatural, or physically demanding to perform well,” the rehearsal procedures and marching styles “create a risk factor for overuse and repetitive strain musculoskeletal injuries,” often in the lower extremities, though not exclusively.⁹⁰¹ Marching technique itself does not produce the injuries; instead, the movements “not [being] performed correctly or without necessary physical

⁸⁹⁶ Steve Rock and Melody Higgins, “Health and Wellness for Marching Band,” Slideshow presentation, author’s personal copy, 8.

⁸⁹⁷ Rock and Higgins, 9.

⁸⁹⁸ Rock and Higgins, 10.

⁸⁹⁹ Rock and Higgins, 16.

⁹⁰⁰ Steve Rock, “Marching Arts: A Health Perspective,” Slideshow presentation, author’s personal copy.

⁹⁰¹ Rock and Weren, “Care of the Marching Musician,” 2.

conditioning” more often causes issues.⁹⁰² Unfortunately, not all injuries are unavoidable. Many of the injuries occur early in a given season during long, intense rehearsals.⁹⁰³ However, medical professionals have not treated marching arts activities similarly to sports teams. Dr. Rock proposes the use of “functional progression” and “gradual increase in the number of repetitions” in returning to activity post-injury in a guided manner.⁹⁰⁴

Another healthcare worker, podiatrist Dr. Tom Freeman, has worked with DCI’s MASH to provide a list of footwear that is recommended for membership. He has been consulting with DCI for almost twenty years.⁹⁰⁵ His recommendations advise students to purchase two pairs of shoes to use throughout the summer, as they wear out over time, which causes injury.⁹⁰⁶ Ideally, people in DCI should aim to purchase a “Cross Trainer”-type shoe to provide stability laterally and on the forefoot for backwards movements, which cannot be accomplished with traditional running shoes.⁹⁰⁷ Light and flexible is not ideal.

With this information, corps have altered their procedures over time for the health and safety of their members. The Colts Drum and Bugle Corps had previously devised a policy in which the final run-through at rehearsal was the criteria that determined whether students would

⁹⁰² Rock and Weren, 3.

⁹⁰³ Rock and Weren, 4.

⁹⁰⁴ Rock and Weren, 4.

⁹⁰⁵ Drum Corps International, “2023 Recommended Shoe List for Marching Musicians,” Drum Corps International, 2023, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://www.dci.org/static/recommended-shoe-list-for-marching-musicians>.

⁹⁰⁶ Drum Corps International, “2023 Recommended Shoe List for Marching Musicians.”

⁹⁰⁷ Drum Corps International, “2023 Recommended Shoe List for Marching Musicians.”

perform in a show that evening. Over time, this policy has shifted. Students who are only able to do a single run-through a day due to their physical limitations, would be saving their best “rep” for a performance situation and not participating in the rehearsal run. McFarlane notes that because of the continued guidance and information from Dr. Rock and other medical professionals “we prevent season ending injuries as much as possible.”⁹⁰⁸

Because environmental considerations also place demands on daily life in drum corps, heat is one of the paramount safety concerns that each corps currently faces daily. As in sports, it is recommended that marching ensembles acclimate their students to heat and allow them to hydrate often, and that rehearsal environments should be selected to reduce exposure when possible.⁹⁰⁹ Grass rehearsal fields are one way to alleviate some heat exposure. More importantly, there should be plans in place based on temperature to allow members to cool off and perform at optimal levels. Additionally, staff should be aware of and alerted to signs of heat illness. DCI often will begin events later in the evening to avoid the sun adding to the overall heat index.⁹¹⁰ Breaks and cool-down strategies are often implemented to allow corps members to avoid heat-related illnesses by helping their core temperatures return to stasis. The Colts also takes a stance of doing production runs, or portions of their show, in extreme situations instead of the full run to alleviate overheated members. Most of this preparation for this falls on the staff itself. It requires that Emergency Action Plans and procedures for organizations to follow be in place prior to the summer.

⁹⁰⁸ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁹⁰⁹ Rock and Weren, “Care of the Marching Musician,” 6.

⁹¹⁰ Acheson Interview.

Additionally, meteorology is employed at each event to prescribe best practices of protocol and ensure of safety.⁹¹¹ All events must have direct connections to meteorologists, such as Dr. Kevin Kayzle, to understand all risks related to weather.⁹¹²

The question of, “How do you care for people physically, emotionally, [and] musically” is continually a component of thought for McFarlane and others in the field.⁹¹³ McFarlane notes that “enhancing the care that we provide for members so that we'd have retention” was the correct approach to take and that “we're still working to improve” in this care even after the growth that has taken place.⁹¹⁴ Ultimately, DCI’s corps are working to “shape and form [a] culture” of safety and longevity for the students of the activity.⁹¹⁵

Participation in Roles Outside of Member or Staff

DCI is not solely for the performers, though they are the primary focus. Volunteerism is essential to each corps fully functioning succinctly throughout their events and tours. Member families and alums often participate in this way. Corps require the labor of volunteers to help cook, sew, drive, and so much more throughout their tours. Each of these tasks can be extensive, therefore, volunteers frequently participate for shorter stints throughout the summer. These people often utilize vacation time from their full-time employment to do so.

Some volunteer positions were highlighted by Tim Hinton’s *Marching Roundtable*. Hinton also provides information about the daily food operations. Food truck volunteers spend

⁹¹¹ Acheson Interview.

⁹¹² Acheson Interview.

⁹¹³ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁹¹⁴ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

⁹¹⁵ McFarlane Interview, December 27, 2023.

the entire day cooking using prescribed menus. They volunteer to prep food two hours prior to every meal and then serve it to students.⁹¹⁶ Corps administrators run to the store for any additional daily food needs. Ultimately, this is all done on a truck that is equipped with a full kitchen and storage, moved by a semi-tractor.⁹¹⁷ This intricate operation is just a small component of the additional help used on tour. Sewing uniforms and helping to build prop infrastructure is often important as well.

In 2010, DCI began an initiative that directly targeted recent age outs, the “On Field Society.” This was a way for former participants to stay current by getting free tickets to regional events. By 2014, over 80% reported using this service to stay involved in the community beyond their year which kept them involved as spectators.⁹¹⁸

People unable to spend time with corps in an in-person manner often donate in other ways. Monetary gifts to a specific corps and/or member within a corps perpetuate sustainability for DCI.

Conclusion

Overall, the daily life of a corps member has remained somewhat similar throughout this time period in terms of day-to-day occurrences. The substantial life lessons that members receive are still deeply engrained. However, the quality of daily corps life has improved drastically. It now features a more professional approach towards education, safety standards, and the materials provided to the membership.

⁹¹⁶ *Marching Arts Roundtable*, Episode 1182.

⁹¹⁷ *Marching Arts Roundtable*, Episode 1182.

⁹¹⁸ *Auditore, 2014 Project Persona*.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The evolution of drum corps has continually developed throughout the twenty-first century. In his interview, Richard Hinshaw comments, “I guess you could say [it] evolved. ‘Grow’ is maybe not the best word.... If you are looking at our data/amount of groups and participants, it’s probably not grown.”⁹¹⁹ In spite of the difficulties in maintaining participation, Hinshaw notes that the audience and overall reach of the drum corps activity has grown exponentially and displays optimism for the activity as a whole.⁹²⁰

Ultimately, the information provided in this document provides a thorough picture of the many inner workings of DCI as an entire organization. Some of the major components include its business, its competitive aspects, its show design, and membership life.

The largest alteration to the business of DCI was its 2008 bylaw amendment that restricted membership in the organization. This provided an opportunity for all corps to have a voice in the organization and enhanced its ability to make meaningful change due to the division of voting membership and board of directors as separate entities. With the divide, a reduction of members on the board of directors created ease for approving policies. Outside of this, DCI’s staff has grown considerably to assist each ensemble to operate more succinctly, specifically in terms of acquisition of housing.

Competitively, the allowances permitting additional instruments, especially electronics, have changed the trajectory of the show design within DCI. This change is seen in the perspectives of performers, educators, designers, and audience members. The new musical

⁹¹⁹ Richard Hinshaw (drill designer) Interview author, January 9, 2024.

⁹²⁰ Hinshaw Interview.

timbres have altered the scope of the soundscape through which it is possible to create a more refined approach to the musical literature found in shows.

Other smaller changes to competition revolve around the verbiage used in judging and the standardization of touring events. Ultimately, each corps votes to decide the direction that judging practices in DCI lean. This notion has been apparent since DCI's inception in 1972. Tour standardization, then, assists corps to have controllable variables yearly and design their shows accordingly.

Unexpectedly, DCI, like the world, was faced with challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020. Several years of operation were altered due to this global event. Their response was swift and well informed including strict protocols to keep all involved safe.

Surprisingly, many of the membership statistics remained stable throughout the twenty-first century. Though this is the case, membership alterations were made at the administrative level causing significant discussion. Probably the single greatest change that DCI has administered since 2000 has been to heighten the safety standards within the community, setting it up for future longevity. General knowledge and protocols surrounding safety for all is paramount to DCI's success. It is important to note that DCI does not actually govern the proceedings of the individual corps; therefore, regulating safety poses a challenge. However, the commitment to the safety measures by DCI and each individual corps will help the drum corps activity thrive and continue to be an integral life-changing experience for generations of members to come. For most, improvements in member safety and awareness to situations concerning physical, mental, and emotional health are viewed as the pinnacle advancement occurring throughout the beginning of the twenty-first century in DCI.

Based on the items discussed throughout, the ever-evolving nature of DCI is apparent throughout the 2000s. Regardless of the magnitude of change, the events have a rippling effect throughout the community potentially providing for further adaptations contributing to the evolution in terms of processes, policies, and show design.

Opportunities for Further Research

The limited scope of this document presents fruitful opportunities for future research. As I have limited knowledge about the color guard caption, therefore further research in this field would be better suited for someone who understands its nuances more intricately. Overall, this topic is highly important to conduct a study as it can add to the breadth of knowledge about choreography, equipment, and performance techniques that groups have utilized throughout the past two decades, and earlier. Many resources that the author used as a model included limited information regarding color guard too, furthering the barrier to extended reported in this study. One limiting factor for research in the color guard specific area is that participants do not receive their formal training in academic settings as most music educators employ specialists to teach this section in their ensembles. Therefore, there is no academic discipline devoted to research explicitly in their field at present. This topic could be an almost uncharted topic for movement specialist, like dance, to explore.

Though this document explains many of the contemporary developments related to Drum Corps International, there are other aspects of the marching arts community that could benefit from deeper considerations as part of another study. DCI is highly aware that it has a “preeminent” status in the marching arts community and that its “actions and decisions directly influence and impact hundreds of other organizations and tens of thousands of other participants

in and supporters of the marching arts.”⁹²¹ DCI views itself as a leader within the grand sphere of marching arts. However, organizations such as Bands of America (BOA) oversee the most similar competitive high school ensembles of the marching arts and would likely show similar trends to those in DCI. Additionally, state-run competitive circuits could also be the subject of study. These governing bodies are similar in many ways to DCI and have probably evolved in similar trajectories in the past twenty-three years.

Additionally, other private pageantry organizations have entered the marching arts scene since DCI’s formation. Winter Guard International (WGI), formed in 1977, is another driving catalyst shaping change in pageantry. WGI groups perform in gyms in the winter during DCI’s off-season. Oftentimes, performers take part in both WGI and DCI. The WGI organization encompasses color guard, drumline, and wind groups of smaller size. However, the circuit is expanded to incorporate several levels of competition and to include scholastic brackets. Much costuming and show design from these groups can be seen in modern DCI productions. Thus, WGI would be another organization for future research.

The DCI community faces potential challenges and changes in the future. Two major changes happening after the 2023 competitive season will prove important as the process continues. First is the retirement of DCI’s chief executive officer, Dan Acheson (interviewed for this document). His leadership has been paramount to the direction of the organization since 1995 and will be missed. Jonathan Powell released a statement describing the importance of Acheson’s leadership for the DCI organization:

During Dan’s tenure as CEO, Drum Corps International has seen remarkable growth during a period of unprecedented change. His steady leadership guided the organization

⁹²¹ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 2.

through some incredibly challenging times and helped to build the DCI brand to be recognized worldwide as Marching Music's Major League.⁹²²

Acheson will be succeeded in the role of CEO by Nate Boudreaux, only the fourth individual to hold this position in DCI.⁹²³ The choice of Boudreaux differs from Acheson, who had a background and previous involvement with DCI and the community. In contrast, Boudreaux was previously employed as a part of USA Water Ski & Wake Sports, USA Football, and the National Football League's marketing team.⁹²⁴ In these organizations, he had a positive influence on revenue and spending in those organizations. His skill set appears to be necessary as corps spending has become significantly higher in since 2000. Acheson will remain part of the team into 2024 to ensure a smooth transition, but he will eventually be stepping down from all responsibilities within DCI.

A large amount of energy has been devoted to the acquisition of a new CEO of DCI. The organization expects Boudreaux to comply with the following ideals as outlined in the bylaws: translate the mission and strategic plan of DCI, maintain integrity of leadership, advocate and promote the activity, develop collaborative partnerships in the performing arts, develop market and create public relations plans, oversee tour aspects, fundraise for DCI, develop yearly business plans, and supervise the staff at large.⁹²⁵ Though this job is immense, Boudreaux will

⁹²² Drum Corps International, "Drum Corps International Appoints Nate Boudreaux as CEO," September 28, 2023, accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/drum-corps-international-appoints-nate-boudreaux-as-ceo#>.

⁹²³ Drum Corps International, "Drum Corps International Appoints Nate Boudreaux as CEO."

⁹²⁴ Drum Corps International, "Drum Corps International Appoints Nate Boudreaux as CEO."

⁹²⁵ Drum Corps International Bylaws, 21.

become the face of DCI and provide direction for where the drum corps activity will go in the future.

The other crucial change that will begin in 2024 is the inclusion of the “All Age” category in DCI competitions. Previously, corps that included membership above the age requirements of DCI (twenty-one or twenty-two depending on date of birth) were operated and organized by another organization called Drum Corps Associates (DCA) competitively. Each of these corps is centered on weekend-only rehearsals and competitions. The groups will join in a new competitive classification alongside many of the other drum corps in the upcoming summer. DCA ensembles have been seen at DCI events prior to 2024, but have not competed as part of DCI’s yearly championship events before. The merger will be exciting to watch. With the addition of DCA with DCI, the former groups’ final competition will conclude earlier, on August 10, 2024, in conjunction with DCI’s typical season.⁹²⁶ The addition will also add some events to the DCI schedule in conjunction with other classifications of competition.

With the rapidly increasing financial strains due to travel cost, inflation, and corps needs, various corps at the World Class level have had to withdraw from competition for single or multiple years. The summer of 2024 will be different without The Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps. This group has been a ten-time DCI champion and a staple within the community at large and innovator on the DCI scene. Many artistic changes over the years have been propelled by the Cadets and its representatives. Additionally, byproducts of Cadets personnel initiated the push to heighten safer member practices and have made a systemic problem visible to the public.

⁹²⁶ Jeff Griffith, “Highlights: 2024 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule,” Drum Corps International, November 15, 2023, accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/highlights-2024-drum-corps-international-tour-schedule#>.

Though the 2024 summer was initially the intended to be only a hiatus from operations for the group, news broke on April 2, 2024, that the organization has filed for bankruptcy, meaning they will never return to DCI competition due to the financial liability that their organization, Cadets Arts & Entertainment (CAE), has encountered.⁹²⁷ Luckily, the 2024 season will welcome back seven-time champion, Santa Clara Vanguard. This corps' history is important in that it has never been omitted from finals within the DCI circuit. Continuing to monitor financial within the organization will shape how the top classification of performances will be affected in the years to come.

Financial considerations continue to be a source of stress for DCI's membership as well, as costs continue to shift. Corps have presented various video and in-person options for auditions for gaining membership. The tactics for earning membership spots and producing funds to make participation possible may ebb and flow in upcoming seasons. Financial viability for each corps and participant is an area for growth within DCI.

Finally, another item to be explored further is the influence of the COVID-19 shutdown on the activity as a whole. Richard Hinshaw stated that "we have yet to see the real benefit" of the COVID-19 shut down and its effects on DCI.⁹²⁸ He said it was a time for quick adaptations

⁹²⁷ Cadets Arts & Entertainment Board of Directors, "Cadets Arts & Entertainment (CAE) Files for Bankruptcy," The Cadets corps news, April 2, 2024, accessed April 5, 2024, https://cadets.org/cadets-arts-entertainment-cae-files-bankruptcy?fbclid=IwAR1ASDBCZECAvIVS86gZy3g-v3wLSZquYdd8xnQRwsoI5wQOpBo- OXPJ5-w_aem_AcVctjoGeG5I9nuoqcM39GHNf5oGslFhzp4C2Y8IQj0yxnwXxFARY5U4f_DnI1gf3Ai6qBLtQztOb2ocoLR8RiQX.

⁹²⁸ Hinshaw Interview.

and a survival mindset.⁹²⁹ Though the world is largely past the pandemic mentality, its results are still ongoing, and its impact will only be fully determined in future research.

Other creative trends will be interesting to map over time as they can be unpredictable for upcoming seasons. Often massive props, the purchase of new uniforms, the type of uniform produced for the corps proper, and annual purchase of new instruments can be viewed as frivolous. Since these categories are extremely expensive to maintain on each season and have the potential to cause supply issues for other groups outside DCI, monitoring its continued use will be of interest to professionals in the field.

Closing Remarks

DCI strives to “reset, refocus, and reimagine” going forward into 2024.⁹³⁰ The growth at the beginning of the twenty-first century reflects its commitment to reimagine. Hopefully, the direction will continue in a positive trajectory in future competitive seasons. Growing the marching arts activity sits at the top of DCI’s list for the future. They intend to develop growth through continually elevating the DCI brand and expanding opportunities to fundraise, gain partnered sponsorships, and engage in other revenue-gaining endeavors to benefit the organization, each corps, and all participants, making the community stronger.⁹³¹ DCI remains one of the pillar organizations in the marching arts continuing to be an integral at propelling the progression of artistic innovation. Overall, DCI aims to continue to be a positive outlet for members, staff, volunteers, and audiences alike.

⁹²⁹ Hinshaw Interview.

⁹³⁰ Dan Acheson, “What We Do!” (slideshow presentation, DCI Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN, January 2024), 40.

⁹³¹ Acheson, “What We Do!” 41.

Because the marching arts are ever-changing and expanding, DCI is one component of the many key organizations driving the progression of marching arts forward. As the 2024 season approaches, staff and members of corps will continue to push limits, providing benefit to its participants. Overall, there is still optimism and limitless possibility for what is to come throughout the activity of drum corps and the organization known as Drum Corps International.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “2023 Recommended Shoe List for Marching Musicians.” Drum Corps International. 2023. Accessed March 10, 2024.
<https://www.dci.org/static/recommended-shoe-list-for-marching-musicians>.
- “2024 A Corps Staff.” BDPA. Blue Devils Performing Arts. Accessed May 9, 2024.
<https://www.bluedevils.org/programs/a-corps/seasons/?module=staff>.
- “About SoundSport.” n.d. SoundSport®. Accessed February, 21, 2024.
<https://soundsport.com/about-soundsport/>.
- Acheson, Dan, interview by Kara Metzger, January 20, 2024.
- Acheson, Dan. 2024. “What We Do!” Slideshow presentation, DCI Annual Meetings, Indianapolis, IN, January, 2024.
- “About Drum Corps International (DCI).” Drum Corps International, Accessed December 30, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/static/about-drum-corps-international>.
- Adamkickface. “Santa Clara Vanguard 2018 (Highcam).” YouTube video, 13:52, December 23, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2ibOFG2F5E>.
- Auditore, Steve. *2006 Project Persona*. June 2006. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2007 Project Persona*. June 2007. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2008 Project Persona*. January 2009. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2010 Project Persona*. 2010. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2011 Project Persona*. May 2011. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2012 Project Persona*. July 2012. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2013 Project Persona*. September 2013. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2014 Project Persona*. September 2014. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2015 Project Persona*. July 2015. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2016 Project Persona*. September 2016. Distributed by Drum Corps International.

- Auditore, Steve. *2017 Project Persona*. 2017. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2018 Project Persona*. September 2018. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2019 Project Persona*. September 2019. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve. *2022 Project Persona*. January 2023. Distributed by Drum Corps International.
- Auditore, Steve, phone conversation with Kara Metzger, January 17, 2024.
- Atkins, Christopher Michael. "A Brief History of the Band Program at Stephen F. Austin University since its Inception to the Present (1926-1998)." MA thesis, Stephen F. Austin State University, 1998.
- Bailey, Wayne, Cormac Cannon, and Brandt Payne. *The Complete Marching Band Resource Manual: Techniques and Materials for Teaching, Drill Design, and Music Arranging*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Battisti, Frank L. *The New Winds of Change: The Evolution of the Contemporary American Wind Band/Ensemble and Its Music*. Delray Beach, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 2018.
- Biggers, Samuel Carter, Jr. "On Iowa! A History of the University of Iowa Marching Band, 1881–2012." DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2013.
- Boo, Michael. "John Brazale visual caption award winners of the 2010s." Drum Corps International. March 4, 2020. Accessed March 18, 2024.
<https://www.dci.org/news/john-brazale-visual-performance-caption-award-winners-of-the-2010s>.
- Boo, Michael. "Remembering Jim Ott." Drum Corps International, February 17, 2006. Accessed December 30, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/news/remembering-jim-ott>.
- "Bylaws." Drum Corps International, Revised 2021.
- Cabanela, Alex. "Colts 2015-... And A Shot Rings Out: A Johnny Staccato Murder Mystery (High Cam)." YouTube Video, 12:20, April 19, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWLtSw6EOg0>.

- Cadets Arts & Entertainment Board of Directors. "Cadets Arts & Entertainment (CAE) Files for Bankruptcy." The Cadets corps news, April 2, 2024, accessed April 5, 2024.
https://cadets.org/cadets-arts-entertainment-cae-files-bankruptcy?fbclid=IwAR1ASDBCZECAvIVS86gZy3g-v3wLSZquYdd8xnQRwsoI5wQOpBo-OXPJ5-w_aem_AcVctjoGeG5I9nuoqcM39GHNf5oGslFhzp4C2Y8IQj0yxnwXxFARY5U4f_DnI1gf3Ai6qBLtQztOb2ocoLR8RiQX.
- Carolina Crown, "Carolina Crown to Collaborate with Composer John Mackey," Carolina Crown, (February 18, 2024).
<https://www.carolinacrown.org/news/carolina-crown-to-collaborate-with-composer-john-mackey>.
- Clark, James. *Connecticut's Fife and Drum Tradition*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011.
- Corps Membership- Colts Drum and Bugle Corps. Advertisement, 1960s.
- Colt .45 Drum and Bugle Corps #52001. Advertisement.
- Cook, Bruce Farrell. "Twenty-five Years of Music Competition under University Interscholastic League Administration," DMA dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975.
- "DCI Community Code of Conduct and Ethics Guidelines." Drum Corps International, Adopted 2021.
- de Menezes, Glauber Rafael. "Four Corners The Cavaliers 2001." YouTube video, 12:36, March 20, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_qG4PlcR7s.
- de Seriere, Jeffrey E., II. "The Band Program at California State University, Long Beach: Its History and Contributions to the Wind Band Medium." MM thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2018.
- Drum Corps International. "2014 Santa Clara Vanguard/Scheherazade: Words 2 Live By/ San Antonio." YouTube video, 5:09, November 29, 2021.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaK_xRNXT60.
- Drum Corps International. "2017 Bluecoats - Jagged Line." YouTube video, 2:33, December 13, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlRT_7mek98.
- Drum Corps Archive. "Blue Devils 2010 - Through a Glass, Darkly." YouTube Video, 12:04, October 10, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brSJSDRfmd0>.
- Drum Corps International. "2011 Cadets- Between Angels and Demons." YouTube video, 1:04, December 13, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIVtAx_Ka80.

- Drum Corps International. "2022 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule." November 21, 2021, Accessed December 30, 2023, <https://www.dci.org/news/2022-drum-corps-international-tour-schedule>.
- Drum Corps International. "2023 DCI World Championship Caption Award Winners." YouTube video, 1:33, August 17, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIZf46_aEJY.
- Drum Corps International. "DCI Awards Ceremonies of the 2000s." YouTube video, 1:25:29, August 6, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epnr67VdnfU>.
- Drum Corps International. "Community Code of Conduct, Ethics Guidelines and Expectations for Participating Organizations." Indianapolis, IN, 2018, rev. 2021.
- Drum Corps International. "DCI Statement, January 9, 2022." January 9, 2022. Accessed February 21, 2024. <https://dci.org/news/dci-statement-january-9-2022?fbclid=IwAR3MJVH5c5CKb2jsuAsSJV4-kWEdYIt2dYdJ5ak3QvhbQk8ur3Vby1MtLo>.
- Drum Corps International. "Drum Corps International appoints Nate Boudreaux as CEO." September 28, 2023. Accessed December 30, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/news/drum-corps-international-appoints-nate-boudreaux-as-ceo#>.
- Drum Corps International. "Every Best Visual Performance caption winner of the 2000s." Drum Corps International. March 9, 2022. Accessed March 18, 2024. <https://dci.org/news/every-best-visual-performance-caption-award-winner-of-the-2000s>.
- Drum Corps International. "Every DCI Percussion Caption Award Winner of the 2000s." YouTube video, 6:39, April 20, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkJZgcoeXnZY>.
- Drum Corps International. "Every Donald Angelica General Effect Caption Award Winner of the 2010s." YouTube Video, 3:11, March 12, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh5r3j1g8-0>.
- Drum Corps International. "'Fill Every Corps' project aims to help corps #MarchForth into 2022 with full ranks." Drum Corps International, March 3, 2022. Accessed March 10, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/news/fill-every-corps-project-aims-to-help-corps-marchforth-into-22-with-full-ranks>.
- Drum Corps International. "General Effect." revised March 31, 2016.
- Drum Corps International. "Jay Kennedy- DCI Hall of Fame." January 26, 2008. Accessed January 7, 2024. https://www.dci.org/static/jay_kennedy.
- Drum Corps International. "Judging and the adjudication system." *Drum Corps International* (July 29, 2002), <https://www.dci.org/news/judging-and-the-adjudication-system>.

- Drum Corps International. "John Phillips: Inducted in 2015." *Drum Corps International*, n.d. accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.dci.org/static/john_phillips.
- Drum Corps International. "Madison Scouts Will Open Ranks to All Genders." Drum Corps International. July 7, 2019. Accessed May 12, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/news/madison-scouts-will-open-ranks-to-all-genders#>.
- "Drum Corps International: Marching Music's Major League." Drum Corps International: Marching Music's Major League. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.dci.org/>.
- Drum Corps International. "Member corps vote to cancel the 202 DCI Tour." March 26, 2020. Accessed February 28, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/news/member-corps-vote-to-cancel-2020-dci-tour#>.
- Drum Corps International. "Music Effect/Brass Performance/Ensemble Music/Percussion Performance 2." revised March 1, 2004.
- Drum Corps International. "Official Scores: Past Champions." Accessed March 19, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/scores/past-champions>.
- Drum Corps International. "Percussion Caption Award Winners of the 2010s. Facebook, February 20, 2020. 3:11. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=184116022898318>.
- Drum Corps International. "Schedule of 2021 events leading into Indianapolis." March 31, 2021. Accessed December 30, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/news/schedule-of-2021-events-leading-into-indianapolis>.
- Drum Corps International. "The Athleticism of a Drum Corps marching member." YouTube video, 3:14. September 30, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luP8O-KYok0>
- Drum Corps International. "Tour Restart Health & Safety Guidelines." Indianapolis, IN, 2021.
- Drum Corps International. "Visual Proficiency." revised March 31, 2016.
- Drumcorpsology. "Cadets 2015 - The Power Of Ten - French Horn Feature." YouTube video, :50, February 17, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8V3W9OJ7bo>.
- Exothermic. "(Not) Kinetic Noise (Bluecoats 2015)." YouTube video, 12:28, January 7, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJ09RF_Axpk.
- Farris, Jacii. "Charges filed against form Allentown Cadets director." *WFMZ TV 69 News*, November 27, 2018, Updated September 24, 2020. https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/charges-filed-against-former-allentown-adets-director/article_71ab0fea-04c9-5054-9ded-015afd14ca03.html.

- Ferguson, Michquelena Potlunas. "Oral Histories of Women Instrumentalists in College Marching Bands Post-Title IX." DMA diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2021.
- Fitz, Tony. "Definitely Not Colts 2014~ The Dark Side Of The Rainbow." YouTube video, 14:01, March 30, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pekEwylMg>.
- FloMarching. "The Drill Down: No More Field Judges In DCI 2019." YouTube video, 30:34, March 1, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4vBiB5d_nE.
- Fuller, John Allen. "A Descriptive Analysis of the Eleven Big Ten Conference Marching Band Programs." DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 1995.
- Gaillet, Lynée Lewis. "(Per)Forming Archival Research Methodologies." *College Composition and Communication* 64, no. 1 (2012): 35–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23264916>.
- Geli, Elizabeth. "DCI's New 2014 Rules." *Halftime Magazine*, (March 24, 2014), <https://halftimemag.com/noteworthy/dci-s-new-2014-rules.html>.
- Giachetti, Jason J. "A Qualitative Analysis of Front Ensemble Arrangements for Drum Corps International Finalists and Applications to Marching Band Programs." DMA dissertation, Five Towns College, 2022.
- Griffith, Jeff. "George Zingali color guard caption award winners of the 2010s." Drum Corps International. February 19, 2020. Accessed March 18, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/news/george-zingali-color-guard-caption-award-winners-of-the-2010s>.
- Griffith, Jeff. "Highlights: 2024 Drum Corps International Tour Schedule ." *Drum Corps International*. November 15, 2023. Accessed December 30, 2023. <https://www.dci.org/news/highlights-2024-drum-corps-international-tour-schedule#>.
- Gubrium, Jaber F., et al., eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research : The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2012.
- Guthrie, Kenneth Ray. "Changing Marching Styles: Traditional Marching Band to Drum Corps Style." Ed.D. dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1983.
- Hinshaw, Richard, interview by Kara Metzger, January 9, 2024.
- Hinton, Tim. "Dues and Don'ts of Paying for Drum Corps." Marching Arts Education. Accessed March 14, 2024. <https://marchingartseducation.com/paying-for-drum-corps/>.

- Hinton, Tim (interviewee). Mykah Burroughs, Melissa Burroughs, Brian Creswell (interviewers). Episode 1182: Getting Crown Down the Road. *Marching Arts Roundtable*. Podcast audio.
<https://marchingartseducation.com/1182-getting-crown-down-the-road/>.
- Hjelmervik, Kenneth, and Richard C. Berg. *Marching Bands; How to Organize and Develop Them*. New York: Ronald Press, 1963.
- Holston, Kim R. *The Marching Band Handbook: Competitions, Instruments, Clinics, Fundraising, Publicity, Uniforms, Accessories, Trophies, Drum Corps, Twirling, Color Guard, Indoor Guard, Music, Travel, Directories, Bibliographies, Index*. 3rd ed. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2004.
- Huxtable, Nathan R. "Making the Man in North American Drum Corps: Masculinities and Militaristic Music in Performance." MA thesis, University of California Riverside, 2022.
- Ian, Ian. "BLUECOATS BAKERY 2014 (Tilt)." YouTube video, 12:11, February 9, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulLI9MtkA-s>.
- Johnson, R. Burke, and Larry B. Christensen. *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017.
- kayak-racecar. "2007 Cadets This I Believe." YouTube video, 11:41, September 1, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HAIMdwj7wk>.
- Klesch, Michael, interview by Kara Metzger, February 23, 2024.
- Leal, Kyri. "The Cavaliers 2006- Machine." YouTube Video, 12:43, February 15, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faD1MI4mTjk>.
- Maher, Erin K. "The Amplification Controversy in Drum Corps International: Technological Change and the Meaning of Tradition." MA thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011.
- MasterClass. "Drum Rudiments Explained: A Guide to Rudimental Drumming." MasterClass articles, (August 13, 2021), accessed January 7, 2024.
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/drum-rudiments-explained#>.
- McFarlane, Vicki, interview by Kara Metzger, December 27, 2023.
- McKenzie, Craig S. "A Timeline and History of the Band Program at the University of Miami." DMA dissertation, University of Miami, 2019.
- Metzger, Kara. *History of DCI 2000-2023, participant survey*. March, 2024. distributed by Kara Metzger.

- Miller, Nicholas Joseph. "Philosophies on Arranging for Marching Percussion: Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps, 1968 to 2023." DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2023.
- nick. "2008 Blue Devils - Constantly Risking Absurdity." YouTube Video, 12:12, July 18, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHOeHdqRwhA>.
- Rhodes, Stephen L. "A History of the Wind Band: Dr. Stephen L. Rhodes." Lipscomb University, July 7, 2007. <https://windbandhistory.neocities.org/>.
- Rock, Steven, and Serena Weren. "Care for the Marching Musician." In *Performing Arts Medicine, 1st Edition*. Edited by Lauren E Elson, 1-8. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2018.
- Rock, Steve. "Marching Arts: A Health Perspective." Slideshow presentation, Dubuque, IA.
- Rock, Steve, and Melody Higgins. "Health and Wellness for Marching Band." Slideshow presentation, Dubuque, IA.
- Ryder, Dan and Karen F. Ryder. *Techniques of Marching Band Show Designing System*. Wylie, TX: Dan Ryder Field Drills, 2016.
- "Policy & Procedures Manual." Drum Corps International, Last Updated February 2023.
- Potter, Dan, interview by Kara Metzger, January 29, 2024.
- "Schedule of Appearances." Printed document, Dubuque, IA, 1972.
- Scheivert, Joseph Elliot. "Big Life. Big Stage. Big Ten. An Examination of Big Ten Conference March Band Policies and Procedures concerning Social Media, Copyright, Relationships with Athletic Departments, and Behavioral Expectations." DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2018.
- "Scholarship Opportunities 2024." Drum Corps International, 2024. Accessed March 12, 2024. <https://dci.org/static/scholarship-opportunities-2024>.
- Seifert, Matthew. "2003 Cavaliers Spin Cycle." YouTube video, 12:34, July 23, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pF6WxaJl_4.
- Smith, Gary. *The System: Marching Band Methods*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2019.
- "Strategic Plan." Drum Corps International, 2017, revised 2018.
- Strickland, Tyler Lee. "On to Vict'ry, Strike Up the Band! A History of the Auburn University Band Program from 1991 to 2021." DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2022.

- Summerlin, Lane Wendell. "The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International." DMA dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2016.
- Tannert, Emily. "The Age out Rule." *Drum Corps International*. (October 24, 2005) <https://www.dci.org/news/the-ageout-rule>.
- T, Big. "Carolina Crown 2013 e=mc^2." YouTube video, 13:33, August 17, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6MJSfjXUgQ>.
- T, Big. "Phantom Regiment 2008 - Spartacus (HD)." YouTube video, 13:14, October 13, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmH2O1JFPfM>.
- Tez. List of All Caption Winners. Drum Corps Planet, July 28, 2014. <https://www.drumcorpsplanet.com/forums/index.php?/topic/160326-list-of-all-caption-winners/>.
- "The Best Marching Events. Streaming Live." FloMarching, 2006. https://www.flomarching.com/signup?utm_medium=ppc&utm_source=google&utm_term=136089221725.c.flomarching&utm_content=signup&utm_campaign=branded&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCCQiA84CvBhCaARIsAMkAvkJsZXdQPFfPeZCczH1eFUYIAQ4_QDm8I6t42mFq6eQKhK7v5f2CjEaAjoFwEALw_wcB.
- Waerzeggers, Nicholas. *Drum Corps International: The First Decade, 1972-1981*. Vol 1. Edited by Steve Vickers. Madison, WI: Sights & Sounds, 2010.
- Wallace, Darcy. "Open Class launches 2010 World Championships Week at Opening Ceremonies." Drum Corps International, August 10, 2010, accessed January 5, 2024. <https://www.dci.org/news/open-class-launches-2010-world-championships-week-at-opening-ceremonies>.
- Walkover, Zac. "2009 Carolina Crown: The Grass is Always Greener." YouTube video, 14:04, September 19, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImxQCBUKzdl>.
- "Week-End Trip to Rhinelander, Wis., & Park Falls, Wis." Printed document, Dubuque, IA, 1971.
- Alyssa Wells, "Falling out of Step: Belonging, Grit, and Drum Corps International's Moment of Reckoning." PHD dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2022.
- Whitehead, Taylor Leonard. "A Comparative Study of the Marching Bands at Four Historically Black Colleges and Universities." Ed.D. dissertation, Liberty University, 2023.
- Vickers, Steve ed., et al. *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps*. Madison, WI: Sights and Sounds Inc, 2002.

Vickers, Steve ed., et al. *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps Volume 2*. Madison, WI: Sights and Sounds, 2003.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Dan Acheson

1. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?
2. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past twenty-three years?
3. What are the main jobs of the DCI?
 - a. Have any of these roles changed over the last twenty years?
 - b. What is the structure of staff within the DCI organization?
4. For the board of directors, and other membership, what types of committees exist?
 - a. Is there a difference between voting members and other corps?
 - i. At the moment are there any corps that are not voting members?
5. What type of operating budget does DCI utilize versus individual corps in participation?
 - a. What types of budgetary aspects does DCI cover for individual corps?
 - b. What types of budgetary items does DCI utilize for itself?
6. In terms of overseeing yearly tours, what considerations go into this process?
 - a. What contributed to DCI making their final performance in Indianapolis yearly instead of changing as it had in the past?
7. Describe the process of the DCI annual meetings.
 - a. Who/what are the subcommittees?
 - b. Describe the various “rules congress” proceedings.
 - c. How are these committees continued throughout the year when not all corps are together?
8. When does DCI intervene with corps that do not follow the rules of the organization?
 - a. Describe the processes that happen to include corps input (yearly meetings, rules congresses, etc).
9. Share some changes that DCI has made over your time as president in regards to the overall organization.
 - a. Potentially share ideas regarding the G8, open class corps, and the upbringing of sound sport.
 - b. What are changes that have been particularly positive for the activity as a whole and when were they initiated?
10. Share some changes that DCI and their corps have made regarding safety for membership.
11. Describe the IN-Step initiative and how that has changed over time?
 - a. Are there other similar initiatives that DCI has started?
12. Would you share DCI’s stance on their response to COVID-19 and how you witnessed corps adapt to this struggle? Have we regained full strength since this shut down?
13. What are trends to the drum corps activity you have seen since 2000?
 - a. What have been major changes for drum corps? (potential categories to take note of: daily life, educational, show design, ensemble makeup, etc)
14. Looking forward, what is on the horizon for DCI and the activity?
15. Anything else you would like to share for the record?

Full Transcript with Dan Acheson

[Kara Metzger]

Good morning.

[Dan Acheson]

It's been a while since I've zoomed.

[Kara Metzger]

It was such a thing of a couple of years ago, right?

[Dan Acheson]

Right.

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you so much for agreeing to do this today.

[Dan Acheson]

Oh yeah, I'm sorry I spent a couple of weeks of you trying to pin me down. But, I'm trying to get used to this new thing called retirement.

[Kara Metzger]

That's totally fair and you should get used to that. How is retirement?

[Dan Acheson]

Okay. Okay. I don't know yet.

[Kara Metzger]

Everything you can have dreamed of?

[Dan Acheson]

No, not at all. I'm not on a warm island somewhere.

[Kara Metzger]

Hopefully one day.

[Kara Metzger]

Fair enough. Cool. So, I'm just so you know, I'm recording the meeting today so that I can get the transcripts into my document and then be able to quote you exactly. Obviously, I have the transcripts running.

[Dan Acheson]

Right.

[Kara Metzger]

We'll start with a similar question for you then. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, do you want me to go before 2000?

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, that'll give some context.

[Dan Acheson]

I started marching in what we refer to now as a community-based corps back in 1969 through 1974. I was with the Queen City Cadets in Cincinnati, Ohio. Back then, the organizations were all very community based.

And then I migrated to the Madison Scouts. Where I was fortunate enough to be in the 1975 Madison Scouts, the national champions at the time. And then, I took a couple of years off, went back. I finished up marching in 1978 with the Scouts.

All of all in that time, I was teaching. I taught at local corps in Cincinnati, brass and visual. Then. I spent a little bit of time in Wausau, Wisconsin with the Wausau Story before they went away.

And then, one thing led to another, I was with the Pride of Cincinnati drum and bugle corps. Where I was teaching a little brass and then I started working with visual. I actually turned into a drill designer in my last year there. The drill was already designed, but it was designed for a much larger corps than what we had. So they said, 'Hey, why don't you, see if you can fix this.' I did.

I was one of many people for the founding year of the Pride of Cincinnati winter color guard. As a result of those connections, I started teaching high school marching bands, writing drills, and those types of things.

Then I got into judging pretty heavy, in what was then, the Ohio Color Guard circuit. I did a lot of judging, was a judge training person.

In 1985 somebody asked if I would consider being the executive director of the Glassman. Well, one thing led to another, and I said yes to that. That was a full-time job back then, and I was there for 10 years. While I was there, for 8 of those years, I was the instructor of marching and maneuvering for the University of Toledo, Rocket Marching Band. There I, wrote the drill. Which you know, in college band there's like 6 shows or whatever a year, and had a lot of fun with that. It was a good side gig. The timing was right; it was in the fall, as we were building the Glassman.

As a result of my involvement with the Glassman, the Glassman qualified for the top 25. Which meant, I became a representative for the Glassman on the DCI board of directors. Back then, the entire membership was the board of directors. So, if there were 25 corps and there were 25

representatives. And then, I did a little committee work in DCI. Also, back then, drum corps Midwest existed. I served on their executive committee a couple of years as well in that process.

And then, one thing led to another, and I was asked if I would become the chairman of the board of directors for Drum Corps International, while I was with the Glassman. This was in early 1995, January. I was elected to that position. Unfortunately, at that time, we were transitioning from a 22-year executive director into a one-year executive director. And he wasn't working out very well. So, I spent most of my next 9 months trying to navigate through a bunch of things that were going on there. DCI was in dire financial straits at that point in time.

Well, we let the one-year guy go in September. And, we weren't going to start the search process again. We were trying to figure out if we could find somebody from within. I'm on the record as saying I want absolutely nothing to do with that job.

[Kara Metzger]

That worked out really well for you, didn't it?

[Dan Acheson]

It worked out so well. 28 years, 2 months later, here I am.

So, all the while, through my transitions, I had a little bit of a thing personally that I wanted to take care of. In 1999, while CEO of Drum Corps International, I decided to go to college. Because I skipped that part and that period of time. I just took a 'one class at a time' approach. I found a fast-track program in a community college which led me to my bachelor's degree at National Lewis University in the Chicago area. Within 5 years, I was able to complete that and still do my job with the Drum Corps International somehow.

So, all of those things, like I said, pretty much lead me into 28 years in this role of CEO. Now, I'm retired.

[Kara Metzger]

Your CEO is such a big tenure drum corps community that it seems fitting for me to have the stopping of this project in 2023. It was like, now someone else can write the next history of drum corps because now Dan Acheson is gone and it will be something different, right?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah. It'll be something different for sure. Absolutely.

[Kara Metzger]

Amazing. Well, thank you for that. The next question is just meant to be super general because there will be more specific questions to follow. In your personal opinion, how has DCI changed over the past 23 years?

[Dan Acheson]

So many things.

Well, prior to 2000, as I mentioned, we had some financial difficulties. By the time we got to 2000, we had pretty much straightened all that out, and we were on the good side of operating a

business and moving it forward. From that point on, it's changed quite a bit. In the early years, we've gone through a consolidation, of sorts. In that, we used to have Drum Corps Midwest, Drum Corps East, Drum Corps South, and Drum Corps West. Well, the good directors of Drum Corps West in 1999 said, 'hey, what if DCI operated our business for us? We'll still be Drum Corps West, but DCI can operate our business. It'll just be Drum Corps West under the DCI umbrella.'

That had always made sense to me because there was this weird dynamic of first season, second season. The first season was Drum Corps, West/Midwest, etc. And then, the DCI season. They had their own executive directors; they had their own offices. Often times, through scheduling, they would pit one show against another because the calendars would overlap. None of that made sense to me. It would make more sense if we all sat down and put the schedule together. So, when they came to us with that, we were like, 'okay, that makes sense.'

So that consolidation started with the Drum Corps West and then led to 2003-2004 when, ultimately, everything was happening under the DCI umbrella. That made DCI the activity, more efficient, smarter at scheduling. Promotions made a little bit more sense. It wasn't Drum Corps West competing against DCI for attention. We were trying to make sure everybody was getting their attention, that type of thing. So, most certainly that really kicked in in the early 2000 to see the activity evolve. At least on the event promotions and, governance side with, Drum Corps International.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you. And then the next question that I have just pertains to , what are the main jobs within DCI? And what roles have maybe changed over the last 23 years here?

[Dan Acheson]

So, we had a much smaller staff in 2000 than we do today. In 2000, we were focused on major events that we would operate. And then managing, what we call our, tour event partners shows like in Dubuque, Iowa. Our contracted events. As opposed to DCI operated events. The DCI operated events, we maybe had 8 or so back then. And it, of course, included the World Championships. We would, every year, be looking for a site for 2-3 years down the road for World Championships because we moved World Championships around a lot back then. It was part of what we did. And then, of course, we had big events like Allentown, Pennsylvania. Then, usually a 'mid-season preview,' what we used to call it, those types of things. And then a couple of others that we operated.

But, we really started getting into Texas more. Every time we would start a show in Texas, DCI would operate it. Because there were no corps and there was no base of operation down there to make that happen. Except for the awesome music boosters that are down there and band programs and so forth.

So, through that, I guess you could say we were an event promotions company. And we managed the governance of the organization.

But it's evolved now. Fast forward to today, there's actually an ensemble services arm, and that ensemble services arm is more responsible for corps housing. For example, in 2000 if you were with a corps, most of your housing was secured by yourself. A few events would be secured by

DCI. Now, just about every event is secured by DCI. So, it takes a staff of 3 people to manage that. And make all the arrangements and make all the dots connect the way the corps would like them to. With that, though, is the corps experience on the road. It used to be, 'figure it out.' Now it's DCI trying to do everything they can to make it as easy as we can for the corps. The corps, make no mistake, they're autonomous, they do their own thing. But, they do depend on more services today, certainly than they did then. There's more emphasis there.

Today, it's always hard to say this because it sounds like we didn't really have a focus on it in the past, we did but, not as formally as we do today, and that topic is participants safety/participant protection. Today, wildly better than it was in 2000. Partly because that was always deemed the responsibility of the corps. The corps would just interact with DCI. There was no regulation to the degree that we would get into anybody's business related to their policies and all that of thing. Fast forward to today, we don't tell the corps what their policy should be. But we do give them guidelines as to what we would expect them to be. So, there's a little bit of a difference there in how the structure works within the organization.

We operate a lot more events today directly than we used to. We have a ticketing service. Even a show like Dubuque, Iowa that is contracted, might even contract us as well to do the ticketing for their show. Those are kind of entrepreneurial ways we have found to get a little bit more to support the kind of staff that we would like to keep in place to be able to manage all these events. Out of the 80-90 events that DCI has, there's probably 70% of those are ticketed by DCI. It makes it a little smoother for promotions, more social media support, more direct email support, all of those kinds of things. Which of course, back at the beginning of 2000, we didn't have any of that. A very minimal amount of promoting all the other events. They would each promote themselves. Which didn't make sense either. They should do both, right? There should be both going on.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, of course. Staff wise, what is the structure of the staff within the DCI organization currently speaking?

[Dan Acheson]

Like any structure, there's an operations arm and that takes care of ticketing. It takes care of logistics on the road. Under that umbrella is travel. We do all the judge travel, all the event staff, our weekend warriors travel, and of course DCI staff travel for the summer. So, that falls under operations. Operations also looks after the office that we lease and anything that goes into the support for anything related to the office.

We have an IT arm. Which is a little more robust. It's outsourced now, but we used to have in-house, but it's outsourced now. It takes care of, as you can imagine, the infrastructure for DCI, the hardware, all that stuff. Also the website, social media platform, all of that stuff is outside of the office but still in that department. And they, as a part of that department, there's kind of an integration with flow marching and what we do with that agreement that we have with that streaming service and those types of things.

Also, under operations. Was copyright compliance and so forth.

Then there's the ensemble services, which I mentioned, which is really know, a small little group of people. But, the director of ensemble services looks after trying to find ways to get cheaper food for corps, other consolidated kind of purchasing, and that type of thing. The corps housing, that I mentioned already [is housed here]. And then, that's also where participant safety, is in that realm as well. That same group works on corps compliance. We have to make sure the corps are doing everything that they're supposed to be doing in order to participate with Drum Corps International.

And then there's, of course, a finance group, accounting, they look after all the transactions and so forth.

And then the big one is events. There's all the events that DCI manages. Like, getting the venues, securing contracts, working/coordinating with local organizing committees those types of things. That's all managed by the events team. The events team now has 3 full-time and then dozens, as I mentioned before, 'weekend warriors' that come and go.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, awesome. In terms of the board of directors, and other membership, what types of committees exist? And how is the board of directors structured within DCI now as compared to before?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, so the quick history is in 1972 DCI was founded to be a very elitist organization. If you scored in the top 12 you got to be a member of the board of directors. Well in 1988 that got expanded to the top 25. Now you have 25 board members, which can be unwieldy for an association. So, there was an executive committee that looked after a lot of the governance. But it would still be a budget approval, 'line by line' with 25 representatives sitting around a table and it was not very efficient.

Well, the reason I the reason I tell you all that is because in the 2000, in 2008, the membership of DCI had the wisdom to separate the board of directors. From the membership and allow the fiduciary responsibilities to go on to a board of directors that's elected. And then the membership, retained its rights for bylaw changes, accepting whoever is a member (or not) into the organization, and the election to the board of directors.

Well, the middle one of those, the accepting membership, as I told you, competition got you a membership seat. And that doesn't, happen anymore. So, what has evolved really in the last 10 years is this approval process/evaluation process. If a corps wants to go from being a SoundSport Team to an open class corps, there's criteria they have to fulfill. In order to go from an Open Class to a World Class, there's criteria that they have to fulfill. And even if they fulfill it, the membership still has to vote in that group, should they want to become a full member of DCI.

There are certain benefits to that. Obviously, having a representative at the table influences the activity, being able to run for a board seat, those types of things.

So, there are now 9 board members. 6 of which are affiliated with a corps and 3 that are completely independent of corps so that we always have that 'outside insight,' if you will, as to how things should go. So that board of directors looks after the business. They hire the CEO. They monitor all the committees, basically. In primary committees, of course, like a governance

committee, which is a combination of nomination committee and a group that make sure that governance is working for the organization. Then the finance committee, which is obviously important. And an audit committee. Every year, DCI goes through an independent audit, and the audit committee make sure that that's all done appropriately and so forth. They're separate and apart from the finance committee. There's a membership affairs committee.

And let me pause for a second. There's a deck, that I'm going to send you a PowerPoint deck, that we use for orientation for new directors that will help you with some of this along the way as well.

But, the membership affairs committee actually is what it says. It's member organization representatives that talk about things like that evaluation process that I was talking about.

It also addresses. the member experience. Best practices discussions between corps. How do you feed you're, 250 people? Well, we do this. How do you do it? Do I need a new food truck? Don't I need a new food truck? How do you manage housing? Where do you find a new corps director? You know, all those kinds of things. So that's membership affairs [committee].

Let's see, I'm trying to remember any other really strongly relevant committees.

There's a CEO succession committee. Really, it's a succession committee. It's one of the things that I kept trying to impress the point on. I wasn't the only one leaving. We had a long-term CFO that left, also. There's also a judge community of a couple of people that are running that. They have been doing it for 25 years. So, I advised that they keep a succession committee to keep their eye on those types of transitions. Even though, the CEO appoints the judge administrator and things like that. The CEO, especially now, is going to need some help with those decisions going forward.

So, and then there's a CEO assessment committee, where they do an annual review of the CEO. So, it's a smaller committee and then they submit it to the board of directors, the directors provides feedback, and then they do a sit down with the CEO and that type of thing.

And whatever I missed will be in that deck.

[Kara Metzger]

Great, thank you so much for that. Is there a difference in DCI between the voting membership versus non-voting members? What are the benefits to being a voting member?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, the voting member you have, like I said, a seat at the table, which means you get to influence policy and anything going forward. You get to serve as someone who elects a board member or board members, right? And then you can also serve as a board member if your organization is a member of DCI.

And the way it's structured is the membership is the corps themselves. It's not any one individual. So the Colts are a member organization. So, when you walk into a membership meeting, you notice they have little placards and Vicki will be sitting behind the Colts placard. But now that she's on the board of directors, when she's at the boardroom the placard says 'picky' on it.

So, the mindset is you represent your organization when you're at the membership meetings. And then at the board, of course, you represent the activity.

There's some financial benefits also. There's a pool of funds on an annual basis, that just the membership share that is highly weighted for competitive advantage and so forth. There's a balance in there too for longevity and things like that. It's one third of all that, maybe less than that now, it's more like 25% of that pool is what is distributed to the corps. There's been a lot of evolution in the last 10 years and making sure that all corps are getting paid when they perform. And then, including open class, as well as all age now, and then making sure that there's kind of a balance there because it costs the Colts theoretically as much to go from point A to point B, as it does the Blue Stars as it does the Jersey Surf. So, they should all be getting a certain amount of money that's the same. Pay for play as we refer to it.

This was related to governance, right? Okay, so what is the advantage. The next level is the World Class corps, of which we have 2 now, we have Genesis and Music City, for World Class corps, petitioning to be members. They're in kind of that, middle zone. Where they get to tour a World Class corps, but they don't have all the benefits of membership. They have access to the tour, which is hugely important.

And then you have the Open Class, which has access to the overall tour, but, with lots of conditions. If they are 6 corps already in a show for World Class competition, chances of an Open Class corps getting in that show are tougher. To get into that show so there's an opportunity where we look at it regionally. We try to make sure if there's a show on the East Coast and there's too many World Class corps in it, we still try to make sure that the Spartans or the Seventh Regiment can be in that show. Because it's their region. However, sometimes that doesn't even work out depending upon the circumstances.

The Open Class also has an open class tour. So now, every Open Class corps makes something. It's not a large sum of money, but they each make something when they come to a show, which is a big deal. So, so there's more and more advantages there.

And that's why, for instance, the SoundSport team that shows up at a regular show, that we get scheduled in there, they are not judged the same way as an Open Class or World Class quarters. So that's a benefit to be in the Open Class. If you really want to be a full-on, competitive corps on the tour, you start to be in the open class and then you evolve, if you wish, to becoming a World Class corps. The advantage to becoming a World Class corps again is access to the tour and [in turn] you make more money if you have access to that particular tour as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you. This is probably a loaded question. What type of operating budget does DCI utilize versus an individual corps? Obviously, you alluded to DCI helping out individual corps, how does that work?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, in the last few years, let's call it 'post-pandemic. We've been in the 12 to 14 million dollar range, as far as annual budget. And you'll see in that slide deck I send you you'll see a breakdown of what it what each bucket is from a revenue standpoint and an expense standpoint.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. In terms of overseeing yearly tours, what considerations do you have in this process?

[Dan Acheson]

I don't know, you've been in the trenches a long time. You know what really is DCI. Why do we do this and then why can't we get better housing? Why are we in this venue still, you know, those kinds of things? Yeah.

The director of the 21-time DCI champion Blue Devils, David Gibbs, he's not a fan of Allentown. It's funny because he's been a board member, he's been on the finance committee and so forth and he sees how wonderful Allentown is on the bottom line. But the question is, at that stadium, oh my gosh, and you know, all that kind of stuff. So it's like, yeah, it sometimes you scratch your head and go, 'why are we in Allentown?' But, 10,000 people showed up last year on a Saturday night that was magnificent. We do very well with that event.

So, those are some of the considerations with regards to setting up an event is. Is it in a location that works for DCI. It's no longer just a tunnel focus on DCI, like we're going to put on an event, we think we're going to get 3,000 people there, the high school stadium is big enough. Let's go.

[We consider things like]

Oh, there's no parking for the buses. Where are the buses and trucks going to park?

Oh my gosh, no one wants to house cores at this particular show....Yeah, but it's a cool stadium. And when you get 3,000 people to show up.

Yeah, it's not going to work.

So, we have to take all of that into consideration. That's evolved quite a bit over the years. The other thing, we're looking now, even more directly at the corps member experience. What are they going to experience from the time they pull into the parking lot through the time they leave the parking lot? Is the warm-up zone great? Is it as good as it can be? It's really where we're at adding a lot of this. Do they have to park the trucks a mile away where they have to haul their props all the way where they have to haul their props all the way? That's not good.

Sometimes, we just do that because you know what? ... 10,000 people are showing up. But, we try not to over burden that situation, right?

So, those are some of the factors that are put into it.

And of course, when we put the tour together. [Questions like] How many miles between stops? Can we get everybody housing? If they want to take a day off in between, there's a myth out there that DCI tells the corps where to go. We certainly lay it out for the corps, this is where we would like you to go and then we start working with them on what they want to make their experience happen. For instance, a couple of years ago the Troopers director goes you know, 'I'm happy to go this direction, but I'd rather go this direction.'

I said, 'So why do you want to go that direction? I just want to understand it.'

He goes, 'I want to give a free day in Washington DC to the corps.'

I'm like, 'Yea, that's a really good reason. So let's make sure we can get you to go that way.'

So, when those kinds of things come up, we try to take those into consideration as well.

The environment has given us a hard time with these summer tours, especially in Texas and especially in the southeast. We're taking into consideration not just the event itself and where it's located, but what time can we start it. So that it makes sense for not only the audience, but for the corps as well. For instance, in Texas, the sun goes down at about 8:15. That's about when the first World Class corps is stepping off at each of those events. And primarily only World Class corps in that region when we do the tour. It doesn't mean that we're going to let the Open Class go on in the middle of the afternoon. We don't like doing that. Sometimes it happens. But, for the most part, we're trying to do everything we can. The challenge with the event starting at 8:15 is if there are 10 corps in it, we're ending at 11. A lot of ordinances end at 10 for sound ordinances. So, there's all those types of considerations that go into it.

But it's funny, the first thing we do is, okay, I found the stadium. Great. It's on Google. Let's look at it. And then you're looking all around it and there's no parking lots and it's like, okay, that's not going to work. What else we got?

And also, so in the 2000s the evolution of Google Maps has been awesome for planning events. Yeah.

[Kara Metzger]

Amazing. What contributed to making the final performance in Ind, (Indianapolis) yearly for DCI? I want to that started in 2009.

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, the first the first one at Lucas Oil Stadium in 2009. The deal actually took place in 2006. We had been talking with 'Visit Indy', which is the Convention of Business Bureau Arm, but there's so much more than that in Indianapolis. A true leading organization here and attracting big events like the final 4 and the Super Bowl and the NBA All-star game is going to be here next month and all those kinds of things. So, the DCI World Championships is among them. And this was a part of a larger strategy that they had to attract organizations, like Music for All, Bands of America, Drum Corps International, and the Percussive Arts Society's annual meeting is here as well in an annual convention.

So, we were a part of that strategy. The challenge we had back then, which is really odd because when you look back at it, you're like, why did we fuss about all that so much? The fans and the corps wanted to be in an open-air stadium. When 'Visit Indy' approached us, I said, 'you're building another dome.' We had had a couple of shows in the dome here [Indianapolis] as well. Essentially, that's not going to work for World Championships. They're like, 'well, it's going to have a roof that opens.'

It was like, that'll satisfy everybody. Sure, that'll be great. Well, long story short, we have never opened the roof.

[Kara Metzger]

I've never seen the roof open.

[Dan Acheson]

Now, and it's because the corps are like, 'don't do that.' Especially color guards, right? They don't want that roof open. Wind coming from all directions. And, we can't open the roof if it's inclement weather because they aren't the kind of stadium where they can leave the roof open; they have to have it closed if there's even a drop of rain because they have nowhere for the raid to go inside the building. So they have to they have to close it. We don't get to control when it's open or not. And that's when the corps said 'we'd much rather know what it's going to be. Let's keep the roof closed.' The fans hated it at first but now they wouldn't have it any other way because it's a controlled environment they know the events going to go on. We've had minimal delays because of weather, just because of logistics behind the scenes. But, for the most part, we get to have the event go on.

The other thing that was controversial about moving it indoors was 'it's going to change the activity.' That was a direct quote from one of the directors... It's going to change the activity... And indeed, it has. His statement was more pointed towards a negative. I don't think we've seen a negative change in the activity as a result of being indoors, but we have seen a lot of change with electronics, and with the how brass lines are presented, and those types of things. The hard part of that evolution is that a lot of corps will design their shows for that indoor environment. And they only have one other show in an indoor environment that whole season. There's a lot of outdoor stress when there's weather coming. [There's always] something about props and costumes, more so than there used to be back in the day when it was, if there's no lightning, we could perform. Well, all not anymore. If there's a drizzle, we probably can't perform, at this stage.

[Kara Metzger]

That's fair. Awesome. Going back to more DCI, in general, not show oriented things. You all just had the annual meetings recently. Describe the process of those annual meetings, and what happens on any given annual meeting weekend?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, the annual meeting is where the membership, [based on] they're by-by-laws, they have to get together at least once a year. That can be via Zoom, which certainly was over the pandemic years. But they have to get together once a year and discuss the business of DCI. That's where they elect any open positions on the board of directors. With the 9, it's 3 positions every year that come up for election and if there's a vacancy, of course. They do that.

So, the membership typically gets together on Thursday and Friday of a weekend, and they take care of that kind of business. They talk about the competitive stuff which is part of what they're supposed to talk about. They hear from the judge administration and the director of competition as to how things went. Then, they advise them as to how they would like things looked at, going forward.

They hear some reports. They'll hear from the CEO as to how the business of DCI is doing. They'll have some sessions with experts that come in on health and wellness, mental wellness,

transportation, food, and nutrition. Over the years, just about anything you can imagine that they would talk about, they have.

What happens on Friday, is the Open Class corps directors get together and have their own caucus where they get to talk about their tour and their business. This year, for the first time, All-Age corps came together to do that very same thing. They all participated in those educational sessions and presentations that I mentioned.

Sometimes we'll have a vendor presentation as well at those. And a sponsor. The Marine Drum and Bugle corps gave a presentation. They are sponsor, as well as a great partner. We allowed time on the agenda for them to say hello. Basically, they're there for one reason with the corps, and that is to recruit. I just heard the stat that now it's over 80%, of their corps now is corps has corps (DCI) experience. Pretty remarkable, right?

[Kara Metzger]

That is.

[Dan Acheson]

The other groups that get together... The instructors and judges get together. There's an 'on-year' and an 'off-year' for them. This was an off year for them, although there were still 30-40 instructors and then the judge administration team, that got together to talk about the sheets and how the judging works, and all judging philosophy and so forth.

In the 'on-years,' I refer to this as our rules congress. Every other year you can submit proposals for rules changes, to what happens on the competition field. That'll be in 2025's meeting.

Then another group that gets together is the corps, boards. They have what's called the corps boards consortium. Board members from the Blue Devils, the Colts, the Jersey Surf, and so forth will sit in a room and talk about board development, best practices, fundraising, and those types of things.

And then to me, the most important group for the weekend is the drum majors. They get together and Gene Monterestelli has done a great job of leading them through a leadership session that's, two really intensive days. Did you go through that at all?

[Kara Metzger]

I did, yeah. For the 2015 season.

[Dan Acheson]

Alright, great. So, that happens as well. So that's all at the annual meeting.

There's also a September meeting that happens for the membership. The reason for that meeting is a debrief of the prior season and to finalize the schedule for the next season.

[Kara Metzger]

Nice, cool. Well, thank you for that. You answered all my sub questions, so I'm going to skip to the next question. When does DCI intervene with a corps that doesn't follow the rules of the

organization that you had mentioned, or the suggested ways that they should run and operate. When do you intervene as DCI?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, it's as soon as we know something is the best way to describe it. It depends on its severity. We will receive, now, into our portal, the whistleblower portal, we'll receive concerns over food management. Sometimes that is simple as there wasn't enough peanut butter and jelly out, to their plain just not feeding us. The first thing we would do in a situation like that is, 'let me know if I need to buy any more peanut butter and jelly.' In a not so serious way. But then if it is really a food service issue, the first thing that happens, when I was in place, I would just pick up the phone and call the director and go, 'what's going on here? Let me hear your side of the story.' There's always another side and we usually don't go after it very hard unless we've gotten like 5 or 6 of those kind of complaints for that one corps. Then we're like, wait a minute, 'you got you have some serious issues here, what are you doing to address it?'

And, and this is kind of fresh because it was a corps 2 years ago that had this issue that is a corps that really takes good care of their members. Well, they had a big food truck debacle and they really weren't managing it well. The crisis part of it. They were struggling through that. They finally got through it, but before they got through it, they certainly upset their corps members quite a lot and ran into a couple of times where they were a little short on meals which is never acceptable.

That's when that's how we intervene, they fix the problem and we monitor them fixing the problem. But you know that's one example. Anything related to participant safety, we jump in pretty quickly. If it's an individual complaint, our participant safety manager follows that through right away if they get that. If we get any kind of wind about it, we jump in pretty quickly.

The most recent issue with the Spirit of Atlanta, for example, we heard about it directly from the complainant. What DCI does in that situation, is we go back to the corps and go 'Tell us what's going on. Take care of this.' So, it's really up to the corps to take care of it.

But one thing led to another, and it became an issue where it there needs to be a probation here. There needs to be a few other considerations to make sure that you really do get this straighten out. The good side to that, now that we're there, is they did so much incredibly good work to straighten out their organization. Not only on those fronts, but on every front related to corps member care.

So it's almost immediate. The challenge we have, in terms of public facing is we don't talk about those things, publicly. It's just not appropriate for us to do so. And then that's when the social media lights up and they're like, 'DCI is not doing anything, and the corps is not doing anything.' There's an awful lot that goes on behind the scenes that isn't appropriate to talk about publicly. As long as the right people are being are part of that communication that's all that matters, really. And the problem is getting fixed, of course.

[Kara Metzger]

Yes, of course. Awesome. Thank you. Share some changes in DCI that have been made over time. There were a couple things that I had put down, like potentially the idea of the G8 (or the

top 8) tour of champions. I [also] know was a thing with the Open Class corps versus the division 2-3 corps. The upbringing of SoundSport. Or whatever you see fit.

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, that's all good stuff because as I mentioned earlier that probably the biggest significant change in how DCI operates is that governance change that took place in 2008.

In 2010 that was challenged because the top corps were frustrated that they felt like they needed to be in competition with each other more often. They felt like they should get more of the shares of what DCI was bringing in as a result because they're bringing the crowds into the stadium and so forth. And that stressor that happened created a divide, of course. It's not unlike other things in our society where you have the haves and the have nots. Even the top corps don't have much, but they're competitively successful. They were frustrated and it was a time when there was a little bit of complacency on my part, on part of DCI as an organization, on a part of all corps. They're needed to be a little bit more attention paid to all levels. That includes the top levels. Because they have everything there at the top. People are often like, 'well, they don't need any help, they're fine.' And it's like, well, no, they're not. They have their own experiences that they've invested in for their corps members, their own way about what they need and so forth. It's hard to see that if you're the 25th place corps or you're an Open Class court. Well, the good news is, we evolved as an organization. Where, hopefully, there's more of a balance there, top to bottom. The needs of the Blue Devils are so different than the needs of the Colts, that are so different than the needs of the Jersey Surf, or the Spartans, or the Seventh Regiment. And for DCI to represent all these groups and to try to do everything for everyone at the same level is almost, not right. There's just a little bit of [things to] take into consideration, this, this, this, this, and this, and make sure that everybody has access and so forth. Through that stress, like I said, there was a good compromise that came out of it. This 'Tour of Champions' tour was set up so that there were a few more opportunities where the top 8 would get together and compete. Well, that benefits everybody because we generate more revenue when that happens. As opposed to there's 2 from the top, 2 from the middle, 2 from the Open Class kind of a show. If there's, 4 or 5, top 8 corps in a show, in a drum corps market, that's going to draw people. So, with that there was more of a focus on, well, what we're missing now is... As I mentioned, I marched in a community corps way back in the day. Well, there was more people interested in what we did it seemed at that time. We replaced the community corps with the high school marching band. We didn't do that. It just happened, right? Where high school marching band kids became a part of it. It wasn't drum corps kids, doing drum corps. There was a difference in my day. Marching band or band was there, of course, but it wasn't competitive marching band, it wasn't what it is today.

With that, we started thinking about what we can do to start building the base of our activity at the very most foundational level. One was with the cost of a top corps, or middle corps, even an Open Class corps today, there's got to be an alternative or a small ensemble can get together and participate and that's SoundSport. So lower barriers to entry. Let's not put rules restrictions on them. Bring what you have [instrumentation wise]. Put an ensemble together, have fun, don't try to be the Blue Devils in all of this and just have fun with it. And that has evolved over time. A by product of SoundSport, which we thought was there, but we didn't realize how powerful it would be, is the international appeal to it. We have SoundSport branded events. In England, Ireland, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, we've had them in other places around the world as well. What that has done is it has caused corps from those areas, or bands, to want to come participate

in our SoundSport in Indianapolis. Which is good for revenue generation. It's good for expanding our brand worldwide and those types of things. So we have a domestic and a international component, the SoundSport that's grown quite a bit since 2013.

Let me cover, I didn't cover the Open Class so much. Division 2 and 3 was born out of class A/A60. Division 2 and 3 made sense because then we had a division 1, 2, and 3. Well, when it became the Open Class again was when division 3 was kind of set aside. And Part of the motivation for that is, there were a few Division 3 corps that were just as good as Division 2 corps. So, what we wanted to do is provide the Open Class with best in class. It doesn't matter your size, anything over 50, you're, part of this group.

Well, that evolved even further. When we came up with the concept of an all skate, if you will. Where the Open Class corps are invited to participate at the DCI World Championships at prelims. That was something that the corps at the time, and still, do desired very much. They're very proud of being a part of the Open Class, but they like the opportunity, especially those at the top of the open class, to really compete with the rest of the world if you will.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, awesome. I feel like I know the answer to this, when did Open Class start using the world class sheets for judging? I know that it was fairly recently. I can look that up.

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, you might have to look that up because I can't remember exactly either, but it wasn't that long ago I'm thinking in the 2012 range somewhere. So yeah.

[Kara Metzger]

What are some changes that have been particularly positive in the activity as a whole because of some of the things that you mentioned just in that last question.

[Dan Acheson]

The focus on the corps member experience, that's a more global focus and not just left up to each individual organization. Participant safety and participant protection is certainly a part of that. But health and wellness, including mental wellness, is also an ongoing discussion and education for all the groups. That evolution has been nothing but positive.

I've always been a very proud amateur meteorologist. That served to a certain point for events and so forth. But, one of the best things that happened to me personally is I attended a severe Weather Safety Summit in Norman, Oklahoma and I met a guy by the name of Dr. Kevin Kloesel. And from that point on it became very apparent that, whatever resources are necessary, we need to figure out how to have a direct connection to a meteorologist for every event. We didn't used to do that. We used to go, 'oh, it's raining, we should probably stop now.' Or, 'I see lightning out there.' It wasn't as robust as it is today by any measure. And I think that's such a positive change for us.

And of course, as a result of that, we're more aware of heat illness.

We're more aware of concussion protocol. No, we're not football, but it's amazing how many times our performers have a challenge with getting hit in the head, or how they fall on the ground

sometimes, or that rifle that's going through a line and didn't quite hit the mark, you know those types of things.

Having some kind of health care provider with a corps that's touring all the time and making sure that the health and wellness of every corps member is being looked after. It doesn't just extend to the corps member, it extends to everybody who's around the corps, the volunteers and the staff. They need to be taken care of as well. They need that rest day of rest as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome, thank you. Describe the INStep initiative and how that's changed over time.

[Dan Acheson]

The period of time. When our society was really focused in on issues for women, the 'Me Too' movement as it's been described, was a period of time for Drum Corps International to also be reflecting. To do everything we should be doing as an organization and as corps to make sure that there is never an issue with access for women. It was very focused INStep on women's issues. And some good strides, I won't say great strides, some good strides were made as a result. The biggest one, of course, is being awareness.

Drum Corps International was born out of an activity that was born out of military routes. Those military routes. Women were in the military, but they weren't in combat. There weren't as many women in the military. There weren't as many women involved in drum corps. In the 70s, we didn't have just A60, class A, we had an all-girl class. Where drum corps had all girls in them, as well. So how have we evolved from then? What can we do to open that up even more? Going forward, especially. What was that time period? 2015 or 2016?

And, are we doing open calls for our staff positions and those types of things so that those possibilities exist. As you know, being in the music education realm, how many female band directors of high schools are there? Well, 20 years ago, not so many. 10 years ago, a lot more, but not so many still. And now, even more, which is fantastic. So we're seeing more instructors that are women which is fantastic. And I'm being very delivered about focusing on women because there is an evolution that takes place.

In 2020 INStep, then, became more of an all encompassing DEI focused volunteer group. So what are we doing to allow access to all/everyone? The good history with DCI is certainly that we accept anyone. We certainly have our history that's not so good. But over time, it's never really been related to the membership themselves. And even to the corps, you used to reflect your community. I was in a very mixed group with the Queen City Cadets and just as much so with the Madison Scouts, in terms of race and background, economic background and so forth. But you know, now we see these drum corps have evolved into these elite, you have to audition for them. Well, then it starts getting into society's background. What kind of access did you have to good teaching in your high school, and in your middle school and so forth? And what kind of communities does that occur in usually? Well, suburbia. So, that leads to a whole another aspect of it.

But in 2020, again, society and DCI kind of a smack in the head while we were trying to figure out what we're doing with the pandemic, [the question] is what are we doing to be inclusive? Even today, we struggle with equity from an economic standpoint. It costs you \$5,000 to be a

member of a drum corps. That's just to pay your tour fees and tuition. It has nothing to do with what you have to do to get to the corps and the income that you're going to lose from being away all summer and those types of things. We struggle with that.

There's been establishment of the Legacy Fund, which is all for tuition for people that struggle but. We're nowhere near the amount of money that that needs to be to make it fully equitable. But INStep now focuses on issues related to best practices for making sure that transgender participants feel comfortable and that everyone is taking in the practice. Hiring staff that allows for open opportunities. You'll see a lot of times now corps are just doing an open call for a caption head. That didn't used to happen. You used to graduate, and you probably experience some of this, graduate through your corps into those positions. And then you hire for your sub captions, you hire people you know. And that just depends on who you know and who you hang out with.

So there's so much more awareness as related to that volunteer group. They admit as a group they haven't even scratched the surface. There needs to be a lot more awareness. There's been training, now I've gone through training. A couple of other staff members have gone through training to try to understand from our perspective, our privileged perspective, a little bit more of what's going on and why these things are, so important to us. And I'd say even, you know, since INStep was formed, not just as a result of INStep, but as a result of all of it, all of the other things that surround our awareness and our focus. Things have improved quite a bit in terms of who's involved and a little bit more deliberate consideration from corps and their hiring practices for various staff members and so forth.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Have there been similar initiatives to INStep that cover different things or is INStep kind of one of.

[Dan Acheson]

I think that was probably the first deliberate step. But, that's one thing where a lot of people are like, 'DCI just started caring for the corps members and protection, DCI just started caring about having more women in DCI.'

Hold on. It's something we have discussed over the years and I'm saying decades. You get to a point where at what level is this a DCI issue? Exclusively. It's always a DCI issue come to find out. However, how much control do we have over that fifth-grade teacher that points you more to a flute than they will a tuba because of your gender. We don't have any control over that. By the time they get to DCI and are auditioning for a corps, that's what we have.

How the corps deal with that now is obviously different, which is good. But we've been talking about these issues for a long time and best practice situations.

Probably the biggest thing that happened after our governance thing in 2008 is in 2018. DCI took a bold step, the board of directors did, and said 'here is our code of conduct' for the DCI community. These are your guidelines. We hadn't done that before. All our information was based on the competition and behave in yourself competitively, not all those other issues. And now, the board directors said, 'no, we have to do something here. We have to push this forward. It's opened us, It's exposed us more because people assume we're responsible for certain things.

People will assume we're responsible for hiring and firing the Colts staff, and we're not. But, we don't have that kind of regulatory control. Nor do I think DCI ever should. One of the things that makes DCI special is the fact that the corps are autonomous. And they get to build in their own way, who and what they want to be.

[Kara Metzger]

Would you share, DCI stance, in response to COVID-19 and what you witnessed in those few years when corps struggled? I'm sure DCI struggled because of revenue as well.

[Dan Acheson]

It was needless to say, a very dark time for the drum corps activity, certainly for society, but for the drum corps activity as well because there were some good people that we lost to start there as a result of COVID. The running the business and doing the drum corps thing through COVID was tough because the first thing we had to do, is we had to stop. That late March, 2020 meeting that we had where it was like, 'we're done. We're not going to tour this summer under any circumstances. We're not going to resurrect a tour, we're done until this gets figured out.'

Now let's start thinking about 2021. And in that process, we had weekly meetings all through that time period. Whether it was a board meeting, or a full membership meeting, or committee meeting, there were meetings [about] how do we how do we resurrect this? And of course we're waiting for more information to unfold through the CDC, the government, and everything else.

We formed, because we did think that we could do something, we didn't know what in 2021, we formed what was called the TRTF. It was a task force that was related to making sure we were doing the right thing with COVID. On that group we had a doctor that's been affiliated with the Colts who's used to work for the CDC. An infectious disease person. That person, led by a risk management person, and then a few other health professionals on that group made sure that we considered all the things. On a daily basis, we're watching the little maps that they had where you had hot zones and different colors and you know all that type of thing all throughout. And then we started seeing an emergence of activity in the spring of 2021. And we're like, 'well, we can't do a full tour. There's no way. And have COVID protocols.'

And this TRTF helped us establish the COVID protocols for a group that might choose to participate. All throughout we set forth a whole booklet of guidelines that you had to follow if you were going to participate on what we called the 'Celebration Tour.' That made it possible. The good news is we were starting to find out that COVID, while existent in young people, it didn't impact young people at the same level it did, senior citizens. So, it was manageable. The 5 day, set them aside quarantine there were a couple of corps that brought an extra bus so that they could call it the quarantine bus and keep people isolated and following all the protocols at the time that they could possibly follow.

Not all of them were followed to the nth degree because of the nature of the kind of activity [we are]. We're moving around the country. Even though it was ever so slight, but mask protocols were in place. We had testing in place. DCI was able to serve as a clinic to be able to purchase test kits at a real discount and make them available to the corps and those types of things. All of those protocols put in place were able to, I still to this day, say successfully put on the celebration events that we did in that 2-week period.

Had we not been able to do that our concern was, first and foremost, health, wellness, and safety. Always have to state that. But, but secondarily was, 'are we going to be relevant anymore? Are we going to just go away and not have this awesome experience for these many, many young people that want to participate in it? Is there anything we can do to preserve that safely and keep this thing going?'

The celebration definitely catapulted us into making that happen in 2022. The challenge, which you may have observed as an instructor at some level. In 2022, we were trying to learn how to drum corps again. And wow, that was, that was a tougher period of time for corps, then getting through the Celebration Tour was. They really struggled with that financially, with getting the right kind of help on the road, and all those types of things.

Which led us to 2023. Which was kind of a deep sigh of we made it. We're a little bit more normal now. We know how to manage this now. But still, I'm not going to say we're in a full recovery yet related to corps across the country. They're still struggling as a result of what happened 3 years ago.

[Kara Metzger]

What are the trends that you have seen in the drum corps community since 2000?

[Dan Acheson]

The corps themselves have trended more towards being better nonprofit organizations. They're so much better today than they were in 2000. We've had a lot of loss of drum corps in the 2000s mostly related to corps, boards development, oversight of their directors, having the right directors in place so that they're not spending more money than they make, and managing all those kinds of things. But, it has evolved quite a bit better. The experience on the road is safer. It's smarter. A lot of people that don't know better concern themselves when they see that you know a drum corps like the Academy might have 70 staff members. How do they afford all the staff members? How is that even possible? You know, when I was a corps director, I had about 20 and 15 of them were on the road with us all summer. That was bad because they got surly in the end. Now the world is change where your band camp starts 2 weeks before finals. So, they've gotten smarter with staffing and making sure that the corps members always have some, professional standing with them going through the day's paces and those types of things. So, much of it the corps evolution.

And then we addressed somewhat already, the event management has gotten so much better. It's gotten safer. It's gotten smarter. It's more of a production, perhaps. [Specifically] between the corps' performances. And hopefully, in and most cases, in better venues. So, that's gotten smarter over the course of the last 23 years as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you so much. Looking forward, what do you see as being on the horizon for DCI in the future?

[Dan Acheson]

Yeah, I think the continuation of all of those things getting even more solidified.

We just had a heat awareness presentation at the January meeting that has always been something that we're aware of, but to what degree, what is the science out there that we can use to help the corps manage this better than just waiting until someone actually gets sick or just looking at the temperature and go, gee, it's hot, maybe we shouldn't do anything. Well, that's not always true either. It just depends on where the environment is, and what's the wind doing today, and is there any shade today or clouds? Is it what other things? Let's learn more about that to make that even safer. I think that's going to carry forward.

I think the promotion of the activity is going to become broader. The new CEO is poised to shake trees that are hopefully going to help us become more of a thing out there. Because there's so much going on! All you got to do is pick up your phone and you can go in 50 different rabbit holes. It's really hard to get attention. A lot of people are like, DCI should be on PBS again. No, because I don't know anyone who watches it anymore. Back in my day when we were on PBS, you had 1 of 4 choices. PBS was one of those choices. So, chances of someone clicking through those 5 channels and seeing us on TV were much better than they would be today. We experienced that with ESPN when we did that in the early 2000s as well. So, I see that happening.

The excitement for the activity has never been stronger from participants. The numbers that corps are having show up at camps and want to participate are huge, it's fantastic.

How do we grow more at the base? How do we have more SoundSport teams and more Open Class corps? How can we help facilitate that? And I think the corps themselves and DCI are more poised to help that situation grow even further.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. And then last, is there anything else you think I need to know about DCI for my project?

[Dan Acheson]

Oh my gosh. Yeah, everything. There's so much.

[Kara Metzger] 10:20:09

I'm sure the answer is everything.

[Dan Acheson]

Well, it helps this project, I think, that you have the perspective you do because you've lived it. I don't really think of anything. When I looked at your questions, you pretty much had it all covered about what you should ask to get to the bottom of these things. But hopefully I've provided enough material that it makes sense. Are you interviewing anyone else?

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah!...

[Dan Acheson]

Oh, excellent. Yeah, those are great perspectives. Excellent. Very good. Well, sounds like you're off to a good start on all of that.

[Kara Metzger]

Indeed. And I thank you for your help and your time for this.

[Dan Acheson]

Absolutely, when it's appropriate to give me the final copy, I'd love to see it.

[Kara Metzger]

I will, yes.

[Dan Acheson]

Alright and if you have any follow up questions, don't hesitate. Just reach out and I will do my best and I'll send you that deck. I'll put it in black and white form

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you! Enjoy going back to retirement now.

[Dan Acheson]

Alright, thank you. Take care.

[Kara Metzger]

Perfect. Sounds good. Thank you!

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Dan Potter

1. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?
2. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past twenty-three years?
3. Through your interactions with members, corps staff, and DCI staff, what are some major takeaways about the overall drum corps experience?
 - a. How has your role as a curator for the drum corps experience shaped your views of drum corps?
4. Are there specific DCI legends you have talked with in the recent future?
 - a. What were some of their major points regarding the activity?
5. How do you think the audience's perspective has shaped DCI to be how it is today?
6. What are trends to the drum corps activity you have seen since 2000?
 - a. What have been major changes for drum corps? (potential categories to take note of: daily life, educationally, show design, ensemble makeup, etc)
7. Share a personal anecdote(s) about how your time with DCI and how it has changed over the years.
8. Anything else you would like to share for the record?

Full Transcript for Dan Potter

[Kara Metzger]

I have about 8 questions for you and I appreciate that you're going to contribute to this! Whatever you can, is awesome. Whatever you can't, that's okay too.

[Dan Potter]

Okay, well I'm ready.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome! Well, the first question I always think is the easiest one, but most people have told me that it's not actually that easy. When and what roles have you been active in the DCI community?

[Dan Potter]

Alright, first as a participant, 79 through 81. I was drum major of the Geneseo Knights. And then I taught the Toledo Glassmen under Dan Acheson. I was an M and M instructor for the 85 and 86 seasons. And then I moved to Texas in 88 and thought I was out of the activity. And then in 90 we learned that DCI championships would be in Dallas in 1991. And so I got involved with the local organizing committee and the local attorney who was the chairman of that organizing committee and Bill Cook. I started announcing shows around Texas. At the same time Skyriders had relocated from Hutchison, Kansas to Dallas. And their director had asked me to be the announcer at a couple of shows that they were promoting in Texas. So that's when my, announcing for DCI started, in the summer of 1990.

From that group, Dan Acheson, then went on in 1994-1995 to become the director of DCI. That connection, plus the announcing I already done in Texas, led to me doing more and more shows. And eventually to being immediate personality and podcaster.

So that's in a nutshell, that's it.

[Kara Metzger]

That's amazing. Thank you. In your personal opinion, how do you think and/or what have you seen, in terms of DCI growth in the past 23 years.

[Dan Potter]

How have I seen the activity grow?

[Kara Metzger]

Yea.

[Dan Potter]

Oh, man. The first thing that comes to mind is the quality of the performance and the quality of the overall production. So both from a design and an achievement standpoint, the growth has been unimaginable. I mean, we thought what we were looking at in 1979 was pretty hot. We had no idea what was to come and what people that age will truly capable of achieving. I don't think any of us thought we were capable of that when we were that age. But it took the right kind of

design, programming, instruction, and time for the performer to evolve to what they are today. Which is just an elite athlete, an Olympic quality elite athlete. We weren't that in 1979. We were a bunch of misfits who didn't belong anywhere else and who found the home in drum corps and we worked really hard at it. This is, this is a completely different type of performer and type of student. And that's why, honestly, Kara, that's why really what keeps me coming back year after year. So that I can see what those young performers, you know, the next level. What's next you're going to bring? I'm truly curious because I've been blown away every year for the last 40 years at the way it advances on a yearly basis.

[Kara Metzger]

Well, thank you. Through your interactions with members, corps staff, DCI staff, and whoever you get to work with, what are some of the major takeaways that you have found to be in the overall drum corps experience that people get?

[Dan Potter]

I've literally been there when a parent has seen their kid for the first time in almost 2 months. Like in the middle of July, and have literally not recognized their own child. So that, I mean, that speaks to drum corps being an activity that changes you mentally and physically faster than anything I've ever seen. You know, show up for spring training in May and by mid July, your parents might not recognize you. That says something about how hard you work.

So, here I am, 61 years old. I work in radio, and have for over 40 years. And when I speak to corps members at the end of the year, what I tell them is even if from this point forward, you never pick up your instrument again, you never pick up a flagpole and spin it again, you never do any of this again... What you have learned already, what is ingrained in you now, will never leave. When I go on the air at 5 in the morning, my mind is in the exact same place that it was 40 years ago when I was performing. Almost 50 years ago now. That performance mindset, that way of locking in and being in the flow, becomes muscle memory. If you never play again, when you have to do a PowerPoint, when you have to perform in some way at your job, your mind is going to go right back to starting line and where your brain was pre-performance for Drum Corps International. I think for me that's, given my career and everything, that's the thing that has stayed with me the longest. I don't know if that answer your question at all.

[Kara Metzger]

No, I think it's super useful. Thank you.

How has your role as a drum corps curator shaped your views of drum corps over the years?

[Dan Potter]

I'm a pretty staunch defender of the evolution of drum corps. When you are as close to the performers as I am, being down on the field talking to them, and being around them all the time, you realize that the core experience, Both CORE and CORPS, it doesn't change. No matter how the production might change, the instrumentation, the design, the costuming, all of that is ancillary to the core purpose of drum corps, which is to bring out the excellence in young people. That has not changed one bit. If anything, we've gotten better and better and better at raising good humans. When I was, marching, and I think it's a common experience of anybody in my generation marched. And, you know what? Not just marched, but grew up in that generation. We

were, loosely guided. Let's just put it that way. We were not given a whole lot of instruction; you learned to raise yourself on the road pretty quick. You make sure that you've got what you need and you've got enough money and you've got the right clothes and laundry is done and all that stuff, those are things that you learn, when you march anyway. But back then, was a different time. And was an admittedly, more dangerous time for young people because we were doing stuff we shouldn't have been doing. It is different now, it's more professional. So, I think that's the biggest difference between now and then. It's professional educators, it's experience with people running tours and large groups. As opposed to 40 or 50 years, when it was largely volunteers just trying to do their best.

[Kara Metzger]

Makes sense. Awesome. Thank you. In the past 23 years, have you talked to any people that you think either will become DCI Hall of Famers or DCI legends and icons? Or have you met any people that you would like to pinpoint as being innovators here in the 2000 and on region?

[Dan Potter]

Yes, Vince Oliver. In terms of especially sound designs.

Eric Kosman.

Kevin LeBeouf. Now with the Cavaliers, marched with Carolina crown, trumpet player just incredibly talented and innovative musician.

I'm on the board of Zephyrus Drum and Bugle Corps, which will be coming out open class next year here in the Tulsa area. Their corps director here in Aaron J. Morton, is a former Seattle cascades member, and is incredible as a composer and arranger. Just keep your eye on Aaron Morton. He'll accomplish great things.

There's another sound designer whose name I cannot think of. And I actually confuse them with Vince Oliver sometimes when I see it. I will have to email you, when I think of it.

[Kara Metzger]

Sound design is not really my area of expertise.

[Dan Potter]

Well, and I mean you got to look at those individuals now as major influencers going forward in the activity, right? Because soundscape and sound reinforcement, all of that is now, is just so tightly woven into the productions. It's not like it's an afterthought anymore. It used to be you hire your staff and it's like, okay, we're gonna get to do sound. Now you're hiring your sound designer at the same time you're hiring your drill writer and your program coordinator.

Let me think if there are any other needs that we're going through down there.

Lindsey Vento. If she's not a Hall of Famer in the next 15-20 years, something is wrong.

Lindsey Schuller is someone else who's made a major impact as the program coordinator for Troopers.

Yea, these are some of your names to watch.

*Added names after email transcripts: Kevin Shah- Blue Knights, Daniel Belcher- Cavaliers, Adam Weinken- Spirit of Atlanta

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Maybe from these people or maybe from other people that you've interviewed or talked to since 2000, what were some of the major points that you have gotten from these interviews regarding the activity itself? If you can whittle it down into just a few major points.

[Dan Potter]

I mean, a lot of it is echoing stuff that I've already said. I don't know, Kara, if I could find common threads other than I've never had a participant tell me, 'I wish it was more like it used to be.' All of the hand ringing that we do as fans of this activity whenever there's a change, I understand wanting to talk about. But, at some point, you've got to let it go because it's the activity. Yeah, you want to satisfy the fans. You want the people to be there in the stands. If you go to a show, you're going to be back because they're great shows, regardless of what used to be. But the bottom line is, this is an activity for primarily the members. We as an audience get to take that journey with them and enjoy it, but we're not the real target of this activity. This is a nonprofit youth activity meant to grow great human beings. That's what we are at the core. So, I guess my big takeaway is You can bitch all you want about the evolution of drum corps if it bothers you. But, you're not the target audience. The performer who are 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 are. They are the ones primarily meant to benefit from this activity. And we grow to serve them and their needs right now. Not 20 years ago, not 30 years ago. I guess, to get back to what I said originally, I have never had a member tell me, 'gosh, I really wish we didn't have electronics or I really wish we had more traditional uniforms.' The members themselves right now today, they're happy with what this product is and participating in it because it's been designed for them. So, you know, keep in mind. The real purpose of this activity. Then, maybe some of the changes make more sense.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. No, that was amazing. Kind of going off of what you just said, how do you think the audience perspective HAS shaped DCI?

[Dan Potter]

A big part of that experience for the member is, that this is one of the few activities for that age group that can put them in front of 10 to 15 to 20,000 people and give them a great memory in terms of 'oh my god, remember when we got those 20,000 people that all come to their feet and scream at us and Wasn't that cool?' That's a lifetime memory. So to that end, even as the activity evolves, corps are always going to want to give that to their membership. They'll always want to program in a way that excites the crowd so that the members get that feeling and reward for their hard work. So, the audience is never going to be abandoned. They, they might be uncomfortable. They might need more than one read to really be emotionally moved by a show. In other words, they might need to see it a couple of times. But the audience is still going to be one of the primary groups that that designers are writing for. Them and the judges of course. But, if you don't get the audience involved and you really haven't accomplished anything, you're not going to get a good score.

The audience, the audience has shaped this actively. You look back at the biggest moments in drum corps and they are definitely moments when the crowd was involved.

Spartacus, 2008.

Pick any show in 1992, I don't know why. To me pound for pound still 1992 might be the best. Top 12 ever. Just from top bottom. And that, I mean, that's a year Blue Devils were fifth.

[Kara Metzger]

That's okay. That was a great answer that will be useful. Then just moving on to thinking about trends in the activity since 2000, what are some trends that you've seen or maybe even major changes that you've seen? Potentially things like daily life, education, show design, ensemble, or whatever you want to go for.

[Dan Potter]

I mean, the 1990s was really the decade when we transitioned towards more professional music educators being on staff. And by the 2000s that was the norm instead of the exception. So, I think that's probably been the biggest driver of innovation in the activity has been the marriage of the drum corps and band world. We saw it starting to happen in the nineties. It really started to pay off in the 2000s.

When I marched, and you probably have heard this, there was a real palpable division between high school music educators and drum corps and drum corps staff members. They didn't come from the same place. They like each other very much. Band directors couldn't understand how you can play one of these out of tune bugles all the time. It drove them crazy. It wrecked embouchures if you marched all the time, etc.

[Kara Metzger]

People still say that today.

[Dan Potter]

Yeah, well they do. But it was never the twain shall meet. The high school band directors hated drum corps, and drum corps hated marching in high school band programs. That's the way it felt. Thankfully, that changed and I think that's been the biggest thing that's driven innovation and quality ever since because it's, like I said, professional.

Sorry, tell me again the question.

[Kara Metzger]

Is there any trends that you have seen in the drum corps activity basically related to daily life, education, show design, etc.?

[Dan Potter]

Daily life is much safer than it was even 20 years ago. Certainly. 40 years ago. It's the focus is much more on the performer and the performers experience throughout the summer. Some corps have experiential administration positions. Somebody on the staff, or on the board, whose job it

is to make sure that the experience is good for the members. That just didn't happen. So that's driven things a lot.

The other big trend that I see just in programming, and as an old guy, I'm not sure I like this. Is the move away from uniforms toward costume, costuming that is thematic to show. I understand it. I love it. When you see it visually, it's as an old visual guy, when you see what a costume like a Bluecoats costume can do visually depending on how they move their bodies, God, I love it. But as somebody who has a poster of, you know, Santa Clara in their traditional Santa Clara uniforms in my office, I like the look and identity that went with very specific uniforms. That's something that I actually, I miss that, but I get it. I'm not begrudging it.

[Kara Metzger]

I guess moving into more of your personal side. Do you have any personal antidotes that you like to share about DCI and how it's changed over the years and maybe things that you've been involved in here on the announcer side of things.

[Dan Potter]

Well, from the announcer side of things, the biggest change that's happened. For us is the scripting has changed. We now get, instead of, 'are the judges ready?', drum majors is your corps ready?, Santa Clara Vanguard you may take the field of competition" which used to be the old kind of methodology. Now everything is queued by the contest director. There are 3 announcements. One, welcoming them to the field. Two, telling them basically their show. And three, allowing them to go. All of those things are queued either by the contest director or by somebody from the corps and a lot of the announcements are already pre-programmed into the pre-show. I just sit back and watch they've got something else recorded doing. I think we'll see more and more often as we go forward, especially with AI, is the voice they want. So it may be eventually that the announcer just does the commercials in between. 'Come visit the concession stand.'

So, from the announcer's perspective, that's changed a lot.

[Kara Metzger]

I'm pretty sure we had you do our voice over for one of the shows that I was in.

[Dan Potter]

Yeah, I get a lot of requests to record stuff in advance.

Frame the question for me again, please.

[Kara Metzger]

Just do you have any personal anecdotes to share of your time and how it's changed over the last couple of years?

[Dan Potter]

I mean, that's for me personally, that's probably the biggest change in what I do.

Another change that doesn't get talked about a whole lot is the tour year to year is more stable than it used to be. In the early 2000, I didn't know what my summer was going to look like or what shows I would necessarily be doing that summer. You know, starting in the late odds around 2010. The tour kind of settled down to basically the same map every year. Assignments settled down at that point, too. I knew I would be doing these stops on the Texas tour, I knew I would be doing the show in Murphysboro, Tennessee, and then go to Atlanta. Everything kind of settled in because Lucas Oil Stadium became the perfect venue for championships.

So that is something that has definitely changed in the last 20 years. It's gone from a completely different tour model every summer, to one that kind of looks the same.

[Kara Metzger]

It can almost be replicated.

[Dan Potter]

Yeah, almost. I mean, yes, different tour event partner stops are a little bit different every year. The radio show that goes away or showed them to added. But, the San Antonio's, the Atlanta's. The Allentown's, the championships, they're all set in the same place. So that means the shows, leading in and coming out of them are going to be the same place.

[Kara Metzger]

And then, my final question for today is just, is there anything else that you think is important for me to check out here? Tell me I don't know.

[Dan Potter]

Well, I think that's all I've got. I've enjoyed this. Thank you.

[Kara Metzger]

I've really enjoyed it as well. Thank you so much for your time and of course we'll get cleaned up version of this transcript for you to!

[Dan Potter]

Oh, okay. Alright, I'll look forward to that. Alright, Kara, take care.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you so much!

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Vicki McFarlane

1. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?
2. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past twenty-three years?
3. How has the role of the corps director changed since you began with Colt Cadets?
 - a. How has it changed since you took over the Colts in 2013?
4. As a corps director from both open and world class, please describe potential differences to approach or need in these fields.
5. What are trends to the drum corps activity you have seen since 2000?
 - a. What have been major changes for drum corps? (potential categories to take note of: daily life, educationally, show design, ensemble makeup, etc)
6. What are components that the corps director and/or staff focus on for their students (member experience, show design, etc)?
 - a. How much interaction do you have with other corps to align or individualize this experience?
7. Describe a year in the life as a corps director. What timelines do you have for auditions, planning, housing, etc?
 - a. How have those timelines changed, altered, or developed over time?
 - b. What other committees do you serve on as part of DCI?
8. Describe the process of the DCI annual meetings.
 - a. Who/what are the subcommittees?
 - b. Describe the various “rules congress” proceedings.
 - c. How are these committees continued throughout the year when not all corps are together?
9. Pedagogically, how have you seen the instructors operating under your direction change?
 - a. What are the values of the instructors on your team?
10. What is the operating budget for the corps yearly and how has this changed overtime?
 - a. Would you care to share the breakdown of costs for travel, food, staff, and other monetary needs?
11. Anything else you would like to share for the record?

Full Transcript from December 27, 2023

[Kara Metzger]

When and what roles have you been active in, in the DCI community?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

When I was 4 years old, I went to my first drum corps show, but I was only a spectator until I marched in 1994 and 1995 on baritone in the Colts. And then in May (Memorial Day) of 2001, I became a Colts staff member. I had been a public school band director and then wanted to do something a little different with youth programs. Was a Colt Cadets director from 2002 to 2012, [and] Colts director 2013 to present. I was Open Class chair from 2007 to 2013. In January, 2013, I could not be Open Class chair after I became the Colts director. Beginning in 2022, I was a DCI member of the board of directors (elected) to present.

[Kara Metzger]

Obviously, a lot of things and the most important thing for the study is the fact that you were part of DCI or have been part of DCI for the entire time period of the study. That's kind of one of the things that we were looking for was people who have been active in the role from 2000 until 2023. So we appreciate your expertise, of course. Question number 2, in your personal opinion, this could go probably anywhere, how have you seen DCI grow over the past 23 years?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

That's a heavy one. Really the professionalism that is required in all aspects of what we do. So my husband, for example, Jeff McFarlane's family, they had 5 kids that marched in the Colts and they go back to the late sixties through the seventies in a marching time frame. Watching the ages increase and skill sets increase [is a change]. From 2001 to 2023, we're allowed to have more members than we did back in that day. It went from 128, to now 165. So the numbers have changed. The G to B-flat bugles [as well as] the addition of amplification and electronic instruments has evolved during that time. Our use and utilization of amplification in electronic potentials within our productions has changed.

But, I think most dramatically from an administrative level is the expectation of the care and or the expectation of everything we provide, serving really as the finest example possible. A lot of that standard can be hard to uphold. Which is where, I do think, the number of corps waning sometimes is because of the professionalism demand. So, I think of professional areas that have changed, like the food program. We get a \$25,000 medical grant to help us understand the biometrics of our students. It changed our food program overnight, where in the last 10 years that budget has gone from \$80,000 a year for 2 drum corps to \$160,000 a year. That has doubled. This essentially in the last 10 years the scale of most people's budgets, I believe in World Class at least, has doubled. You'll see, I think, more of the development areas that the fundraising that has to be done to support a drum corps. If members only pay approximately 50% of what it costs to be in a drum corps as we've had these inflation numbers, that increases the demand on the fundraising on the board of directors, to be able to pace and match to what the students provide.

Students expect charter buses. We charter our buses, they are wonderful vehicles. When you go back to pre-2000 more corps owned their buses. So now we have professional drivers, professional hours, and follow DOT requirements. There's a lot of DOT inspections at all of our events. The housing, the facilities that we use... air conditioning used to be a bonus, now it's an expectation. And the expectation that I think was changing in our community is the expectation that we can accommodate and provide for all... all types of people in every way. And I think as an administrator, some of what I look at kind of to the extreme now is, is there a certain timeframe and especially having Colt Cadets for us where we are discussing 6 different transgender students would be a good example. Do we have the capacity and the time if there's only one set of locker rooms to care for these individuals in the way that they all should be cared for? How do we understand? We want to be all things to all people, but where are the parameters that we may or may not be able to be. So sometimes it's just talking through being realistic about what we can provide, making sure we under promise and over deliver.

And then the medical teams. For Colts having 2 medical professionals on site every day of last summer's tour. It can be really challenging. And in some groups even have a hard time to have one. But now we have medical professionals.

We also, we haven't really talked about props or whatnot, but really the theatrical production. Even from a member expectation, the detail of the theatrics that we put on the field, I believe, to continue to push that envelope. That's been a consonant in drum corps, that evolution. Finding that proper balance of what we utilize to enhance our production while not overwhelming the travel nature of our activity and the student maintenance of that.

So, I guess if I go back to the professionalization of what we do, it's making sure we're accounting properly, the DOT requirements, the medical requirements, the fundraising requirements, the legal requirements, the care for all different types of people and provisions. Those layers of support have changed considerably through the last 20 years.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you. Very thorough. And I enjoyed that.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Okay. So I'll just keep on that way because I think it's a question people don't ask often. And I might be unique. We might have been flying by the seat of our pants in some ways, 22 years ago. Wouldn't fly now. And it would just be unacceptable.

[Kara Metzger]

Right. That information is the kind of things that I'm looking for. I'm doing the business side of this project too. It's not just what do we put on the field? Because there's so much more that goes on in drum corps than just what we put on the field.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I feel like the on the field stuff in some ways, I mean... the skill has evolved so much. Here's a good example where the skill level shifted. In 2001, and even 2005, if you could throw a 5 on a weapon, you were in the weapons line. Now, if you can't throw a 5, you're not considered for the weapons line. So that's where the skill set has tremendously increased. Some of that goes back to just from the draw students to the activity where so many students have had private lessons. They need private lessons just to earn a position. Where before, you know, that was not generally the case.

[Kara Metzger]

Sure, of course. Moving on to the next question, how has your role of corps director changed, since you began? Either you can choose since 2013 with the Colts or if you'd be willing to go back and do the 2002 to 2012 Colt Cadet time as well.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Let's do both. I was just staff member for Colt Cadets, but I was with Colt Cadets then, 2001 through the 2012 seasons. I would say those years, at least from the Open Class perspective, and I think even now, the expectation was lower, the egos are less. The Open Class dynamic that we have, where I believe Colt Cadets hold the unique space in the activity, because they provide such an entrance level aspect that not all corps provide. I saw things tightening up in terms of making sure, are we logging driver paperwork correctly? Those things. Just from the tour aspect of what we do shifted during that time frame for us. I think that was one where it was very organizational.

We as a team can't necessarily control the philosophy of the Colt Cadets because the board establishes what is philosophy. We determine our approach to that philosophy. And that's where our average age, at the time, was 12.5-13-year-olds at first. That was where [we asked] 'what would it take to win with 13-year-olds? How can we have that competitive drive in a way that challenges us to educate better?' A lot of our drum corps team at that time with Colt Cadets where there'd be days where there'd be 3 of us at rehearsal. And as the corps grew, people actually took lesser salaries to have expanded teams, even with the Open Class corps because we wanted to be able to be competitive, but always said educational first. And that really allowed us the educational aspects drove our competition.

When Jeff and I shifted from Colt Cadets to Colts, Jeff became the executive director, I became the corps director, that was September 2012. We thought really the World Class aspect would just be double what we were dealing with the Open Class. You go from 75 kids to 150 kids. It was exponential, the shift from Open Class to World Class. The 2013-2014 season was the toughest years of my career for sure. Some of that was the expectation. In the World Class, the expectations within the members of what their traditions are, and expectations within the organization of traditions, it is important that we value our traditions. But sometimes some of those traditions, or what people might call tradition, were really more personally-based and not organizationally-based. So then over the last decade, if I go through a couple of things that are not necessarily on the field, what we were on the forefront of [what we did]. If you go through Colts,

for example, on the field, you have 3 years of Mark Sylvester as a program coordinator with very innovative programs. You have 3 years with Howard Weinstein. That's where I was like, we need to address the culture within our own organization and strengthen that. And then, we enter this COVID timeline. But the last 3 years where we really felt like we could bring a foundation and the competition together.

So, what happened over 10 years was we had to stabilize financials of the organization, we had to reestablish the culture of the organization, and then to have the right educators, the right team in place to be able to carry the organization forward. Because what we didn't want to have happen is become finalist corps and then just be out of finals, like 'one and done.' We wanted to get there, and then be able to stay there. And to us, that took a solid foundation really culturally and financially to be able to create that.

But that's where working with Dr. Steve Rock here in Dubuque, who is part of MASH (marching art safety and health) was a key part of that. Enhancing the care that we provide for members so that we'd have retention and we could shape and form that culture and work over time to make sure it was the right approach. A lot of drum corps people can just be hardcore. [AKA] Rub some dirt on it and get back in there and even in 2014-2015. I would have said those days are over. That's not how it's supposed to work. But what do we really have to do behind the scenes to make sure we prevent season ending injuries as much as possible? So going from 14 to only 1 or 2 a year, that was a big growth step for us. [We're] working on what is peak performance level for each performer. All the things I'm talking about, we're still working to improve, but I think it goes back down the fundamentals of how do you care for people physically, emotionally, [and] musically? Really the physical outlining overlapping into the visual aspects of what we do.

We go through what I call the 'me too' timeline, or the Hopkins era scandal. Where if you look at just even the last 6 years segment... I'm trying to think. That news broke with Cadets in 2017, I think. And up till that point in time, I couldn't tell you that corps were consistently background checking or having references on employment practices. If I go through the list of professional things, the HR expectations, the simple Safe Sport training, and all the basic policies that we need to make sure people understand and practice. I feel like policy protects an organization, but people protect people. And so those are the biggest things that changed. For me, coming from the teaching environment I was used to going, 'okay, what would be the public school standard of this? What would be from a collegiate level like the NCAA standard for certain aspects?' Even lightning, now I'm ranting, but we're the only corps that had a lightning protocol. And I don't know if you remember sitting on the buses. I'd be like, 'it's lightning, we shouldn't be outside, but we were the only drum corps that did that.' Some of those shifts that we had done, whether I took heat for them or not (usually I did). We just happened to be a little ahead of our time. Maybe behind the athletic world, but better than the drum corps world in that way.

[Kara Metzger]

What do you see as the greatest role of the corps director, whether that be in the World Class or the Open Class sphere?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Not sure if there's one. It's the ability to be anything when needed. Not the ability to be all things perfectly. But, availability.

Here's another good one administratively that has really evolved that I think you could actually track through time. When Jeff and I, for example, at Colts were put in our roles, it was really a split from what the former corps director was expected [to do]. The former executive director was the corps director. So now we have a situation where we have a person that works on the business, that's Jeff the executive director, and a person that works on the educational aspect of what we do, that's the corps director. In an Open Class environment, I would run full ensemble, I would teach on the field, I would take care of a little bit of everything. What I had to learn quickly for the World Class aspects is I need to be available for what anyone needs me to be for that day. I think some of the corps that have had some more challenges than others have not had a consistent director available on tour so that you don't have day-to-day consistency and approach to what you do. And it's still even if I am there every day, it's hard to pull off in a group of 60 to 80 educational and professional staff on tour. I think that's critical. What you see now, more, for Colts, it's getting more depth in that area. So it's not just myself, it's Kathleen, or it's tour assistants that are readily [and] consistently available so that there's, hopefully, a seamless approach. But on the same hand, I guess availability number one, but then just the adaptability. I love to worry about the production, and the details on the field, but it has become more and more administrative as the organization has grown and as the expectations of the organization grow.

[Kara Metzger]

Next question on the list was as a corps director for our both Open and World Class, please describe potential differences in approach with both of these organizations.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

With Colt Cadets, or an Open Class, I just feel like everyone is a lot more green and they expect to be more green like you can tell them what to do more easily. So Open Class members are more often treated as students. And as World Class has grown and evolved, I feel as though we treat members more like customers than students. So there's this balance that we have to achieve in World Class now of making sure we allow students to be their professional selves. But I also still believe they are students paying for an educational experience. Sometimes students, sometimes team members make mistakes and those have to be dealt with. One thing I think you'll see in the activity is a more consistent notion of what should be expected from all members. So it becomes more black and white in terms of what is appropriate [and] what is not appropriate. That currently is established by each individual organization and there will always be some autonomy, I believe, when you have such separate businesses. Every drum corps is its own business. Then DCI's business is separate from that. The individual businesses of the corps, I do think that the general expectation, especially from World Classes, that we are supposed to be all things for all people. There still is a capacity level as 501(c)(3) organizations that operate on tight budgets, that I just don't know that it's possible to be. So, you have to decide what to be or not to be, so to speak. I don't think that expectation is the same from students of Open Class units. Where they, more often, expect to be educated. My experience though may be based on the scale of Colt Cadets

where we're typically somewhere between 50 and 80 members and it's more of an entry level or startup access point for students than, Spartans, for example, competing for a title might be.

[Kara Metzger]

We'll go a little bit out of the administrative realm here. What trends have you seen in the Drum corps activity since 2000? And there's a couple of different ones that I'll highlight. So maybe in terms of daily life for students or even staff members.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Actually, one nice thing is I was going to say there's more breaks, more rest, more sensitivity to heat. There's not the same running or push ups. 20 years ago, we'd all go running all the time and do push ups, push ups were never a punishment. Even in Colt Cadets in 2012, push ups were not a punishment, they were a memory device. And then, the 'run touch the pole because you can't listen.' In general, the educational approach is more scholastic. That's something we are intentional about in our language starting in 2015 or 2016 is when we at Colts started using the phrase scholastic. I have to credit Howard Weinstein for that. We need to make sure the drum corps environment is a scholastic environment and that it is possible to merge the two. Then the professionalism of the educators. You see more doctors and you see more highly degreed people as opposed to parents teaching drum corps (if you went back to the 70s, 80s, for example). Nineties a lot of people without degrees still and then now if you just did a comparison of the number of music degreed personnel on drum corps teams in 2001 compared to 2023 would be it a stark difference.

[Kara Metzger]

You kind of touched on this. Is there anything more that you'd like to add to trends since 2000 for the educational side of things?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

On the educational side of things, I would be curious to see over time different people's impressions of the brass quality of sound. Where it used to be, play as loud as you can. Then a lot of corps want to have a very refined approach to their playing so that it's appropriate for even your collegiate concert experience. And I think that balance can be found but not every corps does it. Again, we're all separate entities. Each organization can make their own choice. I can't give you a good impression because it seems like it shifts. [There are] different times where different people hate drum corps or different people love drum corps. They see the value in our attempt to make sure that we're providing a sound orchestral education in what we're doing. People pick on amplification. One of the biggest increases we've had of students is getting degrees in audio engineering. And that's where I really feel like the electronic engineering and electronic mastery, audio amplification management of what we do is very important because our students are getting careers in these fields. I also think that even us as educators get more educated, making sure that the amplification that we utilize is producing a higher acoustic quality of sound. I'm not saying that in a real versed way. But we want to make sure that students, in 2001, would destroy marimbas and xylophones playing them to make the sound we wanted to make. As soon as we could allow microphones, we could allow pit members to play naturally. So

what evolved first was allowing students to perform in a more orchestral manner where they would in their classical environments. But also, what it's evolved to now over the last 10 years, is really projecting that sound in a way that allows the strength of our members to shine. I think people who are uneducated or fans would say, 'oh, you add all these microphones just to be louder.' It's like, no. I want to make sure that the authenticity of the fan experience is the sound that our students are providing and making. For Colts, we have done well with the more we carry that sound, that our students are making the field more naturally to the seats. It's not about being louder, it's being authentic and that also relates to the educational aspect. I think the educational aspect when we spend so many hours every day playing that it's being able to play in appropriate fashion, that's why the electronics and amplification is so critical.

[Kara Metzger]

And then moving on to a new section of somewhere that you've seen trends. Where have you seen the trends go since 2000 in terms of show design? Since you've been very involved in those processes as the director in the past 23 years.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Not sure I'm the best person to answer this.

[Kara Metzger]

That's okay, I ask everyone the same question.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I really don't feel like it's that different. The creative process is really not a lot different than it was, but the areas of expertise that we utilize to generate that production has scaled from having an audio engineer to having a prop designer and a prop manager to having the uniforms changing every year. Uniforms becoming costuming, I don't know if that's a niche or a trend that's going to stay in the market. I don't believe it's sustainable. The companies are hardly keeping up just to produce what we want in that way. We didn't used to have a uniform designer. You might have someone that sketched your flags, but that might be the program coordinator. Well, now the program director is really directing and facilitating the entire process with a team of professionals. Where before, one thing that has definitely evolved, you used to have a percussion writer. And then over the last decade, that really split into battery and front ensemble and then add in the electronics, so now you have battery, front ensemble, and electronics writing. Separate than your audio mastery of where all your placements are. That enhances our capabilities when we don't have to have a soloist on the front sideline by a microphone anymore because now we get into wireless.

But now we need to make sure that uniform is sketched every year, not just once every 5 years. We need to make sure that theme is there throughout.

[To] make sure the balance of the props not only set the stage, but that we're capable of managing the travel and logistics of those, and that was something I think that each organization has learned kind of their capability of and sweet spot for over the last decade. Even from a student level, I'm

going to quote a student on the Colts leadership team, which is 'big props big points, Vicki.' I'm not saying that that's a true statement, but I can reflect that as one genuine impression of what's out there. There are far more logistics to deal with in drum corps because we're in a different city almost every day, or every other day, different rehearsal or any different show venue. That's where I think the travel demands on drum corps create, more they necessitate more creativity and logistics than what other marching units might have to experience in the country.

[Kara Metzger]

The last potential trend that you could have seen might be in the ensemble makeup. I know you had mentioned earlier the transition of types of instruments and whether that be in the brass section or the percussion section, was there ever obviously there are more members now based on rules but what have you seen change in that regard over time?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I really like the switch to the B-flat instrument. Granted it took like 10 years to add a third valve to brass instruments when they were bugles. It took like 5 years-10 years when we switched to allow B-flat instruments. Now, to allow any brass instrument on the field. There's different opinions on those things. But again, I really like the B-flat instrument aspect because it keeps the brass players more natural to what they're playing in their school and traditional environments.

I think everyone's learning about electronics still. And then percussively, I would say even going from, the quads, 23 years ago, to the sixes now, where it's going to be a sextet of drums. Bass line hasn't changed a lot. Cymbals, I think the marching cymbal line is an interesting beast in its own. I have encouraged even our cymbal technicians through the times not to argue for a cymbal line based on the educational merits of that. Because I do believe many music educators will just downplay the merits of that. I feel drum corps offers a unique stage for that niche. And there are students in the country that love that niche. Let them perform, it's a performance education. But, when I jump to the Open Class dynamic of the cymbal line, being able to train people on moving cymbal parts to prepare them at a young age to get into a bass drum part. There's a lot of creative elements on what that is.

We can use electronic stringed instruments. We can't use acoustic stringed instruments. So that's what's interesting with the corps dynamic, in that way. We can use an EWI, which we haven't. I've wanted to add an electronic wind instrument like every year in the Colts.

When I go through the equipment for color guards has stayed relatively standard through the timeline, whether it's a 36-to-39-inch rifle, 39-inch sabre, 6-foot poles being standard. They've gone 5.5 [foot] different times. They've gone to oversized silks. Those trends will still go back and forth but essentially over 23 years the color guard average has probably stayed the most similar in the equipment but most different in the expectation.

Oh, let me talk about Rosewood. I don't know that Rosewood is conducive to outdoor elements in the same way. When we shifted to using Rosewood, (for Colts) we would only use Rosewood for our performances or full ensemble rehearsals. That was the only way we would shift to Rosewood because it's not good in the heat or the elements. Global warming is impacting what we are doing clearly. I don't have the science to study that other than to reference what you'll read

in the headlines about every other day about concerns on the environment. But, when we shifted to Rosewood, we said we would play Acoustalon for all rehearsals and Rosewood for shows. There is a slight shift to the performer, but I think learning to shift between those two is part of the experience and that way we can offer, what I would consider, an excellent concert education. While also making sure we have appropriate equipment for our environments.

[Kara Metzger]

And for the people that don't know, I've been involved with you guys with the Rosewood forever, but what does the Rosewood change when it's in the heat?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

So, our Acoustalon keys will hold up to any weather, any temperature. But the Rosewood is a delicate wood that in the heat will become brittle, crack, go out of tune, and not be useful. Sun and heat damage it most, or rain. Those are all environmental concerns we deal with in drum corps on a daily basis. There are some groups that will not use it. There are some groups that only use Rosewood. There are concerns from environmentalists about Rosewood as well. To me, that's one where the orchestral side, the concert side, the collegiate performance side, percussion major side of marimba performance, their expectation or standard would have to shift. We are not, as one activity, going to change that mindset. That's where I want to make sure students in our organization are performing on what they'd expect to perform on when they go to college. Or when they're in the professional world and Rosewood, I believe, is an expectation for most marimba performers.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you. Shifting into a different gear, what components do the corps director and/or staff focus on for their students? Whether that be member experience or show design. And how much interaction do you have with other corps and how that aligns with their individualized experience?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

This is where I'd go back to, a drum corps is not allowed to *not* focus on any area anymore. I would say in some ways that the competitive show might take a back seat to making sure some of the other needs are addressed. I think an excellent example of a corps really focusing on making sure they take care of their business is Madison Scouts. They may not have the same placement success, but in terms of the member experience that they're providing, if I'm simplifying it back to your question. I started this interview just talking about how we focused for nearly 10 years on our financials and member care, knowing that the competitive side can be hit and miss. But we felt like to maintain the competitive side, we really need it to have the financial [and] we needed to have the business aspects first. When I say business aspects though, I consider a business aspect the member culture. That takes more time because you're evolving people in that process. I would say there's a staff member or a director worrying about any individual element at some point in time, it is just divided more accordingly. I think one area where I've gotten stronger as a director is trying to manage those departments more and trusting and building a framework of people. That's one thing that does happen with time. That you can't just create, is making sure that

philosophically people are on the same page. So that all those elements, [go towards] the member experience.

I was just thinking too, it's like we say member experience a lot, but a lot of times that might be medical or travel or housing or food or when we're talking through the equipment question too it's like okay all members getting new instruments every year is a pretty nice treat. And one thing drum corps do is provide equipment to their members. Not all music programs do that. That's something that drum corps are able to do. And that does relate to the competitive aspect, but maybe, not as much.

So, then the competitive aspect is really your design framework which is a significant part of our judging, it's the design. It's 50% what the adults do and the other 50% is the education, the skills of the members. For a lot of groups that's based upon the education we provide to get to those skills. They don't all walk through the door with those skills. Some corps they do, not all I'd say more corps though than not need to provide that education to be able to compete.

One of the aspects as someone said, what did Colts do? You're talking about all these things, our focus was very specific in our strategy on incremental growth. We couldn't just get better in one area like competition. We wanted to see incremental growth in all areas of what we touch. And that way that would grow together over time.

Oh, interaction with other corps. This is what 2020 changed, the COVID year. Because all the corps directors started meeting every week. I would say, right now, our interaction as corps directors from 2020 to 2023 is the strongest it's ever been. The question we'll see now in the next report in 20 years, would be, 'are those relationships and interconnectivity maintained as competition returns?' There's nothing in 2020. 2021 was a non-competitive season. So everyone's like as best friends as you'll ever be.

But we also enter generational differences, right? One of the things, too, from the people in Gen X and people before me would stay in certain careers or certain jobs longer. That's a generational statistic or something they teach people in HR. That's not going to be as common, it seems, from at least my own HR studies that I've [seen]. Going forward, next generation of people move jobs more often. So that's where the question will be going forward. Can we maintain that interaction, the interconnectivity, even with a higher turnover rate in leadership of organizations. That'll be something time will tell.

But right now, it's like, what are people paying for eggs? I could call any director right now and just go, 'hey, what are you spending on food? What are you spending on travel? How do you handle this?' Competition, directors corps-to-corps more tight lipped. In terms of any other aspect off the field, everyone's very open, or at least appears to be very open. It's been positive.

[Kara Metzger]

Good. I'm glad to hear that. Describe a year in the life as a corps director. So what timelines do you follow for maybe auditions or housing or any of those needs?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

So, let's go August 15th. We get home from tour. We really start recruiting for the next year right then. This last year we had our new materials out September 15th, which we had a consistent staff. If any corps has staff turnover, they may or may not have their new staff in place by September 15th. To be competitive, you really need to be able to do that. We just talked about having new instruments. All the time. We like new instruments. Every year, but that means for our organization we buy and sell and buy and sell and buy and sell. August 15th-November 15th, you could really say recruit, recruit, recruit. Or maybe it's until November 1st. Recruiting never really stops. But we're recruiting and then we're developing the new show concept. We're unloading and cleaning everything.

And then you have November, December, January, I really think of as the audition timeline. But it also begins not just auditions but the rehearsal timeline of the production. Again, every aspect of what we're doing is kind of happening year round. We're still recruiting for color guard, February, March, April.

The significant orders for the shows have to be placed by February 1st. What kills us on color guard auditions happening last weekend of April is painful. That's where those students who earn positions at the end of April have three weeks before they move into tour. So it's not the same year round experience.

But when you go from the corps director experience, that's where I go back to your orders are really in place by February 15th. And now [then] we're really focusing on the summer housing, staffing, travel logistics. And then, May is really tour prep period and then move in. June, July, August is the competitive season. If you don't have it done before you move into tour, it's really hard to get done. Let's put it that way. It's also not just because of the demands on tour, [and] the surprises that happen every day. When you add the fact that we're trying to rehearse less and do more with the time we have, you have to be way more prepared to be able to compete. We don't move into May 24th, but May 1st feels like move-ins. So May 15th to August 15th is the season. Get home from tour, and that's a busy year, right? You should get some time off, right? Oh no, but we gotta remember now we're getting ready to recruit and have packets and auditions for the next season. Now we're auditioning.

But if I had to simplify the year, it's recruiting, audition, audition/rehearsal, tour prep, and then tour.

[Kara Metzger]

Has the timeline changed in any way since you started 10 years with the Colts or 20 years ago at Colt Cadets?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

In some ways, no. Because you always had to have a show for your tour. And you want to be ready with that. Different years, different people, different respectiveness to timelines changes that more because different groups will have different balances. Every team might have a different approach.

Going back to one of the earlier questions, you should put a side note. I would say one thing that has shifted is just the interactiveness between all the different elements. When we're more ahead of the game earlier, we're able to connect more of those pieces of productions better. I would say we've gotten better at the Colts about putting our productions together. They're a little more what I'd call sophisticated. I feel like it's not just 5 tunes now. Everything is really woven to interact visually and musically is something we're getting better at, with the electronics and the effects, so that all details and music emotions carry with each other in that way.

Since COVID and the supply chain issues, the supply timeline takes longer. That's why we have to be more ahead of where we've been not just for the drum corps, but for our suppliers to be able to provide what we do. Companies set up to do band uniforms every 5 years and they are not set up to do every band's uniform every year. That's what we have been asking as drum corps. I'll be curious as to what happens with that through time because of the cost of those materials and the skilled workers that assemble those costumes for us. I'll be curious to see what happens there. Sometimes drum corps is doing what we do and we might be getting more provisions from companies than what a marching band might. So, how do we balance that in the marketplace? But, we want to be the trend-setters. We want to be on the forefront of that.

I'll listen through different years. Does DCI trendset more than WGI or BOA? I kind of just grin because we all have the same people now. There is a career in these worlds where you can go from DCI to BOA to WGI and have year round employment doing what this is. That wasn't as much the case 20 years ago. When people argue over who trendsets what, I would be like the scale of DCI's budget is far beyond what some of the other entities are. So, the capabilities of what we put out there would seem like they're more, [like] the cost of our travel and food and logistics of traveling staff. As the staff become more professionalized, they don't have the same amount of time. But when I go back to the production, it's not really different except for the third party elements that go into what we do and the number of people that we have doing what we do creates more forward thinking. Demands more forward thinking, in my opinion.

[Kara Metzger]

Within all your roles that you have yearly, you also serve on the board of directors for DCI. What types of committees or types of commitments does that involve, that is outside of your Colts roles even?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Okay, so I was on the INStep committee. I'm not as active on INSteps since someone else in our office is now. I am currently on the governance committee that concerns recruiting board members, creating policies, guiding bylaw changes. And I really like that legal aspect of what we do because it's kind of my niche here. I just got my masters in nonprofit leadership and management so I do the legal aspects of what we do. I am on, but we have not met recently, the participation safety committee for Drum Corps International. I chaired the membership affairs committee. Currently, I'm a committee member of the Membership Affairs Committee. My two biggest ones are governance, membership of affairs. Go[ing] back to the 2000 years, I was on the advisory committee for Open Class before I was elected chair of that.

One thing if it hasn't been explained to you on the governance structure of DCI, I'll just state this briefly unless you need to get into more. So DCI is controlled by the voting membership. There are 20 voting members. There are two participating World Class corps that don't have a vote, that's Music City and Genesis. The other 20 would be member corps, but right now SCV is not because they did not perform at championships. The Cadets have withdrawn from competition. So they will not be a member as soon as they don't perform at championships. But they may have rescinded all of their voting rights going forward. I can't remember that detail exactly. So right now there's 18 voting members. So that would be those World Class organizations. The membership of DCI controls three things, which is the governance, essentially like what are the bylaws, competition and anything relating to membership. So, how you become a member. So the members control who are members, how we govern ourselves, and what our competition is. So then the membership elects the board of directors. The board of directors takes care of the business. Clearly, competition with judging being a significant cost overlaps into what is the financial aspects of what Drum Corps International is. So there's this interrelated relationship that is critical but unique in structure.

Many people think of DCI as a governing body. It is actually not, at least in the current setup. That is a consistent conversation and a trend we'll see going forward. I think its current focus and should DCI be a governing body, or is it not?

[Kara Metzger]

It's more than I asked for, but it's definitely what I need. So that was very helpful. I'm just wrapping my head around it right now because these are all the things that I don't actually know about DCI, but I'm so passionate about.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

As a board member, I cannot speak to the competition. Anything competitive, that is my Colts hat. So a lot of times I'll use my analogies. I've got my director hat on because I represent the Colts. So the Colts-speak when I'm in the voting membership room. As a board of director when I put my board hat on I must represent all drum corps not just the Colts.

[Kara Metzger]

Describe the process of the DCI annual meetings.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

There's everything. So, for the annual meeting, we have the drum majors, we have the instructors caucus that votes on the rules congress is here every other year. So, 2024 is not a rules congress year, but they're going to do some judges things while they're there, the judges and instructors. But the Open Class, World Class, now- SoundSport and DCA all get together in that timeline, in their separate caucuses, so to speak.

If I went through our own schedule, Harlan, director of Colt Cadets. This is his first year as director. So he, on Wednesday, will do a new director orientation with Drum Corps International. I have committee meetings beginning on Wednesday for membership affairs committee and the

governance committee. Then we have voting membership, that's an all day Thursday and half of Friday. Drum majors also come in in the timeline. Then the Open Class people come in and then the instructors and judges come in. Now we're embracing the all-age aspect of what we do since DCA, Drum Corps Associates, is now under the DCI umbrella. That fits perfectly with DCI's mission.

SoundSport is a much better entry point for any small group to be anything they want inside Drum Corps International. And that's where I do believe the SoundSport model is very important to the future of drum corps and to the growth of the activity. The participation point of a SoundSport, though is far simpler than a World Class corps. For example, we have a structure that evolves through that.

The voting membership's meeting, they end or pause Friday, so that we can participate with the Open Class, with all-age, with the instructor meetings going on, but also observe the drum major leadership training that's happening at the same time. And then Sunday, I would normally hang out. But as a board of director, I am not up for reelection this year, so I know I have a board meeting on Sunday. That will go all of Sunday. So on Sunday because new board members will be elected in the context of the annual meeting- we have three positions that will be elected this year- then on Sunday, the new board of directors will elect its officers. So on every nonprofit, there's an annual meeting type situation where that governance practice must be perpetuated.

[Kara Metzger]

I know that this is not a rules congress year, how do rules congresses change the DCI meetings? How does the rule congresses work?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I think one of the challenging things at least I would note is the voting membership, meaning the directors, but voting members, they can really change anything at any time. Sometimes we do. You have to really respect the governance and the process. Which I'd be candid that we don't always do. We, in general, try to subscribe by our governance, which means every other year anyone can make a rules proposal. Basically you have someone sign off on it, like rules proposals can be submitted. Like proposals might be combined into one proposal. Then instructors will gather in Indy every other year and divided by whether it's brass, percussion, visual, color guard, to discuss the proposals at hand. The instructors will vote on these rules to go forward to the voting membership and the voting membership would vote for or against them.

My joke through time is the instructors usually pass everything and the directors vote against everything. That's usually what happens. That is a broad generalization meant for humor, not statistical fact. But is it common that the instructors are apt to go somewhere that the voting membership might not be ready for yet. Hence, when I go back to allude to the number of years that it took to get the third valve to be allowable, the number of years that it took to pass moving to B-flat instruments, that number of years it took to allow amplification. That analogy of us going back to just amplification passing in 2004. And/or going on the 2004 season. When I look back, the moment that we allowed the pit to park in one place is the moment the drum corps has needed semis because of how big our front ensembles got. When we could only use what we

carried on and off in the field, pre earlier timelines, you didn't need the same scale of transport. That's the electronics and props for your scale of transport changes also.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. And then for your committee roles, how often do they meet? What type of timeline do those see throughout again any given year?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I'd say during the COVID pandemic, meaning 2020/2021, we were all meeting just even as general directors, we are meeting weekly. To try to find a path back for the activity. And understanding what we had to do in order to successfully achieve a tour from a health standpoint. There might be work outside the committee meeting, but a shear committee meeting might be one or two hours a month for governance. It's going to be two hours a month or a meeting every other week for the membership of affairs committee. The participant safety committee really only needs to meet when there are major issues. Where that has shifted too is DCI has hired a participant safety coordinator. So they have an employee now that does a lot of that. But governance, I would say it's a few hours a month, regardless for meeting timeline. And then a few hours of homework per month also.

Then I'm sitting with my nonprofit law book. I'm just exploring my desk, which is DCI policies and bylaws. Understanding the minutiae of those details takes a lot of legal work and perspective outside of the traditional meeting timeline. I'm laughing at another book, just the Roberts Rules people may profess their experts on, but it's really tough to understand all the written policies and details, and that takes more time.

So I say governance is a very binary type committee. Where membership affairs is a little more a live-time reactionary to what are the issues of membership organizations and not just of Drum Corps International member corps, but of all what we call participating organizations, which would include Open Class, DCA, SoundSport, Drumline Battle groups, etc.

I should say, the board of directors, we meet monthly and that's more intensive. That's like 6 hours a month, plus 6 hours of homework, and a lot of travel to meet face to face. I don't mean to classify that just as a committee, but as a board of director member, then besides the board of director oversight is the participation in the individual committees as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Okay, that makes sense. Going back into more of just like a Colts perspective that could be compared to other things. What have you seen has changed over the years in terms of operating budget? And has the cost of food, travel, staff, other needs, what have you seen be the changes in that regard over your times there?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

When Jeff and I started into 2013, the budget, we had \$993,000 as a budget and the Colts budget for 2024 is 1.85 million. So it has doubled in that timeline. The scale is significant.

[Kara Metzger]

I know you mentioned that the food had essentially doubled as well. What other things have you seen being like the biggest changes/contributors over time.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Food. Transportation. Housing.

So you think of transportation as travel. Like, what are the costs that have significantly gone up in the world? Travel, when you think the cost of gas and flights. Transportation, the cost of chartering a bus has almost doubled.

Food.

When we talk about professionalism, it's also the staffing costs. Higher expectations. Can we even provide the level of staffing our members would expect in an affordable capacity?

Then I go back through this cycle that drum corps has. There's an expectation that comes in place. Members are going to pay 50% of the cost of that expectations, but they want us to keep their tuition down. I examine as I walked through all the corps... and I sometimes would remove the pull tab corps/some people call them the bingo corps -you can only sell pull tabs in the state of California and Ohio- and it is the pull tab operations that fund those groups, not the bingo sales. In Iowa, only bingo was allowed, not pull tabs. So that's where when you look at Santa Clara Vanguard, Blue Devils, Mandarin, and Blue Coats, those are your pull tab groups, and their revenue from their pull tab/bingo operations would allow them (I believe) to fund/keep their tuition lower because of the outside income they have from that charitable gaming aspect. You can't just replicate that in every state. So we want a healthy, vibrant activity.

That's where I go back to member expectations. Like, medical, we used to fund medical \$3,000 a year and that's a \$30,000 expense just for personnel in that category. We talked also about having legitimate drivers. People that are DOT compliant and following all those rules also necessitates a regular wage. That's also the demand of competing in some of the ancillary roles, not the educational aspects of what we do. But it's really a lot of the support roles from drivers and medical team members that are on a different pay scale than our educators, which I don't necessarily know is right or wrong, but is the way the world values, or the way the world compensates those roles where we're required to compete in a different market. If you go, \$3 to \$30,000 just for medical team- and that's not considering any of their supplies. So, those things I was just walking through what is looking at our budget from.

If you ask other people sometimes they would be like, the electronics and the amplification is what you'll hear [as being the major costs]. Or the props. Those are what I call \$15,000 expenses. \$15,000 here, \$15,000 there. Call it \$30,000 electronics, \$15,000 lease and \$15,000 educational team. \$30,000 expense area. Props, \$15,000 for props, \$15,000 for other supplies and personnel, \$30,000. Then the medical team, where it's \$10,000 a person. Two \$10,000 roles in one corps, another \$10,000 role in another corps. It's all those things add up very quickly in the number of areas that have increased. So, but as I walk through it, our travel is way better than it used to be, our transportation is way better than it used to be, our food keeps getting better, our staffing is as

robust as it's ever been, our medical team is strong and all those areas are significant increases. So I guess that's why it all doubled.

[Kara Metzger]

That's, that's fair. Because I'm not interviewing anyone that works on the pedagogical side of the scene here. Pedagogically, have you seen instructors operating in different ways since 2000 to now? What is your instructional vision for the drum corps? What are other corps looking to go towards?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Basically, you're asking what's the evolution of the education. What do you see the vision for the future? I was going to go back on the last question too, to get housing into there.

Housing for us, for example, went from \$26,000 to over \$70,000. But the fact that that it also doubled. That's going from 2019 to present. So a lot of the costs that we're talking about doubling we can share from our perspective, general data points and a couple of these I did podcasts on post the COVID timeline, I really think the daily rate for drum corps is more affordable than most activities. When you compare the cost of band camp per day to a student, drum corps is far less than that. It just happens that we have a lot of days, that's where the costs add up. The cost per the value of what you get, I think is higher in drum corps than other places. But keeping up with the costs, or the development, is challenging. I think when you add the housing travel, schools now look at drum corps and outside guests as profit centers. We used to be guests. Now, we are a customer that can just buy their building, but they are going to charge for that building different than it may have used to be. I think you'll also always see an evolution of the balancing act and the way the pendulum swings through time. People try to acclimate to all those things.

Well, I still like the scholastic term [to] the education. There's always been this argument, in drum corps on, are we meant to be an entertainment industry or are we meant to be an education industry? Our 501(c)(3) status is provided in the fact that we educate. I think that with the military tradition in our roots, the hardcore demands pushing buses, grow kids from the streets... clearly we are closer to that original foundation in the year 2000, 25-27 years after the founding of DCI. [Now] we are 50 years later. What was different from the 25th year to the 50th year of Drum Corp International? I think it continues to be a refined scholastic environment that gets better and better educationally. However, the skill set to earn a position in a World Class corps continues to rise. And that is because we have had good interest. When we interviewed the student leaders from Colts and we found that every single one of them had had private lessons of some sort before becoming a student leader in the Colts, it was a little fascinating to us. We have very conscientious minded people. I would say this is some of the evolution and what is the future instructional and vision... when we add our diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusiveness aspects... one of the things that stands out to me musically is access to musical instruments from a young age for impoverished students. And sometimes solving the world's problems can be a lot more daunting than putting a competitive field show on the field. But that's where I think that you'll see more drum corps take on a broader embrace on of variety of groups or approaches. I don't believe that we're going to enhance the diversity of our students in a very short term fashion. We have to look at long term goals to be able to accomplish that.

That's where, for us, we look at short term, midterm, long term. Our long-term instructional vision is to make sure all students have access to what we do. We have to start providing an education at an earlier age. Not every student needs to want to do drum corps. It's not a right. It's a privilege, really. But we want to make sure that students have access to the opportunity if that's something they desire. If you don't have [access to] lessons at a young age you will not have that access, typically. That might be a broader perspective than you were initially looking for.

If I go back to 20 years ago, there's still profanity used in drum corps. But people might have been sworn at 20 years ago, far more than they're going to get sworn at now. I might use swear words, but it's usually not directed at individuals. It is a respectful, responsible approach.

I like the phrase peak performance level. I think that one of the biggest difference is in the skill set of our educators to be savvy enough to understand peak performance level, it's not just beating things out of people. Where it used to be the word brute approach would be a lot better.

That said, one of the challenges in drum corps is the physical demand of the activity. It's the equivalent of a half marathon every day for 80 days. It's a slight exaggeration, but not significantly. Knowing that on the average day, no one's (none of the brass or percussion or battery or color guard) are doing less than 12 miles per day of some sort of walking, that's [including] to the field, back to the cook truck, etc. I think our understanding of those physical demands is ever growing and I think the medical world parallel to like what you're even doing with this project will help us also as we go forward.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, cool. Thank you. That is all my pertinent questions. So of course my last question is anything else you would like to say state or share? I'm all ears for whatever you think I need to know that I may be missed.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

You know what I think really shifted in drum corps, the whole Hopkins scandal. Because when I go back through the layers of protection that we have now, it's really based around that scandal or that really propelled it.

Post Hopkins era is almost what I would address it [as]. One thing I really have enjoyed about the drum corps environment is... Let me walk through my own experience. When Kathy Black was the president of the board of directors, I felt a comfort with her. I felt like for the first time I could speak candidly without being judged with someone who understood what I was saying. Now the fact that we were both female, [did] that make a difference? I'm thinking so. Was it the fact I'm female or the fact that I was a band director make me more sensitive going back prior to the Hopkins thing? I don't know which way that is, but I think understanding, having another female to turn to in the activity, really helped my comfort and confidence. Really just being able to be me, if that makes sense. I had a comfort level with Kathy Black that I had not found elsewhere. I've never felt uncomfortable about the other men in the activity. But one thing that I found post Hopkins is the manner in which the men in the other drum corps supported myself, ask my opinion specifically, or would seek me out, that's what I have loved about this activity. I even surveyed a variety of the male leadership about if they would approach their young men and

women leaders differently and their answer was not. Sometimes in specific situations they might turn to a male or female to handle a situation within a group differently. But the approach and the education was very much the same. So I have found the men in this activity to be wildly sensitive and supportive of various thoughts, especially since Hopkins. It's the HR practices that have improved. When we go to the professional elements, I should just add HR as a general category. If I just walked through, I'm going to try to do this without naming corps, one corps calls for reference on someone and I say, can you hire someone on a sex offender registry? And before, people were just doing that in drum corps. The organization I work for had a different standard.

Some of that I really believe is the organization setting that standard. That's where I go back, people in an organization have to set that policy that creates that standard and then other people have to follow that standard in their employment or membership practices. Sometimes I feel on an island pre Hopkins. And I go back to another drum corps in that same time that might have a form you have to sign off on, but they have a staff member that lies on it and they never called and checked a reference. It's like, hey, did you know?...

Even right now, we don't have a consistent standard corps to corps. Here's my classic example, someone steals something within a corps, we have to remove them from membership. Should that preclude their membership at another organization? Right now, each organization is making individual decisions. I believe a collective code of conduct would make that simpler. Which we do have a DCI code of conduct, but I'm talking on another level still. That's where I think of where it may shift to. Take the pressure off the individual director of each unilateral entity and make it more collective with WGI.

That's where I think it'll be pre Hopkins versus post Hopkins. Pre Hopkins background checks, I believe through most corps, may have been hit or miss. Post Hopkins, more rare to not do them. It would be a mishap if any corps missed some of those things, in my opinion. DCI does check on those things, but DCI is not a governing body. They can hand slap that but not necessarily punish unless there's an egregious action. The health aspects of what is required by DCI has shifted post Hopkins also.

I'm trying to think... health, background checks, and reference checks. Those would be the biggest things.

Also, I would say in our [last] September meetings, after the meetings, I'm hanging out with another female board of directors member, a female CFO, female corps director, two female assistant corps directors, and myself, and another female DCI employee. I was like, there are seven of us, Kara. I was hanging with the girls and it was the first time in my 23 year career and it was exciting. I do think that the Hopkins reality check shifted a lot in terms of the sense of urgency of what we do and it got a lot of attention very quickly. Speaking for the other men in our activity, I'm very thankful for them.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah. Thank you so much. Of course, if you think that you have any other things that I should know about, please let me know and I will happily include them in this project and I appreciate

all of your time today as well as you know any other day that we get to speak since we do get to do that so frequently.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

If you need anything at all, I don't hesitate to ask and if you think of other questions you need to do it again. I learned a lot from answering questions in the framework of which you asked them. So thank you.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, thank you. I jotted down that I need to do more research on from what you said and cannot wait to include it in the final paper.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I'll see if I can get you the full budget history from Colts. I think Jeff has it from like, 2001 to the present. Just could see that and then the DCI stuff on another level too.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Thank you so much.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Have a great day, Kara. Bye.

[Kara Metzger]

You too. Bye.

Additional Transcripts from March 15, 2024

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I'm just going to randomly banter and if you need it more, perfect. I'm trying to think, when I started at the Colts in 2001 every camp, every announcement was paper mail. We had a website at that time, but a computer wasn't in the home. So what was interesting is the timeline you're covering in drum corps. It was 2012, I believe, if you research that is when 50% of American citizens had a phone, I had a smartphone. If you think, that being the last decade. And that also they believe, a lot of research are investigating how that deals with generational differences. But you go to, everything's online now. Cool, paperless, cool, pretty easy transition.

COVID is what really struck though, right? Because all of a sudden, we've got to try to run and teach these programs from our offices. I think, too, for different instructors, different designers, a lot of people really do/work in drum corps because they love that ensemble type setting. The technology that we utilized is kind of the extreme opposite of that. But COVID helped us learn and we had to learn how to use platforms to put music together. In different ways, where that is not something we would have equipped as a drum corps. We're based on live ensemble performances, not solo performances.

In our case, we followed, what another group, the Virtual Drum Corps was doing at the time. That's where we found sound slice, which allows students to practice at their own pace with video samples from an instructor. And when I go back to even, say the Colt Cadets, timeline and that an Open Class corps that's dealing with beginners. How do you take the instrument out of the box? How do you put the mouthpiece in? How do you make a buzz? Soundslice gave us that potential. We pay a little bit for soundslice.

Google classroom was another piece of technology that everyone has access to in their own home. It doesn't cost money. There's lots of robust tools that people can pay for. But on the same hand what is, what are accessible tools that students can use in their own home to learn? That's where we came upon the sound slice. That's where we can use the Google classroom.

And separate, whether it's before the pandemic or after the pandemic now, the UDB, ultimate drill book/ultimate dot book. To have the changing technology where students can actually see the motion of what we're doing on the field in their own phone, from their own perspective, from the ensemble perspective, from the instructional view. To me UDB has really changed the face of marching education and simplified it and streamlined it more than any other tool we offer. Everything else (Soundslice or Google classroom) is simple homework, turn it in, get feedback from your teacher, get a grade. A practice along with this tool. But the UDB option with Pyware really brought it literally into each student's hands, each staff members hands.

It used to be run to the office in print drill and then carry it to the field because no one had it otherwise. But this timeline of drum corps that you're looking at really encompasses the transition from paper to digital.

And then COVID streamlined our knowledge as organizations about how to utilize those tools, in a productive manner for, education for drum corps education [and] for performance education.

[Kara Metzger]

But you're talking about mailings going out to be recruiting tactics. When I was writing the recruiting part of this, I wrote the things that you had said and then I was thinking about the conversation that we had in Olathe with the full staff in November. About how you're recruiting tactics have changed over time, in terms of three day events versus one day events versus location. Can you speak to that so that?

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

Thinking back through the paper mailing timeline where... here's your mailing about the April camp information and then the RSVP would get mailed back to us. The information was never quite as accurate.

The event structure, I think before, people really needed to seek out a drum corps. I came around just in the timeline where we were starting to get information requests online and that technology was moving very quickly. But again, email wasn't something you sat at every day or had right on your phone. So it wasn't a thing yet. Plus a lot of students in common households didn't have them.

Well now we can get our information out via Facebook [and] all the social media platforms. You can get information out very quickly. And websites are still there, but a lot of times the news is going forward on the social media.

I've never really contemplated how that shifts how we hold or do auditions. In terms of the commitment level required to be in a drum corps, that's where I would say students that seek out events are often, I believe, more specifically interested in that drum corps. So it can be a measure of interest. Yet on the same hand during the COVID timeline, it's not the only measure of interest.

So go back to 2016. The Colts would not have allowed video auditions. Alright, I should go back earlier than that because we just started around that time. But in, 2013 when I started as the Colts director, video auditions were really not an option or not anything we took legitimately. And now what we want to do is try to meet students where they're at. So that is a combination of three day events versus one day events. Where it's like, try this out, do an audition, go home, don't have the same costs. Where we go to the students instead of making them come to us for a three day experience.

Interestingly, at least for Colts, their three day events are more significantly attended than our one day events.

Our student breakdown, in the 11 years I've been director, we've had students every year from 28 states or more. But when you look at the breakdown for each of those years, there are some states that only have like 2 people from them. So that's where I don't know where it will go forward. But I think it could demonstrate a shift in mindset of organizations that instead of making students come to where we are, where we have the capacity to go reach them where they're at. And between social media, the one day event, the change in that mentality, it lets us access a wider variety of students.

Ultimately, at the end of the day for a World Class corps, we are currently limited to 165, right? And that was 154 through most of the 20-teens. The World Class corps are generally going to fill out at that number. It really becomes a pursuit of talent and not as much just like any sheer number.

Now for an Open Class corps, that's where it is a little different. Especially through COVID, the way many band programs and instrumental programs were decimated, I still think that the Open Class corps, which may not have the resources go anywhere and everywhere, are the ones that are really looking at that from a sheer recruiting aspect. You don't see as many Open Class corps doing the one day events where they outreach into other communities. So, I don't have any answers there for you, Kara, but I have some theories you could bring up.

The other thing you might mix in or be able to touch on in this context too, as I also think the challenge with housing with COVID, we have a global pandemic going on. People don't want visitors in the same way. You have the Sandusky issues and the Me Too movement. Both of those things combined that offer more concern about students safety. And that's where the overnight events become more challenging in some regions and some venues. That's one I can note for Blue Stars because of the challenge of the housing went to more one day events. Where they would have traditionally held them, but they just went to one day instead of overnight events because of some of those what i would simplify as housing challenges. But it's really amplified by Sandusky and other Me Too movement, opics.

[Kara Metzger]

Sure, awesome. Well, that was all I needed from you today, but I appreciate it.

[Vicki MacFarlane/Colts]

I'm glad I can help.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Richard Hinshaw

1. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?
2. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past twenty-three years?
3. From a visual perspective, how has show design changed since 2000?
 - a. Cologuard
 - b. Marching/Movement
 - c. Props
 - d. Costuming
4. Who/what types of individuals are involved in the visual design process?
 - a. How do you navigate working with and encompassing all captions equally?
5. What are the key components you try to include in all your designed shows?
 - a. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
6. How involved is the design process/how much time does it take?
 - a. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
7. What are key rules or components of the activity that drive the visual design process?
 - a. How much do you design towards these rules?
 - b. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
 - c. Were there any changes you were particularly excited about to help the creative design process?
8. Pinpoint one show (that you were part of the design team or not) that you find to be the pinnacle of each of the following time periods.
 - a. 2000-2005
 - b. 2006-2010
 - c. 2011-2016
 - d. 2017-present
9. Anything else you would like to share for the record?

Full Transcript for Richard Hinshaw

[Kara Metzger]

I'm just going to go down my list of questions and, of course, if there's anything else you want to introduce or interject in, you are more than welcome to do so.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yup.

[Kara Metzger]

Just so you know, I'm recording this and getting all the transcripts because I'll have to put it in my thesis.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yeah, you're fine.

[Kara Metzger]

Cool. So we'll start, I said this was easy when I did Vicki's interview and she laughed that that wasn't the easiest question. So, we'll start with what I think is easy. When in what roles have you been active in the DCI communities?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Oh gosh, there's a lot there. I'm realizing that I'm old. Do you want only on the instructional and design side or all of it?

[Kara Metzger]

You can go with all of it just because it gives us kind of like a background.

[Richard Hinshaw]

So I marched in the Glassman in 1996 and 1997. I thought I was just doing this for one summer. I fell in love with it because of my high school band director, of course, as most people do, how they get exposed to it. It was on PBS at the time, so they were showing it to us on PBS. Then, I knew I wanted to do that, so I went the summer before my senior year. They let me go. I thought, I'm going to do this once. I'm never going to be involved in this again. I just have to do it. It was like my first bucket list thing. It was it was me as a 16-year-old, like 'I have to do this because I could only do it when I'm this age and This would be the last time I do this.'

Well, of course that's not how it worked out. We did not make finals. We were 13th. I loved the summer and I didn't know that we weren't good, I had no idea. And finally at the end, the old people had to be like, 'Hey, you know we're not making finals, right?' Like, 'what are you talking about?' Because they had been a finalist corps. So, we were 13th and literally it was also one of those moments that summer at the end of the summer where I was like, 'nope I'm doing this again, we're coming back.' And there was a group of us. I came back my second year, they had a whole new director, and a lot of new staff. Probably 60% was new staff. And that was 1997. We got back up to where they were before. We got 8th place, and had a great summer

again. I did not go to my age out because I still thought I wasn't going to be involved in all of this. I still had 3 years left actually when I stopped marching. Yeah, 1996, 1997 Glassmen.

The next time I was involved in drum corps was not until 2001. I taught high school marching band in the summer. Then I started writing drill and I started teaching winter guard. and I was like, 'oh, I really like this.' While I was attempting college, I never did actually make it through college. I tried, several times.

But, I met some people who saw one of the high school bands I taught, and it was actually a guy who taught me in drum corps. He was like, 'Oh, you were involved with that?' And he said, 'okay, I have a gig for you.' I got another high school gig that then led me to meeting people who got me my first drum corps gig. I taught, Phantom Regiment visual in 2001.

And then, we moved away from that and I taught Spirit [of Atlanta] in 2002, visual. Then we all went to Carolina Crown. I taught Carolina Crown from 2003 to 2007. That was all on visual staff.

At that point, I was pretty serious about writing drill and teaching all year round. I was teaching drum line and winter guard and marching band. At that point I was not trying college anymore because I was realizing I should stop spending my money on this thing but I'm not really trying hard at.

The 2008 year, I could have taught again but I decided that I wanted to be serious about writing. So, I really dug into writing and I pulled out of teaching until I got a writing gig. So 2008, I didn't teach anywhere. And then I got a writing gig at the Academy.

So I was designer at the Academy, 2009 to 2013. I got asked to do the Cavaliers. I did the Cavaliers in 2012. So in 2012, I did the Cavaliers and the Academy. That ended poorly. So then I did the Academy for another year. And that account run its course. I actually resigned from the Academy in 2013. Didn't do drum corps in 2014 or 2015, just did Avon and bunch of band stuff. And then, 2016 to 2022, I did the Cavaliers again with some different people. I've been doing the Colts since 2018. So, 2018 to 2022 I was doing both Colts and Cavaliers. Now, I just do the Colts.

So yeah, that's my crazy. And there are people who have way more than that, but that's what it's a lot. It's starting to get to 'I'm old, I've done a lot of groups.'

[Kara Metzger]

Sure, yeah. Cool. Well, thank you for that information. Moving on to question number 2, which in my opinion gets a little bit harder, but, you can agree or disagree with me on that, In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past 23 years? Just a very broad and question.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Woof.

Well, it's grown a ton. Well, I guess you could say evolved. Maybe grow is maybe not the best word, but it has grown. Obviously, if you're just looking at our data/ amount of groups and participants, it's probably not grown. But, I bet the audience has grown. I think it has. I bet you can quantify that. I think that the experience has grown out. I think that our ability to produce

things at a higher level is grown. I think that what the students are achieving is light years ahead of what it was when I marched. We can kind of frame this in my life. I've marched in '96 and '97. I started teaching in 2001.

So, from that standpoint, probably the biggest thing that has evolved, I would say, is what we put on field. In a good way, really. Ultimately, it's just become more advanced on all levels. Musically, theatrically, visually, entertainment wise, it's all advanced.

I think people take that for granted because most people take the perspective of, it's super expensive and nobody's doing it anymore. Then also try to, with that, say see nobody. And it's like, well wait... except we have the biggest crowds we've ever had. We have the ability to reach way more audience now with technology. I think we're reaching more students. Even if it's not students who perform directly with drum corps, I think we're reaching more music students in general through exposure. So, I'm an optimist on that side of it. I know there's a lot of pessimism out there, mostly due to the financial side of it, but I also think there's a ton of that that really has nothing to do with us. I guess I gave you a short answer to a really big question.

[Kara Metzger]

That's okay! The next question is, from a visual perspective, how has show design changed since 2000? And since you're on the visual side of things, I was going to ask you about color guard, marching/movement, props and costuming.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Well, I mean, really. I think in that time period, I think probably the most important thing that really directly impacts the performer is the use of dance. The use of more contemporary movement. And moving away from just pure military. Evolving from those routes and incorporating dance and movement into how we put show out there. And yet still having the military routes. So I think that the performer gets way more from that evolution. And again, people could argue that it's diluted it, but I would disagree.

It's all the other stuff, too. I mean, it's our ability to bring a production to the field. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. But that's with anything, right? There are so many opinions out there that all the newer things are all negative. Yet, the reality is, it's all really equal. It's just different. Even before we had all this, there were still bad ideas. We all still had bad ideas in 1994. We have new toys. And our ability to bring those things to the field has changed.

Obviously, through the use of set pieces and through the use of props that are interactive.

[Making] the ability to not just be Latin on the football field. That's all changed and evolved greatly. It's certainly that's a little bit of what costs more, but not the majority of our possible [costs].

On the adult side of it, our ability to bring more people into the tent. There are way more of us who are visual professionals than used to be. We, kind of have created a career pathway that didn't used to exist. And you could probably give the designers before me credit for that. I think that's something that's cool and unique and something that you don't have as much in your world. So, I think that's cool.

I think that we are struggling with some of that growth because we're, what we see as a result is all the growth on the scholastic side. And it's hard for us to keep up in the visual community. It's

hard for us to service all of the growth with quality designers and companies that can produce all the things that we need to put on the kind of show that we've put on now. We're running the companies that make all the uniforms and the vinyls in the [ground]. There's not enough of those people to fulfill all the orders, especially after COVID, we lost a few of the companies. But the actual demand is higher than it was before. What we're seeing is that the demand for all, especially in the winter, but in the fall too, but the demand on this scholastic side is higher than the companies keep up with. I think you're seeing it more on the personnel side, like people who do what I do, that's grown a lot. There's a lot of people out there doing that. But people that do the actual making of stuff, we need more of that.

So anyway, all that to be said that drum corps has motivated that. The way that we've grown putting the shows on and the way that people get to see it now and the way it involves more people and more styles and more... It's just more. So, you've seen the schools react to that in a cool way where we're all, you know, we all have this essentially, niche culture that is way bigger than it used to be, even though drum corps itself has shrunk. I think that what it's motivated in the scholastic side is a huge grow. Even to the point of, drum corps itself may not survive the way we know it now, but what it has set off is certainly growth.

[Kara Metzger]

Definitely. As you go through some of those things like you had mentioned the movement, the dance being so important... Do you see a specific time that you can pinpoint in your mind as to this is where dance really got or really became its biggest thing?

[Richard Hinshaw]

I mean, it's interesting, and if you're using the 21st century [as the timeline], so much of it, though, was happening. The 90s is really where it started turning. So, I mean the things that the Star of Indiana was doing in the early 90s that then motivated what you started to see in the Santa Clara Vanguard. All of that.

Really it was happening in winter guards first. So that was happening in the winter and with through WGI. So as WGI grew, that was where those students and teachers started seeing it. [And thinking], 'oh, I can do this thing that's specialized and have my own season. Essentially, I can bring that to the summer. So, that infused all of that. So you have to give the WGI side of it credit. For bringing that to the football field.

It's funny, DCI is the one where we're all together and it's the one that probably most people see. But, some of the stuff started in other places. Those were great examples, I would say those Star of Indiana and the Santa Clara Vanguard, those people were bringing that from winter guard and from dance.

You've seen a winter guard evolve in the same way from super traditional military now to quite contemporary. Those stick out in my mind for sure. I'm sure there's examples before that, but those certainly were the ones that impact me.

[Kara Metzger]

Oh, definitely. Understandably so. So then, in this era, what would you say was the most changed aspect of like the color guard caption? I know that you're not particularly working with the color guard, but you do things with them.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Really just the skill sets have grown so much. Even if you just look at spinning. What the kids can do now, is interesting in that way. It's a little different from the music side from the standpoint of literally you're seeing skill sets that you would never have seen before. As where music, you can kind of find derivatives of, this brass line played this thing. And somebody could get a derivative of something orchestral, someone played it, 1952. You can relay. But, some of the stuff on the color guard side like using the traditional equipment and then doing wild stuff with it is just, wow, that's completely new.

Now maybe some of that came from what someone saw someone do with the baton before. But, the fusing of that with then bringing dance and getting away from the military, along with the theatrical of design[ing] whatever we want and we could paint it, or we can print it, or we could build something to create a scene... All of those things evolved together. That's what's kind of cool. They're all different things, but they've all grown together.

It's interesting now. We always look around at what's next? What now? I currently I think, I feel like we're in more of an era of adaptation than we are of an era of pure innovation. We're more in the 'do things that have been done, but do them differently.' And rearrange them in creative ways.

But, I don't know now with costuming, it's just so cool that we can do not wearing the same uniform every year. That can be tough, but it's also the opportunity. The way we could costume now means that we can do things that we used to do, but do them totally differently because we can costume the whole band. Like, I remember that idea we did, but we had to wear those old military uniforms and now we don't so it's going to look totally different.

The way that we can do things with graphics or again, set pieces, it's interesting. Some of us now, we have a little bit of a desire to stop using all the huge stuff and I'm actually shocked.

This is actually one of my biggest current things for drop corps. I'm shocked that after COVID, that more of the drum corps didn't go away from the big productions and the big set pieces and all of the stuff. That has shocked me a little bit.

And, On the scholastic side, like Avon and Carmel, we've spent the last 2 falls not using a lot of big set pieces on purpose. Let's bring this back a little bit to the student. And we actually believe in the costuming thing a little bit more because that's literally on the student, it is the student. It's not just a big hunk of junk that they have to push around that is not totally integrated with them. We should invest in that because it's part of who they are. Or we also believe let's save money on these huge set pieces and let's spend money on our staff, our human resources. But the drum corps aren't going away from it. It'll be interesting to see if they will ever go away from it. I think they will. I would argue that WGI is in a much better place because they leave less of a footprint financially. I think drum corps, with all the travel with the price of travel and food and housing... I'm surprised that the drum corps haven't gone away from some of those extra things. I think it could. Evolve back a little bit to more just student centric things.

[Kara Metzger]

Of course. What do you get involved in, in the design process in terms of the props and the costuming and all that type of design?

[Richard Hinshaw]

So, I am a big believer personally in being involved with as much of it as I can. It's funny Daniel and I'll say this a lot, 'we are not costume designers and we're not set design, but we could help.' If people can afford to hire those people separately, we love working with those people to collaborate on an idea. And we'll have thoughts of what will work in our arenas, that a costume designer or a set designer may not always understand because we work on these shows year-round. And we are constantly working on our craft. When I'm when I'm working with the band, I'm like you need to use me for all the things. And that's partially because I'm involved in winter guard and winter drum line too. I'm not just a drill writer. It's much more of that term, visual designer, because it is designing the whole. There's not cool drill if you don't have good music and good design. It has to all work. So, I like to be super involved with that. I like to work with costume designers and set designers because I learned from them. I actually hope for more opportunity for that where we bring in people who are maybe not necessarily marching people, or people who are marching people who have professional experience in their areas in other places. I think that that's really important to maintain.

[Kara Metzger]

Going off of this question, but into a new one. Who/what types of individuals are involved in this design process for visual? I know you just mentioned a few. But, what are all of them?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yep. For drum corps, we're talking high level, World Class corps, you've got your program coordinator. Who is really managing the design team. It depends, some places it's different. Like some places that person has ultimate power, and some places that person does not. It depends how each group works.

And then from there it usually works down to your designers. I like to differentiate between a designer and a writer. A designer is someone who's helping put together the 'big picture' ideas. Who's coming up with the thoughts and riffing on that. You could be a designer and a writer. But you could also just be a writer. You might just be someone who writes the drumbeats and but not necessarily involved in the designing of the big ideas, and that's okay. Every place has a different combination of that. But essentially, you've got to have your people who are design minded with ideas regardless of what their other roles are. And then you've got to have all your writers.

You got to have your drill writer. You've got to have your choreographers. Which is everything. That's choreographers being color guard and winds. Usually, there's a separate choreographer who does it for the percussion as well. There's all kinds of people.

It just depends, but for most groups there's a program coordinator then there's a group of people who are coming up with the ideas, some of who are usually writers, and then there's all the writers. Which is the drill, the choreography for all the sections, the music writers (brass, percussion, front ensemble). The new category is obviously the electronic designers. The people who are designing the soundscape.

I skipped some back in the designer pile is also the costume designer and set designer. That's about it. And sometimes the costume designer and the set designer the same person. Sometimes set design is something you outsource so it's someone that you're not intimately in the design

process with you're just sending them the stuff and then they're doing it. But generally at high level drum corps they have that person.

[Kara Metzger]

Okay, cool. With all of these different people and personalities and such, how do you navigate working with and encompassing all these captions equally in your design process?

[Richard Hinshaw]

That gets tricky and drum corps. The hardest part about drum corps is that it's the most people that you usually work with. On the scholastic side, you're usually working with smaller teams and there is usually in that environment it's a little easier to work in a smaller team. You're more focused on whatever the best idea is. We need to serve that idea, no matter what it means for each person's little worldview.

In drum corps, you work with more people who are more focused on their small world view. And it becomes tougher to do what you just said. There's a lot of failure in that. A lot of groups fail in that, even some of the best groups. And my mantra is to not care about the trees and only worry about the forest. Because if you don't have good ideas none of the other things are going to be as successful as they could be. If each of the captions, the brass and the percussion and the color guard, (or even the snares and marimbas and all the little sub-captions), if they all are achieving to their fullest potential based on their talent that it doesn't matter if you don't have great ideas. It doesn't matter. It just doesn't. You won't really achieve the full potential of the group and then you'll see it in the scoring. You might have technically one of your small sections that is the best, but if the overall is not keeping it afloat, that little caption is going to sink.

The phrase, 'a rising tide lifts all boats.' That's your ideas. Your ideas, is the thing that lifts all the boats. Part of the reason the Blue Devils are so hard to beat is because they're one of the only groups who really work that way. They think about the wholistic idea to a fault. If you know the score system, 40% of your score is general effect. And general effect is all about having good ideas that work regardless of what the trumpets are playing or what the flags are spinning. It just doesn't matter.

It's even like you can win the Oscar for like best costuming and that's cool, but in our world that's a little more rare. It's rare that you have what the Cavaliers did last summer where like they won a caption, but really they didn't have a good year. They weren't good. Their show was bad. So that almost never happens and it's because of the way our thing works. It's designed to work for the best idea.

I try to think that way in all of my processes. Like, 'what's the best idea?' Especially when we get into editing. That's the hard part. When you get into editing. It gets down to no we're not doing this thing for the brass because we have to do with the best idea right now and people get mad about that and you just have to keep going. You just have to keep your head down and say, 'nope.' That's why generally you try to have a design team, that even if they're writers, on the design team is a separate function. When you're writing for your specific thing, you have to separate that from what's best for the whole as far as an ideas standpoint and not everybody does a great job of that. And you see it. You see it in the shows.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Moving on to the next one, what are the key components that you try to include in all of the shows that you design?

[Richard Hinshaw]

So I'm a big believer in, you don't have to sacrifice accessibility for artistry. I'm a really big believer in that. I'm a believer in, you have to engage the audience. And the creative/ artistic side is, how can you engage an audience and still be intriguing and thought-provoking and interesting and different?

That's probably my biggest tenant. There are some things out there that are regarded highly artistically that avoid the audience and I think that's a problem. I think our world, the pageantry marching arts world, should still strive to connect to our audience. I'm always telling people, 'you realize our audience is parents and adjudicators.' That's what our audience is. Parents, families, and adjudicators. They are all older than us. Even me, I'm 45. They're all older than me. So, we have to think that way.

You know, now some people will argue we got to do what the kids want to do. I don't know. I think we serve the students better. When we think of our real audience and the students learn from that. As opposed to some as some of the band directors try to get our kids excited about the show. I'm like, 'if you're really good at what you do, your kids are going to be excited about your program.' If you're good at it and your kids are motivated and they're there for the right reasons, whatever your philosophy is, [will work]. Their opinion about what I might be saying the show is in March is meaningless. It is like somebody writing a movie review, before they've seen the movie.

I think that's a big one for me. At the same time, while engaging the audience still and having an artistic take, having something that is a little different not, just doing something that's recycled. I think it's both sides of that coin.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah. And how do you see yourself doing that specifically in a visual lens? Is there like one thing that you've done like in terms of drill design or in terms of costuming?

[Richard Hinshaw]

So with my writing specifically, which is really just the drill and the staging, ultimately. Pen to paper, that's all I'm really doing. I'll have opinions on everything else and in some situations I'll have a say. But, for my actual writing, even after all the talk of the evolution, I'm still a believer in some of the military aspects and some of the things that have been done to create excitement through motion. I'm still a believer in that. Drum corps, I think, is still really good about honoring that. The scholastic side, we see a little bit of people taking the path of least resistance. And it's like, 'oh, we're not going to move so much.' There's some intelligence in that, but then there is some also dumbing down in that. I'm a big believer in still using motion to create energy and effect and emotion. I really hang on to that tenant.

The main thing, which is even more important, is the staging on the music. It's paramount. I think some people ignore that, to their fault. You got to stage the music. If your eyes are closed,

you have to be able to feel the voices and hear them appropriately. And then also if your eyes are open, have the visual make 100% sense with that.

Now, of course, it doesn't always happen, but that's the goal. I would say that still hanging on to the tenants of some of which some people would say are old, of motion and the use of motion and then also the staging of the music. Those are really two big, important things for my right off.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Over the time that you've been writing, have you seen a change in any of the things? Like I know you said that you're still hanging on to that motion. Is there anything that you've done differently in the last few years that you didn't do previously?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yeah, I mean every year we're evaluating. 'Yep, we did too much of this and not enough of that.'

'This was rewarded, this wasn't.' And every year we're trying to be a little smarter about the demands we place on the students while still creating what we want to create.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah. What are some of the things that were rewarded or not rewarded?

[Richard Hinshaw]

We're in a bit of a time now where derived achievement is not rewarded the way it used to be. I think that comes from our digital world. I think that's some of the negatives of everybody being able to find something on YouTube and dissect it. Some of the negative is that lends itself to people who are just looking for ticks and mistakes. Their purpose in viewing something, especially if they're viewing it more than once and they're viewing it in that 2-dimensional plane, it becomes one of those games. Find the thing that's wrong. Our viewership becomes more like that, I believe because of the digital world and because of the amount of views.

Then what is perceived as effective, is only the purity of the precision is perceived as effect. When we all know, that's not the real experience we're in when you're in the stadium. And it doesn't move you the way it does when you're live. We used to be a little more daring. We used to be willing to take more risks. We used to be way more willing to be bad in June. So, we have lost a little bit of that. Because we know like, no, this is a challenge. Whether it's a physical challenge or a musical challenge or it's an environmental challenge, whatever, any of the challenges, [it's going to take time]. Before YouTube and streaming, I think we were way more willing to not care about the, 'this is going to be rough for a while. It's going to be amazing in the end.' And so that's taken away, from our ability to challenge the students, and from our ability to take risks, from some of our ability to be creative. Because we're real worried about what someone says on July 1st, drum corps especially.

I guess I would say that's a concern for me, but it's happening in high school and marching.

[Kara Metzger]

No, that was good. I really liked that.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yeah, I think it's happening and judging too. We're having to challenge the judging a lot. Well, you've got to give us the chance to be good at that and philosophically if we say that we're education first, shouldn't we be promoting educationally appropriate challenges? Doesn't that mean it's not going to be perfect?

Don't, don't we believe in A- in trigonometry is better than an A+ in algebra?

Don't we all believe you're achieving more there? If you look at all of our systems, everything is educational. All of our competition, all of it is an educational rubric. Yet, we have a tendency now for the judging to revert a little bit back to the ticks and I think that that's how it's viewed.

[Kara Metzger]

Moving on to the next question, how involved is the design process and how much time does it typically take?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Drum corps? Year round, baby. So, we generally will take a few weeks off after finals. 2-3 weeks off. But then we're back meeting weekly. The first thing we're doing is debriefing the previous season. And, if we're bringing in new people, we got to introduce new people to the team.

But then pretty much September to Memorial Day, we're meeting every week.

Now we've divided the team a little bit, so we all don't have to meet every week. That's more because the team is pretty stable right now. Everybody can kind of live in their own little world and be okay. When the team is new, it really serves you best that you meet every week.

Generally, September and October, you're trying to pick a show. You're taking ideas from everybody or narrowing it down to try to pick your show. Generally by BOA or in November of the latest. Maybe December 1st.

Then November, December, January, February, you're trying to get as much of the music done as you can. And while that's happening, you're also simultaneously designing sets and costumes.

I am supposed to start Colts on February 1st this year. I'm hoping that happens. That would be amazing, it usually doesn't happen. But, we're going to try.

You get into February, March, April, May. There's some overlap like the music people are finishing. The costumes and the sets are being finished. And the visual, the staging happens February, March, April, May. Vicki likes to be done by May 1st. I don't know how realistic that is, but we'll try.

And then May, June as they start learning, you're doing revisions. And then you're 'off.' You're still revising little things all the way to the end. The best groups are constantly fixing things. That involves changing a little drill, changing music. [Some examples] 3rd baritones you're out on that, you're not in the right place, that electronics thing is wrong, let's do something else, we need to extend this by 12 counts... Really the best teams are honing their show all the way to the end and they're not afraid of the kids [not] be able to do this. if you're constantly doing that, the kids

are get good at doing that too. It's another thing that the Blue Devils do better than everybody else is, because their trying to come get to the best idea, they're always evolving the idea. They're not afraid to say, We're going to change this today. Now, they also have the talent to do that. But most people are more scared of that than they should be because they don't give the students enough credit. They think they have to protect the students. A lot of the bad situations in drum corps also happen where the teachers think they have to protect the students from the designers. It's like, no, if you have faith in their ability to do it, they'll do it. If, it's better it'll be better immediately. [The idea is], we're not going to go backwards right now. You're performing at a really good level and we're going to make this better. you're going to perform it just as well and it's not going to take you 3 months to do it. Sometimes the left brain people get too caught in the chronological linear of everything. Every time if you want to get to Z, have to start at A. No, you can start at M. Because that's where you're at in your in your development as a learner.

I mean the best groups are tweaking. Intelligently. I'm not saying blow things up, but they're intelligently tweaking their product all the way.

[Kara Metzger]

Right. Has this design like timeline changed since you started working in design teams or has this pretty much always been a year long process?

[Richard Hinshaw]

I started designing drum corps in 2009. It's pretty much been this the whole time.

Now, it's easier for the big groups who know who their kids are to do what I just said. But even for groups like the Colts. It's hard. Like, I will be doing things in February and March and April that I'm not totally sure of on the color guard side because we won't know our color guard talent. We're going to be guessing. And we're going to get to April 20-something [find out] here's what we really have. So, there's some editing that will have to be done there.

It's part it's actually part of the rub. Vicki wants it all to be done on May 1st. We don't really know th kids until April 20th, it can't be done on April 1st. And it matters. It matters if it's 8 rifles versus 6. That may seem insignificant, but it's not. It's quite significant. It matters that 4 of the rifles are really high world class level who can also spin sabre. And [it matters] that 8 of them can't. So, they really need to be more limited. In February we're guessing a little bit.

I feel the Boston Crusaders, they're not guessing, you already know who your guard is. So, that becomes tricky and that depends. That hasn't changed so much for my time as a designer. But, it changes group to group based on when you know your talent.

If you're doing the Cold Cadets or if you're doing you know, the Legends or the Guardians, you don't know who the brass is until June. So you're not writing in February, you can't. You have to wait.

I have drum lines and winter guards who just really have decided their group. So I have to go. Now I can go a lot quicker. But still, sometimes it depends on the kind of group that you're working with more than it does the actual 'has the process changed for that.'

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, totally. Makes sense. Going, kind of in a 180. We're going to talk about the rules now of drum currently. What are the key rules or components that visual designers write to in the activity?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Oh, that's a good that's a good one. Say that again.

[Kara Metzger]

What are the key rules that visual designers write to in this activity?

[Richard Hinshaw]

Oh boy. Well, the time limit is a big one.

We're not restricted on set piece height. In band, we can only have 12-foot tall set pieces. That's a big one.

It's funny, It's less about the rules, it's more about the design parameters. It's more about what you need to do for the group to achieve their skill set as far as the actual writing.

We can't have fire or smoke. We can't have drones, stuff like that.

But yeah, It's more about the rules are the rules of what it takes to achieve the skill sets to score the points.

[Kara Metzger]

Because I know that half the sheet is based on the design and then the other half is based on the achievement of that. Were there any things that changed in that [document] made the creative process better or worse over the last years?

[Richard Hinshaw]

It's been pretty consistent. I don't think we changed the structure of that much and I like it. I like what we have. We're 50/50.

I know I will say I don't like the effect. In the last 5 years, we've changed effect to be just a general effect sheet. With a music person and a visual person. I don't like that. I like the way it used to be where it was more clearly divided. [Currently speaking there is not the] No, this is a music effect sheet and this is a visual effect sheet. I'm a believer that while you're hiring an expert, let them be an expert about their field of expertise. And we've got a little bit of a trend of going to this overall effect. I'm like, 'the overall effect is that is the cumulative effect of all the judges and the system.' We don't have to say overall effect as a sheet because I think it actually leads to some lowest common denominator thinking. So that's one change that I don't like. I don't know how much we've really changed as a result of that. I think that's changed some of the application of the adjudication. Honestly, other than that, the system stayed pretty consistent. They changed little things about how they talked about sheets or points of emphasis. For the most part, it stayed pretty consistent and I like it.

One of the worst things about WGI percussion is we have overall effect. They put overall effect as a subcaption and it's very confusing. And they have a visual person and a music person, but then they also have half of their sheet is overall and the other half of their sheet is visual or music. How do you have a sub caption of something that should be accumulated? I can't get them to make it make sense to me.

[Kara Metzger]

The next question relates to shows that you have seen or worked on in your time. If you could pinpoint a show that you think is the pinnacle of the early 2000s, and then 2006-2010, and 2011-2016 and 2017-present? I can give you all these time frames again. Discuss list of like what was really good visually about.

[Richard Hinshaw]

What was state of the art?

[Kara Metzger]

Yes.

[Richard Hinshaw]

I think 2000-2005, state of the art was the Cavaliers. I think it's *Four Corners*. Although *Spin Cycle* was awesome, though it didn't win. Either of those.

[Kara Metzger]

What made it that for you?

[Richard Hinshaw]

I think that that was a time where what Michael was doing with the software and the ability to create a set every 2 counts. And the way he used that to sequence ideas around the field, was revolutionary at the time. And we all learned a lot from that. In a way, he was the first person who really used software to do wild stuff. And that made that state of the art. We still have that, but we've evolved. A lot from it. And we all know how to use software in that way now. He's still a genius. It doesn't limit his genius. It just had its time and that's that was its time.

2005 to 2010. That's an interesting one for me. I don't remember all the top activity either during all these times as I get older.

I am actually going to say that it's 2008, but it's not Phantom. It's Blue Devils. That show really probably shouldn't have lost. The constantly risking absurdity. That was great. They did such a great job of zigging when everyone else was zagging and we all bought it. I thought we all bought it. Now there were some people that did. Maybe not popular opinion, but from a design standpoint, that was where they really started taking risks. There were a lot of things, like how they use the polls, and how they treated character, was cool and different in that show. Some people say it was pointless. But that sticks out to me from that era. That was, to me, was the beginning of them really turning over a new leaf. Honestly, even now they're still on that thought process. They had won the year before in California, but that show wasn't out there. It was just a wing show and they were real good. So that sticks out to me, 2008.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. And then the next time period of 2011 to 2016?

[Richard Hinshaw]

The Blue Devils *Ink* show is probably one of my favorite shows ever. They were doing all of the creative things, but it was incredibly accessible. It was a tear jerker. It made us all think of our childhood and it made us think of Broadway. And yet it was also outrageously created. Not, maybe, the most popular thing, but that was a deserving. They turned the tables at the end of the year, and it was deserving that that happened. That sticks out to me and because they took some of the creativity that they had started back in 2008 and gave it the accessibility that I was talking about earlier.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, totally. And then 2017 to now. Where are we in terms of what might be the pinnacle?

[Richard Hinshaw]

That's a great question. I don't know. I think I see some of the Blue Devils thing waning. What the Blue Coats have done, certainly what the Blue Coats have done with production and musically what they have done to take risks I think is kind of the thing for me. I actually really loved them. I liked the Blue Coats better last year. I think they probably should have won, but I don't think they were good enough soon enough. I think they were bad early in the year. And a lot of that was their musical risk taking. But what they've done with costuming and set and movement of the drum corps, like really out there.

I guess really that did start in 2016, when they wore the white. When they came out of the tunnel that night at Lucas Oil (remember we used to do the premiere at Lucas Oil), they came out of the tunnel that night –it was June 20-something- and none of us knew what it was.

They are also really good at keeping secrets and that has been really good for them.

And so, but they came out of that tunnel and those costumes, and it was full corps costumes, totally not what anybody expected. It is that the trend. So, yes, let's say the Blue Coats on the way they produce their shows.

Even though, I would argue it's all a little too much right now. But, I think the creativity that it's propelled everybody to is pretty amazing.

[Kara Metzger]

This is not one of my questions, but I thought of it while you were talking. Do you think the year off from COVID had enhanced or has it hindered the design processes?

[Richard Hinshaw]

That's a great question. I still think we have yet to see the real benefit of that. Not everybody got to do it. So like, you know, we were lucky, Cavaliers and Colts both did it. And I'm also lucky that a lot of my bands did it.

We all got to adapt our processes, we were in a survival mindset. So, we were doing whatever it takes [to] do a show. Whatever we have to do, we have to keep this thing going for the kids, for us. Selfishly, we got to keep this thing moving. So. We were really great at adapting and all highly successful. The Colts, that's the summer we knew. I remember Daniel and I were both telling the staff a lot, 'you're doing great. This is phenomenal.' That's when we knew we had something with this staff and that was a new staff. They were all freaked out [that it was] terrible. We're like, 'no, you guys, you're doing great.' We could just tell, we could tell a difference. And not disrespecting who was there before. It was just different and we could see that it had the potential to elevate.

And the Cavaliers, what we did that summer was great too. What we did with Avon, we just had a local [thing]. With Avon, we were doing that in the summer of 2020/Fall of 2020. We didn't have a circuit but we did some local invitationals and we would rotate. Like these 3 bands are in a block, your audiences are all going to come in together, and stay separate. It was like we were doing anything we could just to have a show. And we did a 3 min show.

So, I think that what we all learned and how to adapt which was really important that year.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. We're at the end of my questions. The last one is, is there anything else you'd like to share?

[Richard Hinshaw]

I think with the COVID thing, I think we will see people think more in the way we thought that summer where we can be more efficient. That was probably the biggest thing. And we even are telling the directors now, [that] we've proven that we can do a shorter summer. We've proven that we can do a local tour. We've proven that we can do a shorter show. So, as everybody is worried about sustainability, our whole thing is as designers and instructors we're not forcing you to do 90 days. Well, some people are. I think most of us on the right side of it are like, we're not forcing you to do a 14 min show.

I think WGI is the example. Look at what we're doing with independent world color guard, and independent world drum line, it's the same kids. Now, independent color guard has some older people too, but whatever. It's basically the same kids. And we see those kids way less. We only see those kids on the weekend. And we're doing 7 min productions of highly skilled stuff. Because it's specific to the skill set groups, a lot of them are doing harder stuff. And you're inside, so you can do harder stuff. Now the shows are shorter. But I even use that argument to say, 'look the show is shorter, it's still entertaining people love it. The kids love it.' The scholastic kids love it. Isn't that really who our audience is in the summer also? Is the all these scholastic kids?

We have all been saying since COVID, we've already proven that you could move to a more sustainable model. You can see it creeping that way, but there's still people moving in on May 12, and they're still people doing huge semis of stuff. Some of it's great, but Also hard for other people to do.

It's interesting, I didn't go to the meetings this year, but last year we were talking about that a lot. Somebody last year proposed that we make the shows shorter. I was like, 'oh my god yes' make

the show shorter they're way too long. How many of these shows do you think they're really entertaining when they're on a minute 11? You just don't. Sorry, it's marching band. There's only so much we can do. I actually think we haven't learned all those lessons yet. Drum corps, I think, is going to have to. I really think they're not going to have a choice.

And I'm interested to see if they talked about it anymore. We have tried as designers and instructors, there's a group of us that have just been like, 'look what we did at COVID, look at what we do with WGI independent kids... You could be more sustainable because where you need to cut costs are travel and housing and food. That's where you need to cut costs. And you don't need 10 winter camps, because those are all old models.

10 winter camps and spending 90 days together. Unfortunately, that's just an old model. It's outdated. So it's starting to evolve, I think it's got some room to go. And I think COVID is a big part of what we all learned. We could do this.

It doesn't mean we have to sacrifice how entertaining we are. It doesn't mean we have to sacrifice our artistry. It doesn't mean we have to sacrifice challenging the kids. We can still do all of that. In fact, if we spend less money on travel and housing and food, maybe we could spend more money on design and instruction. We can support our culture better.

[Kara Metzger]

I love it. Well, that is all the questions I have for you today, and I really appreciate the time that you took out to give me these really thoughtful answers.

[Richard Hinshaw]

Yeah, awesome. It was great meeting you. Good luck!

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions for Michael Klesch

1. When/what roles have you been active in the DCI community?
2. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past twenty-three years?
3. From a musical perspective, how has show design changed since 2000?
 - a. Brass
 - b. Percussion
 - i. Battery
 - ii. Front Ensemble
4. Who/what types of individuals are involved in the musical design process?
 - a. How do you navigate working with and encompassing all captions equally?
 - b. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
5. What are the key components you try to include in all your designed shows?
 - a. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
6. How involved is the designing process/how much time does it take?
 - a. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
7. What are key rules or components of the activity that drive the musical design process?
 - a. How much do you design towards these rules?
 - b. Has this changed in any way since you started working in the activity?
 - c. Were there any changes you were particularly excited about to help the creative design process?
8. What is it like to arrange alongside percussion writers? What is this give and take like?
9. Pinpoint one show (that you were part of the design team or not) that you find to be the pinnacle of each of the following time periods.
 - a. 2000-2005
 - b. 2006-2010
 - c. 2011-2016
 - d. 2017-present
10. Pedagogically, how has your team's approach to teaching changed over the last 20 years?
 - a. Please comment in regards to brass and/or full ensemble changes.
11. Anything else you would like to share for the record?

Full Transcripts for Michael Klesch

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you for taking the time to do this today. I'm just going to essentially ask you the questions that I sent you over email and hopefully get the answers and the insight that you want to share with me. I am recording the zoom, if that's okay. So that I can go back and quote you directly in the paper.

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah, that's fine. I'll tell you what I don't want quoted though.

[Kara Metzger]

Okay, sounds good. Do you have any questions before we get started or is that all good?

[Michael Klesch]

No, so this is your thesis? Is that what you are doing? Like a history of drum corps?

[Kara Metzger]

Yes.

[Michael Klesch]

How did you get interested in doing that?

[Kara Metzger]

Well, I have kind of always been doing drum corps in my life. Well, always... Since, 2011, I started in drum corps and it's just kind of been a nice little thing in my life and I don't think that people write about it academically enough because it's influenced a lot of different marching bands in various realms. I think that it would be. Good to have that information out there for people.

[Michael Klesch]

Where did you march?

[Kara Metzger]

I marched the Colts for a bunch of years.

[Michael Klesch]

I used to write for them like way back in the day.

[Kara Metzger]

Oh, no way! When did you write for them?

[Michael Klesch]

When did I write for them? That's a great question. Tells you how long I've been doing this. I don't know, I would say it was back in the 80s, though. So, well before your time.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, definitely.

[Michael Klesch]

I was looking to see if I had any files on my computer from them, but I don't.

That was all handwritten stuff back then. Yeah, that is all changed. You know, like back when I started writing, I wrote with pencil and paper. It's kind of how we learned in college. You know, there were no computer programs or anything. So, you really had to know the pedagogy of the instruments. You really had to understand the mechanics of writing and score alignment. All the things that people take for granted because Finale and Sibelius does it all for you now. And then you have to imagine what it would sound like. Because you didn't have the playback to tell you what it was going to sound like. You know, the thrill was in that Friday night of the camp going and hearing it the first time. There was nothing like that. So, that's all gone. And as a result, there's a lot of bad writing. Even today, be honest with you. I taught at UMAS for a while. I was an assistant band director there with George Parks and Thom Hannum. I worked in the music department and I did an orchestration class for a few semesters. And for the first third of the class I would have them do it with score paper pencil because they had no idea that things really even needed to align vertically on a page. That stuff was foreign to them. They hated it, absolutely hated it. But it was good because it gave them an understanding of the publishing part of it and what they had to do.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah. I love that, amazing. Well, I'll just get started here and hopefully this will be quick and painless.

[Michael Klesch]

All good.

[Kara Metzger]

I think this first question is an easier one, however other people can disagree with me. When and what roles have you been active in the DCI community just for some context?

[Michael Klesch]

Well, this is a crazy story because I believe it to this day, I don't know how this all happened. I marched in the Garfield Cadets in 1982. I played bass drum. I was the number 5 bass, out of 6 base drums. And then in '83, I was drum major. That was the first year that Garfield won their world championship. '84 I was on the brass staff. In '85 I started writing. I wrote from '85 to '92. In '87, '88, or '89, one of those years, I took half the year off, but then I came back and finished the book. Then I spent a little bit of time at the Crossman with Thom Hannum those guys we did a couple of years to Crossman after that. I was at the Phantom Regiment like 2000-

2001. I think in that zone. And then I started a [Carolina] Crown in 2003. So, I've been writing all that time. At Crown, I was also the music director for them too. I kind of oversaw the whole music package.

[Kara Metzger]

What made you go from the bass drum land to the brass land?

[Michael Klesch]

Well, you'll hear all kinds of stories about this, but this is my story about it. In 1982, we went to another drum corps [with] a couple friends of mine. We/I went to school Westchester University and I was a marching band there. We went to another drum corps, where we really didn't like it. But, I knew that I wanted to be a band director and I knew the place that they were doing the marching stuff better than anywhere was in drum corps. So, I was like, I need that experience if I'm going to be a good band director. And then we went up to Garfield. It was very welcoming. I mean the corps was like 80% of kids from Garfield at that time. It was local. So, they were very welcoming. I thought they were very friendly. My friends are in a drumline, so I wound up playing bass drum. I don't know if they had any horn spots. I would have been a bad baritone player but I wanted to be with my friends. So, I did the drumline. The whole year, I thought I was going to get cut. But, I kind of had my worth because I was the only one that could read music. So, when it came time to learning the parts, I could go away with the bass drums and help teach the parts because I could read the music. And then the next year, I thought I was going to get cut at first camp for the percussion. George Hopkins had called me into the gym and I sat next to him on a bleachers and he said, 'so you want to be drum major.' I was like, 'yeah.' So then there was that. From there, I don't know, I did a lot of teaching when I was doing that because it was what I was doing at college. I was learning how to be a teacher. So, then I got myself onto the brass staff, same kind of a thing. In '85, Donnie Van Doren and Jimmer had left to go to star of Indiana. I was the brass caption head in '85 and we had hired a few arrangers along the way and they all just didn't work. We'd get to a camp there'd be no music. We'd get to camp, there'd be no music. I remember even Thom Hannum told me this story the other day, how he and George went to somebody's house and they were like, 'okay, the camps tomorrow we need music for the camp,' and we still didn't get music. George had asked me along the way if I wanted to write. And I was like, 'I can't do that,' but I was writing. My high school band director taught me about arranging. When I was at Westchester, the band was student run. I was writing. I wrote a chart for the Westchester marching band. I was learning how to write all that time. I think George called me. I think he was at the DCI meeting in Vegas. He called me and he said, 'look I'm going to ask you one last time. Do you want to write the book?' and I was like, 'yes, I'm going to do it because nobody else is doing it.'

I'd been bringing in music all winter to play at camps because we have no show music. I figured I'd give it try and that was probably the best thing I had going for me was that I had no experience in drum corps because we did the Jeremiah Symphony that year and it was groundbreaking and mostly because it was just something new that we've never tried before. That's how that all happened. And I believe me, to this day, I'm like, 'how did this happen?'

I remember sitting in my bedroom in high school listening to records of DCI and seeing Wayne Downey's picture on state-of-the-art scores in our bedroom go, 'Man if I could just shine their shoes on tour, I would do that. I would just go and do that.' And then, that here I am doing it. Believe me, it's completely nuts to me.

[Kara Metzger]

This is going to be one of the more broad and open question. In your personal opinion, how have you seen DCI grow over the past 23 years? So, since 2000. And it can broaden will get more specific later hopefully.

[Michael Klesch]

Man, because that is a big question. I think there's been a change from, the importance or use of music, you know, and that being important. And perfection, drum corps was born on the tick system. So, it was all about perfection. And, that was all important. And now it's very visually driven. I don't think that the quest for perfection is nearly what it was. You know, back when that was important.

Certainly, all the copyright stuff has changed what people do big time. I put that on one of your questions, you were asking about changes. That has changed the activity, undoubtedly. Then the advent of the instrumentation going to B-flats. And then amplification and the electronics and sampling and all the stuff that you do now that, in my opinion, it's become more important than what the actual kid is doing on the field. And that's unfortunate to me.

[Kara Metzger]

Sure. Moving from here, hopefully getting a little bit more specific, from a musical perspective, how has show design changed since 2000, specifically in the brass world? What have you done for that?

[Michael Klesch]

I don't know that it's changed so much, but what's become important again is changed. Like with Crown, we built that program. When we were there year one, there were no horn players there that would have been in a top 5 or top 6 drum corps. I remember this girl that came in as an all state flute player, and she was like, 'I want to learn how to play trumpet.' We're like, 'Okay, what else we got.'

So, we built it. Matt Harloff is really that. And if you wanted to do this interview right, it should be me and him [Matt Harloff] sitting here. Because we do this symbiotically. One doesn't work without the other. The technique program doesn't work without the written book and the written book doesn't work without the technique program.

So. I think with Crown, as we got better, it was always the question of, 'what can we do that no one else has done before?' We started doing these crazy features, the different ways you'd like to feature the brass or whatever. And as we got to be more successful with what we did, you see other groups, it's now about more. 'Who's doing more?' We play more, we do harder stuff, it's that. It's not about how effective it is to people or how it moves somebody or it's about the more thing. I know internally, we always have that question of, 'what can we do that we haven't done before?' 'What can we do that's different or something like that?' But it's also so the same from

when Matt and I were being taught. It's breath, dah. The technique program is the foundation of everything. Even now, as good as Crown is, this year is a really big emphasis on getting back to the technique program even more so, because when COVID happened, you went through a chunk of time where people weren't having vets that had marched. You didn't have people with 2, 3, 4 years of experience, you're building the program all over again.

At Crown, we're fortunate that we get a lot of music majors walk in the door, a lot of college age people walk into door now, we get that. But it's teaching them the technique program so the technique is uniform across the whole ensemble. And then, the horn line sounds the way we want the horn line to sound. Like, a cognitive thing that's unto itself. It's not just hearing 76 individuals with talent. If that makes sense.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, it does. With that writing that you were talking about and going for something that's new and different, what are some things that maybe you guys made a conscious decision to do in the last 23 years? Besides the 'more' is there anything that you were like, 'oh this is what we need to do or this is the direction we need to take the drum corps.'

[Michael Klesch]

No, with Crown it was always, Jim Coat's vision that he wanted to be a fan favorite. Whatever we did, we wanted people to get it, and not to be scratching their heads. I think we did a great job of that for a long time. I think we may have lost our way a little bit. I think we've kind of gotten our way back to that also.

But there's always the hook in there. Michael Cesario used to talk about this all the time with Jeremiah. They're going to give you the license to sit through 7 minutes of Jeremiah, something they've never heard before. Because then you can play *Candide* or you can play *Garden Grow* and everybody's going to be able to relate to it. It's beautiful and you can get into that.

Take last year's show, for example, there is a lot of the stuff that you've probably never heard. Then you play Bartok, which people are not really familiar with. Then we're playing *Tristan and Isolde*, which you may not know what it is as a fan, but you're going to go, 'I heard that in *Excalibur*' or 'I heard that in this movie like.' That was a hook that came to be very popular. A lot of that was about space and transparency. Everybody wants to do more. So we made a conscious challenge to say, 'we're going to make you uncomfortable with silence.' Because that's what that piece begs to do.

So, I guess small things like that.

[Kara Metzger]

I love that. And I know that you're mostly on the brass side of things, but have you seen anything change in the percussion side of writing and when you're working with them in terms of show design?

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah, I think the same thing goes for them, obviously. They have always been, for the most part, privy to instruments of a wider range than the brass instruments. I mean, it's like when you look

at the evolution of the front ensemble, they had marching stuff now it's grounded. They could add more things but they had a wider range of instruments than the brass, and still do.

Even though we can use any brass instrument, you can use, look at the percussion catalog, anything that's in there, you can use. We can't even use an acoustic string instrument or a wood wind, but they have every percussion instrument in the world they can use. Any electronic instrument in a world, now, they can use (for the most part). I think that's changed a little bit.

Certainly for them too, the judging thing [has changed]. Getting the judges off the field has changed what they do. You know, it's changed how it's evaluated. It's changed how the drill is written. Because now you got to get them to the front of the field to be evaluated instead of the drum judge running around like he needs football pads out there (on the field) to evaluate people.

But, I think if you ask them, they would probably tell you the same thing. It's about the visual thing has changed a lot is evolved. They move a lot more than they ever have. The environmental demands of where people are in the field that is change. What I do as a player, like I just don't stand there and play anymore, brass or percussion. That's choreographed. There is all kinds of movement to that that was never part of it.

I don't know if it makes it better or worse. It just makes it different; you know?

It's involved in that way.

[Kara Metzger]

Right, of course. And then, I guess, who and what types of individuals do you work with in the musical design process?

[Michael Klesch]

All types. I've worked with a lot of people that, also have degrees in music and do this as a living. Have been teaching as a living, whether it's been in high school and/or college.

The visual people are a little bit more, I don't know what the right word is, but it's different over there because you don't go to school for visual degree. But there's a lot of people that have learned through the trade and the craft and the pageantry of it, and they've developed into really great creators of the things that they do, so to speak.

And then we look for consultants. We've had all kinds of consultants over the years. I know when we did, *No One To No One*, the year that we did Andy Akiho's percussion piece, he was involved with the percussion team when they were putting that together. I know that was enjoyable for them.

This year we have John Mackey. He's going to write our closer this year. That has that has been incredibly different, and exciting, and fun, all the same time.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, I would love to know more about that! Unfortunately, my project stops at 2023 just because, it happened already.

[Michael Klesch]

Right, right.

[Kara Metzger]

Cool. How do you navigate working with all these people and specifically, enhancing the captions equally in the writing process?

[Michael Klesch]

Well, you tend to, and I've been really lucky over the years that I've been able to work with a lot of people that I either am friends with, or know very well, or have worked with before. We're able to sit down and work on something and say, 'what color is the sky?'

I go, 'it's blue.'

And you say, 'it's blue.'

And the person next me goes, 'it's blue.'

And everybody agrees that it's blue, so we can run after what we want to do with a blue sky. Sometimes, you're on a team where there's somebody that goes, 'no, the sky's red. It is firmly red. I see it firmly red.' And it makes no sense to anybody else in the room.

I haven't had a lot of those experiences. Some off and on over the years, but I'm always surrounded by really good people. Teaching-wise as well! The brass staff at Crown, I'm on the brass staff for all essential reasons. I spend a lot of time teaching with those guys. We're all coming out from the same angle and it's very easy.

As far as navigating the different captions, I think as a designer you kind of have to keep that in your wheelhouse. I grew up writing with Thom Hannum in Drum corps. He trained me to always think about the percussion. When I write, I have cue lines. I do things in that I'm always thinking about what their involvement is in the show. I'm not just in there with my brass goggles on. And then some people write like that; and you can hear it. You can absolutely hear it in the shows that they write in their goggles.

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you. What do you think has changed most about the design process since you started? Or, in this case, since 2003 when you were with Crown?

[Michael Klesch]

I think the advent of the rules and the adjudication, all that kind of stuff. Like, the instruments.

The sound design, now, you have to take that into account as you're designing a show. Why? Because people expect it to be there. I think it's like most things, honestly. It's gone way over here, and some day it's going to come back to be in here where it's not too little and it's not way too much. But, right now, it's completely overused because it's the new toy in the toy box.

[Kara Metzger]

Makes sense to me. What are the key components that you try to include in all of your design shows?

[Michael Klesch]

Well, Jim Prime was my teacher. He had a saying where, 'clarity is the key to all effective communication.'

Even confusion should be clear. I think, clarity of intent, clarity of sound, of pedagogy; clarity is like the overriding thing. And I think, a sense of musical integrity. Obviously, we play music and we arrange music by a lot of composers. I try to do it in a way that if a composer ever came to our rehearsal and heard it, they would be happy with what we did with it because we're trying to be respectful.

(Will not quote in body of paper)

This is a really, grossly over exaggerated example. But, if you're writing Copeland, you don't want to go through the Copeland arrangement, get to a point and go, 'man, it sounds like Stravinsky all of a sudden.' That doesn't show very much respect to Copeland. But, you take either the polytonality or you take the harmonic vocabulary of how Copeland wrote and you try to use that to create a moment. Like the extended effect moments that we have in drum corps. I wanted to sound like we did that.

And then, for me, (I don't know that I would put this in), but one of the best compliments I ever got was in 1982 when we did, *To Tame The Pairless Skies* at the Cadets. There is no ballad in that piece. So we had to write a ballad. I took melodies and harmonies and what I thought was his harmonic language in there, and I wrote a ballad with that. And he came to see the drum corps one day on tour. I hid like the whole day. Because, I don't want to know what he has to say about this. I'm afraid he's going to not like it. And he said, 'You know, I think if I would have wrote a lyrical section, it probably sounded a lot like that.'

So I was like, 'Okay, then I'm okay with that. I'm cool with that.'

[Kara Metzger]

Obviously, you said clarity is kind of been throughout. Has anything changed that you've been like, 'I need to do *this* in every show more recently versus in the past?'

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah. And I'll tell you another one, you can't tell anybody, you can't publish it...

[Michael Klesch]

But I try to include that. But again, with Crown brass being Crown brass, you're trying to look for those opportunities for virtuosity that no one else can do. Like I want a couple of things in our show that everybody else is going to listen to competitively and say, 'Okay, we can't do that.'

You know, they would never admit to that. But, you listen to the groups and you know that they could never do that.

And then I want people to be moved. I want them to be emotional. I want them to be moved by something in the show. So that's always a goal mine, as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Thank you. How involved is the design process? How much time does it typically take?

Walk me through a year in the life of The Crown Brass Designer.

[Michael Klesch]

It takes a lot of time. What we do, for the last few years, every Wednesday we have a design meeting that we do via Zoom. That's helpful. Even if we don't have some concrete things to report on, it's helpful to keep track of where things are and what people are thinking. We kick around ideas, we listen to the stuff that's been done already. We go back and do edits or whatever. But, it takes a lot of time. For me, it's my biggest project. I probably spend more time on that than a lot of the other things that I do and many of the bands combined. But, it's my favorite thing and it's my favorite thing to be around. I love the kids, and love the staff. I go to a camp it's just so fun to be around all the people that are teaching. So I know for me I put a lot of time into it.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, how much time do you devote to picking the show and picking the music versus arranging and editing and all that?

[Michael Klesch]

For me, probably too much. There's been years where we're looking for a ballad and I am like, "okay, here's my list of 50 ballads." It drives them nuts because we have to listen to all of them. I spend a lot of time looking for stuff. Even this year, I started a folder for next year that I throw ideas in there.

'We haven't done this.'

'Here's a piece that I heard doesn't fit what we want to do this year, but maybe there's a year we can do this.'

Leon May worked with us for a long time and he had this phrase, 'put it in the hopper.' So, it's like, you have this idea, put it in the hopper because sometime down the road, it's going to rear its head and be of good use.

[Kara Metzger]

I know you had mentioned the rules. How much do you design towards those rules versus towards whatever you think is musically great, or do they kind of work synonymously?

[Michael Klesch]

They probably work together. I probably don't put as much stock in the rules as some people may do. Because, I think if you're undeniably great at what you do and you're doing things of substance, then it should be able to be looked at and be rewarded. That depends upon, what people value. There always seems like there's a flavor of the year. Sometimes you can be the

flavor of the year and sometimes you're not. No one could put a finger on it. Like why your stuff isn't the flavor of the year but it is just, not.

I just saw this thing the other day. In the last 13 seasons, we won 8 Jim Ott's and every other time we've been second in brass. So that's a pretty consistent track record of being good at what you do.

Yet, the thing that has changed every year is what is valued visually. It's like you can't put your finger on like what is that thing that they're going to love this year that's visual. That's where I think the activity is very different.

Even look at what people play. Way back, when I was talking about the early Garfield days, we were playing large works of music. *Jeremiah Symphony*, *Appalachian Spring*, *On the Waterfront*, the *Mass* by Bernstein. We were diving into these huge works.

Now it's like short attention span theater. You got a minute of this, and then you're doing something that's in no relation to that, and then it's over here. There's no big arc of composition like there used to be. That changes the evaluation too. They can't sit there and listen to anything for too long.

[Kara Metzger]

Were there any changes that were particularly exciting and good for you in the design process? Whether that be competitive pools or whatever.

[Michael Klesch]

The B-flat instruments with probably my big one!

Now that was that was before your time in the scope of project. But going to the B-flats was huge. Imagine you can't play an A-flat, like a second space A flat, trouble clef. You play that note because you don't have a valve to do that. And there's other notes that you can't play and you have to be crafty about how you cover them with other instruments that can do that. And the quality of the instrument was just [better]. Even though the marching instruments aren't the best instruments out there, they're so much better than a G-bugle. How we ever played those things as well in tune as we did, is kind of like a science project. But, I say going to the B-flats is big.

Amplification was also a big game changer because what was good about that was there were so many things in the front ensemble that you couldn't hear or that you had to write a certain way with the brass, so that if you wanted to hear this thing in the front ensemble, you could hear it. Then amplification kind of changed that. That's when I think then the wheels came off after that. Once they added the sampling and the electronics and everything else, it's like, if you could go to every drum board this summer in a top 12 and say, 'can I hear your show with the electricity off?' You would be shocked at what you heard. Shocked.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah. Right. I know it's always tragic when you come in and they don't have that.

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah.

[Kara Metzger]

Because they're all freaking out about it. Amazing, thanks. What is it like to arrange alongside percussion writers? And what is the give and take of that like?

[Michael Klesch]

Again, I've worked with Tom my whole life. I worked with him for a long time at Crown and we have a different team there now. Tom and I were always on the same page about what was important with the music. That was just finding how you wanted to, not divide that up, but ways to orchestrate it so that everything got to be featured. There's times at Crown, I remember (I don't remember which one), it was in the last 10 years, Matt [Harloff] called me up and said 'man, you left a lot of room for the percussion this year.'

Yeah, we're trying to get that part of the corps to be more recognized and visible and audible. So, you have to leave space for that to happen. But again, if you work with the right people that's not difficult to kind of parcel that stuff out. You're just trying to find the best way to orchestrate the intent of the music. And sometimes that's with brass and sometimes that's with the percussion. Sometimes it's with both, the ensemble.

[Kara Metzger]

Do you have a formula set in your mind, that you're looking for? Like, brass playing X percent of the show for their face versus percussion?

[Michael Klesch]

No, I think for the brass as far as their face goes, it's just as you go through the piece and the show, that's always in the back of your mind. We got to get them off the horn just for a little bit here. Even if it's 2 bars, before something big at the end, it's just getting that off your face for a little bit helps. Again, at Crown like it's a little bit more strategic because we have players. They're horses, these people, thoroughbreds. So, you're able to push that envelope a little bit more. You're also cognizant of it too. I write very pedagogically sound. I'm not writing stuff that they can't play, even as good as they are. I'm not writing stuff in ranges that they can't play. We're not doing any of that kind of stuff. We're just making them sound as they best.

[Kara Metzger]

This is kind of just more of a drum corps broad, statement or question. If you could pinpoint one show, show design wise in, (I'm going to give us 3 or 4 different time periods) what would you find to be like a pinnacle show? In 2000 to 2005?

[Michael Klesch]

I saw that question.

I actually had to go back and look because my memory with this stuff is terrible. I went back and looked at each of those time periods and what all the shows were and everything. I'm also, really critical of myself. I'm hard to please when it comes to that kind of stuff. As Matt would say, that's like, okay, but what's going to make me excited this year? So, we're looking for things like that.

The 2000 to 2005 thing, I said anything Cavaliers. They were, again, that's where I think the one of the big shifts visually came. They could have played just about anything but they were visually so fresh and so different back then that I think that was a big change in the activity.

2006 to 2010. I thought, the 2006 [2008] Spartacus. Just because, I watched that show from... have you ever been to Bloomington?

Back then, it's probably different now because I think they've built more, but back then you used to come down this hill that was on the back side of the stadium, come around to where the scoreboard was, and then the field, it would be over here, the home stands you'd be looking at the home stands all over here.

I watched that show from the top of that hill, probably equal to the back stands, watching through the drum corps to the audience. I wanted to see how the audience reacted to that show. And obviously, they did the thing at the end where they killed the guy on the podium or whatever. The place, it erupted like you haven't heard at a drum corps show in decades. I thought that was a big from an emotional/audience connection standpoint. They nailed it that year.

And I think I want to say 2009 Crown, too. By winning brass that year for the first time, they broke onto the scene as 'the new thing,' something new and fresh in the activity.

2011 to 2016, I'm going to say 2013 Crown. Just because again, for you hadn't had a first-time winter in a long time. You took *Einstein on the Beach*, something that nobody knew. But yet, we had a ballad in there that was from the *Abyss* that, *But on the Ledge from the Abyss*, the whole point of that was how can we inject romance into this storyline. And that poem, it's a poem that's actually in *Einstein on the Beach*. It's beautiful! I remember, I was sitting downstairs in my other studio at the time with a tape recorder and the arrangement and I would play it and then I would talk on top of it. I was like, 'how can we get the dialogue to be part of this? So that it all works out and that it's romantic?'

I think that achieved a lot of new things. The brass book was crazy. The look of the drum corps was completely new. It was a totally different uniform than anybody had at the time. So, that was a big one for me.

And then, 2017 to the present. I think you can probably look at the 2018 Santa Clara Vanguard.

Again, most people would tell you about the prop. You know, Babylon. They're like, 'I don't understand what Babylon has to do with the show but that prop, what they did with the prop and everything was so cool.'

So again, I think another thing of the visual and how that dominated. What Michael Gaines was able to do with that kind of dominated the activity.

And then, any Blue Devils show. They've been so dominating in what they do anymore. It's partly, the performers. I think they perform better than anybody. And when I say that, I don't mean technically. I mean, you could follow any kid on the field for the entire show and they look like a performer the entire show. They don't break character. They don't look like they're ever under duress. They just they do that part of it so well that, and this is not a knock on the blue Devils, but you don't sometimes pay attention to the rest of the stuff. But, it's that stuff, and how it affects the viewers and the adjudicators as well.

[Kara Metzger]

Yeah, amazing. Thank you. The next question you've kind of answered. How pedagogically has you and your team's approach changed over the last 20 years, or in this case maybe not changed?

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah, "breathe, dah," every year since day one.

[Kara Metzger]

Amazing. Is there any changes that you would have seen pedagogically with the full ensemble versus the brass ensemble?

[Michael Klesch]

Yeah, the electronics have really played into that. You have to take time now to rehearse the electronics. I'll give you an example, the wireless micing. I wish that would all go away. I love the amplification of the front ensemble. I think that's important. I love the amplification of soloists, but now it's gone way too far.

You have wireless mics on people during tutti ensemble moments. There's been pushes to get this changed by people outside of the activity, the Alfred Watkins, the Alex Kaminski's like these big people in the activity music activity. They're hearing this and thinking that it's not good for music education. It sounds synthetic. It's changed the sound of the brass instruments. People are recording things and playing that instead of having what you hear be live performance. They're doing it with solos. They're doing it with samples that they use as patches that enhance the overall volume of the brass section on the field. Like it's gone way too far. Again, to me it takes the credibility off the individual. The kids on the field don't get enough credit. It's the designer who's putting all that together and putting that into the sound design of the drum corps that's getting the credit for that kind of stuff.

And, you have to practice it. The wireless mic thing, We did spring training, I can't tell you how many hours we spent on. Like, just the wireless kids are out there. I think we had 24 total in the brass this year. And it's like, 'Okay, Trumpet 1-1, let's go.'

They're doing their thing on the field. Really, a lot of it is the EQ. At Crown I wanted to sound like one of our brass players. I don't want it to sound synthetic. I don't want it to sound electronic. We're not adding all the reverb and all the processing and stuff that people do. I want to sound like a real deal. That takes a lot of time.

'Okay, now trumpet 1- 2. Here we go.' You know, next.

And then you then you work the sections, then you work the ensembles. And then you got to rehearse that stuff on the road. And then the stadiums... That takes a lot of time.

Then you're doing brass on the move. What we do at Crown, we just rehearse the brass by themselves with no percussion or anything. Drum major on the hands, brass on the move. That's why they do what they do so well, because that's a big part of their technique program.

[Kara Metzger]

Of course. Awesome. And then I guess the last question is, is there anything else you'd like to share about drum corps in the past 20 years or just drum corps in general?

[Michael Klesch]

I don't know. I think it's generally it's a great activity. I'm afraid for it because I think when COVID hit, I thought it was done for good. I didn't think it was coming back.

You look at what it takes to get a group that size down the road anymore, and what it costs kids to do that. \$7,500, that's what I'm paying for a summer of drum corp.

My son's an engineering major, aeronautical engineering major Purdue. He plays trumpet, but he fortunately didn't want to do drum corps ever. If he would have wanted to have done it, we would have had to make some choices. It's like, okay, you want to get your pilot license and go to college, or do you want to do drum corps? We can't afford both of them. I don't know how these families and how these kids are pulling this off.

We're one bad accident in the middle of the night, by the corps going down a road from one city to the next city until they say, 'okay, you can't travel at night anymore.'

The schools are getting harder and harder to get into, to do anything, like to rehearse. Even Crown this winter, our camps are going to be at a different school every single time we go down here for a camp. There's either too much going on at school or they're charging way too much to use the facilities.

So, I don't know where that's going to end. I just don't know how that's going to all go.

And I think creatively, I'd love to see the evidence go back to the performer rather than the designers and all the stuff. It takes away from what the kids are doing on the field.

I'm saying that like an old guy. You know, that's totally me, but I just, I find that part unfortunate. What do you say, the kid who walks up to you and says, 'why, why didn't I get a wireless mic?'

No one would have ever felt that [before]. You always felt like I was part of the horn line. I was part of the group. I was doing what I did. I was important. Everybody was important. Now it's just questions that we never had asked before.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome. Well, that's all my questions for you today. And I thank you so much for your time!

[Michael Klesch]

Oh, you're quite welcome. You don't get a lot of questions like this. You do in casual times. People were like, 'hey, tell me how you've ever did what you did,' or 'how did you start doing this?'

You get that. I found it interesting. I'd love to read it when you're all done with it to see what the whole project was like because You know, it's an enigma. There's a lot of people in the camp of

like, I will never respect what people do in pageantry and marching arts. Then there's people that the marching arts have wonders for.

Like when I was growing up and I was telling you those pieces we were doing, so many people would go to drum corps and go, I've never heard Bernstein's mass. I'm going to the record store and buying it. Because I want to hear the original. It really expanded the horizons to people. I think that still happens to some degree, but I also don't think we choose a lot of great literature anymore in drum corps. You know, like there's a lot of low hanging fruit in terms of what you what you choose to play.

And it's you either give in to that or you try to buck the trend and do something that is maybe better literature, but it's not that you're going to get you as much recognition as you wanted to get. I don't know, fine line of stuff to play there.

[Kara Metzger]

Definitely. Thank you!

[Michael Klesch]

So anyway, best of luck to you and let me know when it's done. I'd love to take a look at it. And if you have anything else you want to know along the way, just give me a holler. You got my email.

[Kara Metzger]

Awesome, will do. Thank you so much.

[Michael Klesch]

You're welcome. Nice meeting you.

[Kara Metzger]

Nice meeting you, too. Bye.

[Michael Klesch]

Bye.

APPENDIX F

Questionnaire for Current/Former Membership

Names were not be gathered or reported

1. Please list what years you were an active member (not staff) in a DCI corps.
2. What section(s) did you perform in?
3. Describe what your audition and preseason commitments were like.
4. What was the approximate cost of membership?
5. Were there any outside fees in addition to your membership costs you incurred?
6. Describe a typical day in the life of a corps member on a rehearsal day.
7. Describe a typical day in the life of a corps member on a show day.
8. Did your membership include other duties than learning/performing the show? If yes, please describe.
9. Describe at least one personal anecdote from your time marching. This could include: rehearsal, performance, and/or off the field memory
10. If you marched multiple seasons/corps, share a personal experience about change(s) in DCI over your marching years.
11. Is there anything else you would like to share for the record?

APPENDIX G

Biographies for Interviewees

Dan Acheson

Dan Acheson has served as the executive director and CEO of Drum Corps International, Inc., since 1995. Dan grew up in Cincinnati, OH where he joined the Queen City Cadets Drum & Bugle Corps along with his three older brothers in 1969. In 1975 he marched with the DCI World Champion Madison Scouts and again in 1978. Dan began his professional management career as a warehouse manager then operations manager of an office products company in Cincinnati, OH where he served for six years. All the while, Dan was engaged as an instructor and drill designer for various local drum corps and high school bands as well as an adjudicator for marching band and winter guard.

Dan then pursued a long-time dream of serving an activity he participated in from age 11 by accepting a full-time position as executive director of the Glassmen Drum & Bugle Corps in Toledo, OH. From 1985 to 1995 the Glassmen grew in both organizational and competitive prominence within the marching music activity. The Drum Corps Midwest Director of the Year distinction was awarded to Dan in 1990 and again in 1992. While in Toledo, Dan served as an assistant director of the University of Toledo Rocket Marching Band focused on drill design and marching instruction. He also served on various Drum Corps International committees and then became chairman of the board in 1995. Shortly thereafter Dan was asked to take the position of DCI executive director and CEO.

Dan was inducted into the Drum Corps International Hall of Fame in 2008 and was awarded the distinction of Lowell Mason Fellow by MENC (now NAfME): The National Association for Music Education. In 2016, he received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award from the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame. In 2023 Dan was awarded the first ever DCI Lifetime of Achievement in Leadership Award. Dan earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in business management from National-Louis University (Chicago, IL); has been married for 42 years and has three grown children and four grandchildren.

Dan Potter

An award-winning journalist and radio host, Dan Potter has been involved in marching band and drum corps for over 40 years. He is an announcer and media personality for Bands of America and Drum Corps International and is also the host of popular marching arts podcasts, including BOA's "Break Ranks!"

Dan was a drum major in both high school marching band and drum corps. He has also instructed high school bands in Indiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Zephyrus Performing Arts, the parent organization of Zephyrus Drum and Bugle Corps and Zephyrus Independent World WGI Guard in Tulsa.

Dan is a veteran journalist, radio personality, and host of the KRMG Morning News with Dan Potter at KRMG Radio in Tulsa.

In his decades covering news in Texas and Oklahoma, Dan has witnessed many historic events first-hand, including a presidential inauguration, political conventions, and too many tornadoes to count. He is the recipient of numerous broadcast journalism awards, including the Radio Television News Directors Association's Edward R. Murrow award for best radio newscast in the US and the DuPont-Columbia University Silver Baton for excellence in broadcast journalism. In 2015 and 2020, Dan received the National Association of Broadcasters' Marconi Award for Medium Market Personality of the Year.

Every November, Dan hosts "Stories of Light," a three day radiothon in Tulsa that has become the largest annual revenue source for Make A Wish Oklahoma, raising over \$4,000,000 for the charity. In 2021, Make A Wish Oklahoma named its' annual volunteer of the year recognition, the Dan Potter Community Service Award.

Dan and his wife, Martha, reside in Tulsa with two spoiled dogs and lots of pictures of their kids and grandkids.

Vicki McFarlane

As director of youth programs, Vicki is responsible for the operations of the Colts Youth Organization, which includes the World Class Colts Drum & Bugle Corps, the Open Class Colt Cadets, and the Colts Summer Band. Vicki has a bachelor's degree in music education from Wartburg College and a master's degree in nonprofit leadership and management from Arizona State University. In December 2021, Vicki was inducted into Nu Lambda Mu, the International Honor Society for Nonprofit Management, Philanthropy, and Social Entrepreneurship & Enterprise.

Vicki began working for the Colts in May 2001 and was director of the Colt Cadets from 2002-2012. Besides making sure everyone was in the right place at the right time, she spent valuable time working with the Cadets instructional team and was often on the field teaching personally. In her time as director, she saw the membership grow from a perfectly-proportioned ensemble of 18 (six each of brass, percussion, and color guard) to become a DCI Open Class Finalist for the first time in 2010, and repeating that distinction again in 2011 and 2012. The Colt Cadets were named Most Improved Corps in DCI's Division II in 2006.

At the 2018 Drum Corps International World Championships, Vicki was awarded the George Bonfiglio Chairperson's Award, and in 2022 she received the Dr. Bernard Baggs Leadership Award given to the DCI World Class Director of the Year as selected by her peers. Vicki is the first woman in DCI's first 50 years to receive the award. She was also honored locally with a Women of Achievement Award for service and support of nonprofit work in May 2018.

Vicki served six terms as chair of Drum Corps International's Open Class Advisory Committee where she acted as liaison between the Open Class directors and DCI's Board of Directors. She

resigned that position in January 2013, when she became director of the Colts. Vicki has served as chair of DCI's Membership Affairs Committee and has also served on the InStep, Governance, and Competition committees. She was elected to the DCI Board of Directors in January 2022.

Vicki moved to Dubuque in May 2001 from the English Valleys Community School District, where she served as the 5th-12th grade instrumental music director (as well as "coach" for a variety of sports) from 1998-2001. Vicki serves as an active educator, clinician, and adjudicator in Iowa and the Midwest. She has taught clarinet privately, and has performed with the Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Cedar Rapids Symphony Orchestras.

Vicki played baritone for the Colts in 1994 and 1995. She also marched baritone in the 2009 Presidential Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C. Her favorite bit of musicianship was on the clarinet as a member of the Wartburg College Concert Band on their 40-day tour of Europe where she soloed on "Rhapsody In Blue."

Richard Hinshaw

Richard Hinshaw is a visual designer and music educator with 30 years of experience in the marching arts. After growing up in Central Indiana, Richard studied trumpet at the Indiana University School of Music while also performing in the Glassmen Drum & Bugle Corps.

Richard is currently the drill designer and lead visual instructor for the Avon High School Marching Black & Gold, who are three-time BOA Grand National Champions (2008, 2009, 2010) with sixteen straight top three placements at BOA Grand Nationals (2007-2022). He serves in the same roles for the Avon Indoor Winter Percussion, perennial WGI Scholastic World Finalists (2002-2023), and the 2022 WGI PSW Gold Medalists. Richard is enjoying his 22nd year working with the nationally acclaimed bands, percussion ensembles, and color guards at Avon.

On the Drum Corps International Tour, Richard designs for The Colts from Dubuque, Iowa (2017-present). He has also designed for The Academy from Tempe, Arizona (2009-2013) and The Cavaliers from Rosemont, Illinois (2012, 2016-2022)

As a freelance designer, Hinshaw has also worked with several high achieving indoor ensembles. From 2012-2016 he designed for Gateway Indoor Percussion, WGI PIW Finalists in each of those years. From 2014-2018, he was the staging designer for the Colerain High School Winter Guard, who were WGI Scholastic A Color Guard Finalists in 2017 and 2018. Hinshaw is currently a visual designer for Monarch Independent Percussion, WGI PIO Finalists in 2016, and WGI PIW Finalists from 2017-2023.

Since 2011, Richard has served on the esteemed WGI Percussion Advisory Board, where he collaborates with top designers and instructors from around the country to help shape the future of indoor marching percussion. Hinshaw also enjoys being a freelance adjudicator for marching band, winter guard, and indoor percussion competitions around the country.

Richard resides in Avon, Indiana with his amazing wife Jennifer, and their beautiful children McKinley, Coleman, and Annalise. Samples of Hinshaw's work can be found at his website, www.richardhinshaw.com.

Michael Klesch

Michael Klesch is an arranger, program consultant and clinician for numerous marching bands across the country. In addition to being Musical Director and Brass Arranger for the Carolina Crown Drum and Bugle Corps (2013 DCI World Champion) he is the wind arranger for the Calgary Stampede Show Band (2012, 2013, and 2014 World Association of Marching Show Bands World Champion), brass arranger for the Arizona Academy (2016 DCI Finalist) and wind arranger for the University of Alabama Million Dollar Band and the University of Massachusetts Minuteman Marching Band. Michael was the wind arranger for the Bands of America Honor Band at the 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2017 Tournament of Roses Parade.

Michael has a long and successful career in the Drum Corps activity as a performer, arranger, and program consultant. He was a performer with the Garfield Cadets and finished out his time there as drum major of the 1983 DCI World Champions. After aging-out in 1983, he then served on the Cadets brass staff in 1984 and as the brass arranger from 1985 to 1992 (World Champions in 1984, '85, '87, and '90). Michael has served as an arranger and consultant with the Troopers, Colts, Crossmen, Phantom Regiment, and was inducted into the Drum Corps International Hall of Fame in the summer of 2012.

Michael's degrees come from West Chester University, a B.S. in Music Education, and from the University of Massachusetts, a Masters in Music Education. He was a founding brother of the West Chester University Chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi and is an honorary member of Tau Beta Sigma. Michael resides in Hadley, Massachusetts with his wife, Heather, and their son, Bobby.

**All biographies were personally provided by interviewees to the author except for Michael Klesch's. Which was found in the "Inside the Circle" website:
<https://www.insidethecircle.band/michael-klesch>.*

APPENDIX H

Letter from IRB

December 11, 2023

TO: Kara Metzger Clas-Music

Richard Heidel

FROM: Janet Karen Williams, PHD IRB Chair or Chair Designee

RE: Not Human Subjects Research Determination

I have reviewed the information submitted with your project titled 202309397 A HISTORY OF DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL: 2000-2023. I have determined that the project described in the application *does not* meet the regulatory definition of human subjects research and does not require review by the IRB, because the project is not a systematic investigation designed to develop generalizable knowledge.

We appreciate your care in submitting this application to the IRB for review. If the parameters outlined within this Human Subjects Research application request change, re review and/or subsequent IRB review may be required.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. The Human Subjects Office can be reached via phone (319)-335-6564 or email irb@uiowa.edu.

APPENDIX I

Permissions for Photo Use (In Figures)

Permission for all Colts related photos given below by Vicki MacFarlane (Colts Youth Programs Director/ Corps Director) and Jeff MacFarlane (Colts Executive Director).

Fwd: Permissions  



Vicki MacFarlane

to Jeff, Kara ▼

Mon, Apr 1, 12:17 PM (3 days ago) ☆

Jeff - I see no problem giving Kara permission to use these.
Can you confirm permission?
Kara - do you need formal permission on letterhead?
Thank you both,
Vicki

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Metzger, Kara L <kara-metzger@uiowa.edu>

Date: Mon, Apr 1, 2024 at 9:12 AM

Subject: Permissions

To: Vicki MacFarlane <colts@colts.org>



Jeff MacFarlane

to Vicki, Kara ▼

Apr 1, 2024, 12:40 PM (3 days ago) ☆ 😊 ↩ ⋮

Kara, you can use all of these images. No problem. I was interested to see the last image. I had never seen the 1972 schedule before where they crossed out the first-ever DCI Championships in Whitewater. What could have been?

Permission for all DCI specific images granted by Dan Acheson (Former DCI CEO) as seen below.

[External] Permission

From: Dan Acheson <dacheson@dcj.org>
Sent: Monday, April 1, 2024 9:27 AM
To: Metzger, Kara L <kara-metzger@uiowa.edu>
Subject: [External] Re: Permission

Kara:

First, a wonderful article that DCI put out featuring you. Thank you for putting yourself out there and for all that you do!


The judges sheets should not be an issue. Might it be okay for what you are trying to present to eliminate the names on the Org Chart? Titles, etc. no issues.

Dan
Daniel E. Acheson
Executive Advisor
CEO 1995-2023 *retired*
Drum Corps International
Marching Music's Major League™

2495 Directors Row, Suite I
Indianapolis, IN 46241
317.275.1219 phone
630.400.0598 cell
www.DCI.org

Permission for all DCI data reported through Steve Auditore's surveys was granted by Bob Jacobs (Senior Marketing Director of DCI) as seen below.

[External] Permission (DCI)

 Bob Jacobs <bjacobs@dcj.org>
To: Metzger, Kara L
Cc: Steve Auditore <stevea@auditore.com>
Thu 4/4/2024 10:53 AM

You don't often get email from bjacobs@dcj.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Greetings, Kara:

Please allow this email to confirm that you have our permission to use the data which has been supplied to you on our behalf as a component of your research.

Feel free to let us know if we can be of further assistance.

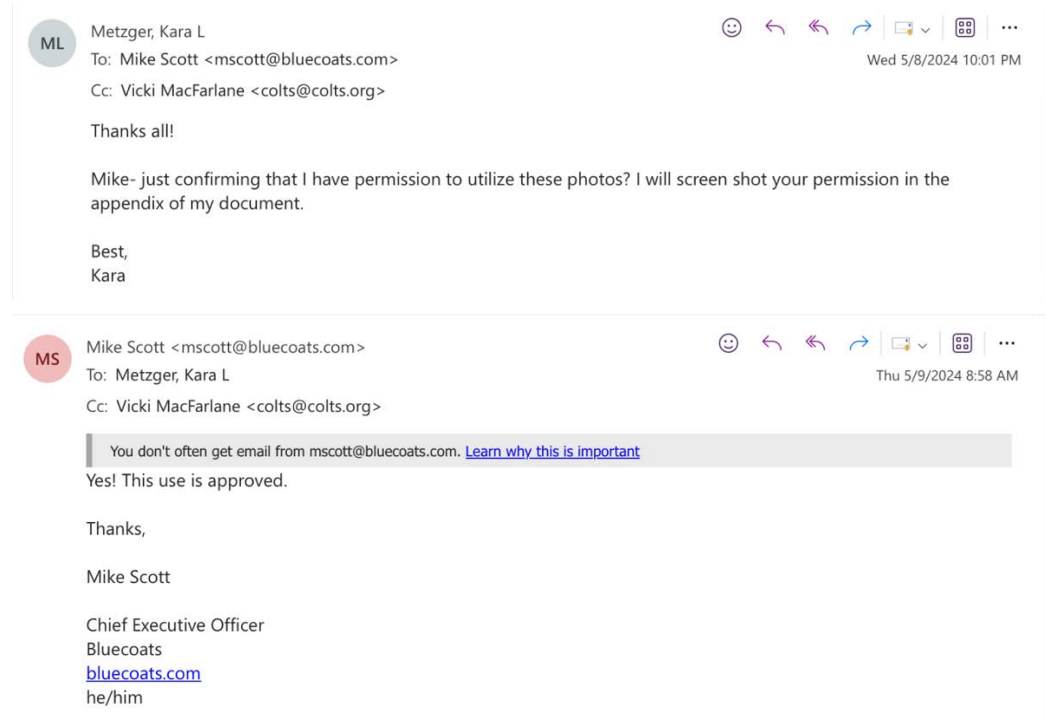
Best wishes,

Bob

--
Bob Jacobs
Sr. Director, Marketing
Drum Corps International
Marching Music's Major League™

2495 Directors Row, Suite I
Indianapolis, IN 46241
317.275.1227 Indy office
609.280.0223 Mobile
www.DCI.org

Permission for all Bluecoats specific images granted by Mike Scott (Bluecoats CEO) as seen below.



APPENDIX J

Complete List of DCI Corps Active for the Upcoming 2024 Competitive Season

DCI World Class

The Academy
Blue Devils
Blue Knights
Blue Stars
Bluecoats
Boston Crusaders
Carolina Crown
The Cavaliers
Colts
Crossmen
Genesis
Jersey Surf
Madison Scouts
Mandarins
Music City
Pacific Crest
Phantom Regiment
Santa Clara Vanguard
Seattle Cascades
Spirit of Atlanta
Troopers

DCI Open Class

7th Regiment
Battalion
Blue Devils B
Blue Devils C
Colt Cadets
Columbians
Gold
Golden Empire
Guardians
Heat Wave
Impulse
Les Stentors
Raiders
River City Rhythm
Shadow
Southwind
Spartans
Vessel

DCI All Age (new 2024)

*these corps will be shifting over to part of DCI after being part of DCA prior to 2024

Atlanta CV
Bushwackers Drum and Bugle Corps
Cincinnati Tradition
Columbus Saints
Fusion Corps
Hawthorne Caballeros
Hurricanes
New York Syliners
Redding Buccaneers
Rogues Hollow Regiment
White Sabres