

REGIMENTAL DRUM MAJOR ASSOCIATION



HIGH SCHOOL DRUM MAJOR COMPETITION

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Things change with time. Rarely do things stay the same. Sometimes things change for the better, sometimes they do not.

My competitive era in high school Drum Majoring was in the mid-1970s. The “L” Pattern has been devised to mimic a parade route that would require the Drum Major to display and execute a series of signals to lead an imaginary band through the course. Flourishing was primarily limited to the introduction to the salute. Music consisted of a recorded march that was played while the Drum Major performed their routine. I found that this process prepared me and others as competent Drum Majors to have drill and deportment finely honed for the upcoming parade season.

My competitive Drum Major experience then shifted to the Scottish Pipe Band Circuits for the several decades. In 2009, I received a call from a work colleague seeking assistance to prepare his son for a Junior High School Drum Major audition. I had taught several Scottish Drum Majors in the Pipe Band idiom over the years and agreed work with this serious and very focused student. To see what the craft had adapted over the years, I attended several school level Drum Major competitions.

I was taken aback to how the “L” pattern had evolved. Drill had been de-emphasized and replaced with an abundance of flourishing. While the quality and inventiveness of flourishing was astonishing, the key elements of the skills required to be an effective Drum Major were dismissed. Marches had been replaced with mostly synthesized, rock, or pop music. In short, the “L” pattern had turned into a baton twirling show.

With my new student, my expectations were that we would develop proper dress, drill and deportment first, and then judiciously add flourishing to the routine. My student and his parents agreed. In his Junior High School competitive year, he routinely outscored several high school competitors and went on to have a very successful high school competitive career, placing in the top three in most of his competitions.

Following is the further refined strategy that as a working Drum Major, I use and recommend to my students. I hope that you find it useful.

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ROUTINE FOUNDATION

STEP ONE: IDIOM

Definition: a style or form of artistic expression that is characteristic of an individual, a period or movement, or a medium or instrument.

One of the first things for you to determine is what idiom or style you are working within. Some bands have adopted a British Guards style (British Army), a Scottish Style (Scottish Regiments of the British Army), a colonial style (Revolutionary War era) United States Army, Show Band, High-Stepper, or some other distinctive idiom. Your idiom can be military or civilian based.

A specific idiom helps define the look and feel of your band; however, it can also restrict what you can do if you wish to stay within your chosen idiom. Staying within and developing your skills within a given idiom will provide a comprehensive and cohesive presentation that will stand out from other competitors whose presentation will appear disjointed and fragmented in comparison.

Unless you are attending a newly opened school, your idiom has likely been selected, adopted, and firmly ingrained into your band and school's tradition. If you are a student of the craft as all Drum Majors should be, you may discover incongruencies in your idiom. There may be inconsistencies involving your dress, drill, and/or deportment. We will discuss how to address those issues in a later section.

STEP TWO: DRESS

Your uniform is the first thing your band, your audience, your judges and competitors will notice. More often they will see you before they hear you.

As Drum Major, your dress must be exemplary because you, as Drum Major, set the standard by which others will emulate. You cannot demand that your band members improve their state of dress if your uniform is ill-fitting, unclean, and/or worn incorrectly.

Your state of dress should be perfect well before you enter a performance.

Fitting Of Uniform

If your band's leadership is willing, try to get your uniform fitted early and before the others in the band. Try on as many uniforms that are available until you find the uniform that fits the best. This will allow time for repairs, identification of missing parts, minor tailoring, and cleaning before your first performance.

Some uniforms are simple in construction so that you may only need to hem pants and sleeves, and ensure all buttons are present and firmly in place. If you are wearing a Scottish Full-Dress uniform, there can be 20 or more components to your dress.

Review your issued uniform:

- Replacing buttons that are damaged or have a failing finish,
- Determine whether any cloth stains may be removed,
- Cut off (do not pull off) any loose threads,
- Make sure you have all of the uniform parts,
- Ensure your headgear fits properly,
- Proper lengths of sleeves and pants.

Wearing of Uniform

Centerline

Most uniforms are designed to be symmetrical. If your uniform is symmetrical, review your three centerlines. The main centerline is the imaginary line from your belly button to your nose (when facing forward). Each leg has a centerline defined along the shin bone (tibia).

Shoes

Your shoes should be polished and clean. The laces should not be frayed. Be sure to clean and polish where the upper portion of the shoe meets the sole – a frequent collector of dirt, and well as the sides and back of the heel.

Buttons

Your buttons should be aligned either along or symmetrical to the centerline. Buttons should be oriented properly. For example, if your buttons have a lyre on them, make sure all lyres are upright and not upside down or on its side.

If you are wearing a complex or historically based uniform, research the correct standard of dress. For Scottish Full Dress, the Royal Regiment of Scotland standard should be adopted, For Guards Dress, the British Army standard should be adopted, etc.

Invest in a robust set of clip-on suspenders if they can be worn and not seen. Suspenders are particularly recommended in the wearing of a kilt.

Tunic/Jacket and Pants/Kilt

As noted above, ensure your uniform has been altered to fit you correctly. You should have your uniform professionally cleaned and pressed before every performance.

NOTE: If you are kilted, only use cleaners that are familiar with pressing kilts so that they don't alter the pleating.

Pants should be long enough to hide the view of your socks but high enough to not drag on the ground.

Kilts should not extend below or above the middle of the knee-cap.

Whiten your white belts and white spats.

Polish any brightwork (chrome, nickel, silver, or gold plating or Sterling silver) such as belt buckles, badges, etc.

Headgear

An otherwise impeccable uniform is easily ruined by ill-fitting headgear. Your headgear is based on military cover (hat). It is not a fashion accessory.

For most types of headgear, the item should be worn level on the head from side to side and from front to back. The sweatband should generally be an inch above the eyebrows. If your headgear (such as a glengarry), has a crease, that crease should align with your centerline (nose). Your ears should not be touching or tucked under berets, tri-corner hats, balmorals, glengarries, feather bonnets, busbys, or shakos. If your band wears a helmet, your ears may be hidden depending on the style of the helmet. If your band wears a bearskin, your ears may not be visible.

Your headgear should be consistent with your idiom. In the United States service bands, the Drum Major headgear is consistent with or of better quality than the rest of the band. For British military, the Drum Major's headgear is consistent with what the drum corps wears. If your band wears shakos and you are wearing a beret, you may want to revisit headgear possibilities.

Unless specifically designed to be worn under the jaw, chin straps should be worn to the point of the chin. Any excess chin strap should be secured and not left to dangle freely.

Whistle (if used)

The standard is still the *ACME Thunderer*. This whistle does not require a lot of air to generate a lot of sound. Spend time to ensure the lanyard is not too long. Most of the purchased lanyards are for sports coaches. I would recommend that you go to a fabric store and seek out colored cord that coordinates with your uniform. Wear the lanyard so that it is under your standing collar, have the cord go under the collar clasp so that the whistle's sway is limited. The lanyard drop from the collar to the whistle should be about five or six inches so that the whistle is easily captured by your hand every time.

Mace/Baton/Other Signaling Device

Clean and polish your equipment. If your baton or mace has a cord, ensure that the cord is wrapped with consistently spaced twists. If your cord had tassels that are no longer attached, consider purchasing a new cord or removing the dangling portion of the cord to which the tassel was at one time connected. Think of your baton or mace as your instrument. Clean and prepare it accordingly.

Day Of Competition

Uniform

Plan to dress on site. Do not dress and then ride in a vehicle to the competition site. You risk acquiring smudges and wrinkles that will cost you points.

If you are able, have an assistant to help with your uniform. The assistant can ensure that your buttons, pants, kilt, hose are properly aligned and level; that your uniform is lint and loose thread free; and that your bright work has no fingerprints or smudges.

Assemble and bring a **uniform first aid kit** that may include: a lint roller, needle and thread, safety pins, rubber bands, duct tape, shoe polish and/or whitener, Windex or water/vinegar solution with a spray bottle for bright work, and a cotton polishing cloth as appropriate. In addition, review your baton and mace for any tools or spare parts you may need (screw driver, screws, Loctite, rubber tips) and add those to your kit.

Personal Appearance

Your personal appearance should be exemplary. You may wish to have your hair cut or trimmed before the performance date. On the performance date, remove jewelry, neatly tie hair up or back, and remove sunglasses (unless medically required).

Don't forget to bring water and sunscreen.

STEP THREE: MUSIC SELECTION

This step is extremely important because it sets the foundation for your performance. Unlike uniform selection, **you have complete control** over the music you select for your performance.

Appropriate Music

When selecting your music, remember that Drum Majors typically lead a marching band or field music.

The military marching band is primarily used for ceremonial performances. High school and college marching bands originated as ROTC bands, later evolving with less ties to the Armed Services.

Field music is military based corps such as fife and drum, drum and bugle, pipes and drums. Field music was used to signal soldiers on the battlefield to perform certain tasks and maneuvers.

Start Seeking Music Early

You should allow significant time to select the music for your performance. By starting your search early, you will avoid rushing a key part of your presentation development. An early start will also allow changing out music that will better stage your drill and flourishing abilities. The music should help guide you on flourishes and drill that will work harmoniously and provide synergy for a comprehensive and inspiring performance.

Selection

If you have an idiom that you are following, your performance will have more impact if your selected music is compatible with your idiom. For example, a march would be compatible with a British Guards style idiom. Barry Manilow singing Copacabana would not be within any marching band idiom.

Strong Beat

A strong beat will help you stay in step particularly if you have a flourishing section that is particularly challenging.

Musicality

Marches with dynamics such as crescendos, decrescendos, accents, and piano and forte passages are preferable. Many of the popular music selections that have been used in competition have lack of musicality. Musicality allows your flourishing to accent or augment musical cues to provide a comprehensively cohesive, unified, and exciting presentation.

Appropriate music other than marches may include orchestral compositions that have dynamics and strong beats.

STEP FOUR: ADD DRILL

Once you have selected your music, then chart out your drill routine. You may find drawing out the competition course and adding the various components of your drill and flourishing routine helpful.

The Band

The competition is designed to mimic a parade route. Few parade routes are completely linear which is why the left and right turns have been added. **Always be mindful that you are leading an imaginary band.**

When designing your routine always think:

- “How is this going to affect the band behind me?”
- “If I stop forward motion in the middle of the course, what will the band do if I failed to give them a signal to Mark Time or Halt”?

Commands

NOTE: The Drum Major must be at Attention BEFORE calling any commands.

Vocal Commands

Vocal commands should be clear, loud, enunciated, and easily understood. Vocal commands vary by idiom. For example, the British command for attention is “SHUN”. The American command is commonly “A-TEN...SHUN (or HUT)”. British vocal commands tend to be more clipped in presentation as opposed to American commands. As with all other elements of your presentation, determine what idiom you are working within and adopt that idiom for your vocal commands.

Whistle Signals

Whistles signals should always be double forte or louder, and staccato. Whistle notes are tongued on the whistle similar to any wind instrument. Do not let the whistle note trail off. Each whistle note should have a distinct beginning and end.

Foot Drill

To have your most effective presentation, determine what foot drill your idiom dictates.

British foot drill differs significantly from American. In addition, there is different foot drill for military, high stepping, show band and other idioms.

Stride

Unlike leading your band that will have a set stride length, you have flexibility in using a stride that is comfortable for you. The stride should not look labored or stiff. If you have shorter legs, take a shorter stride. If you have longer legs, take a longer stride.

The common pace sizes are:

- 8 (steps) to 5 (yards) (22.5"),
- 7 to 5 (25"),
- 6 to 5 (30"),
- Other Set Pace,
- Customized to your body type.

Basic Foot Drill

As Drum Major, your foot drill must be impeccable. Foot and heel placement must be consistent, and timing must be accurate and on the beat. Foot drill while on the march should be linear with a consistent stride. Feet should extend straight out so that the heels touch either side of the imaginary line of march. This will avoid the look of walking a tight rope.

The basic foot drill that should be ready at every competition skill level are:

- Attention,
NOTE: Watch your chin angle. Head should be level or raised just a degree or two. Do not tilt the head back or lead with the chin.
- Parade Rest (USA) or At Ease (UK),
- At Ease (USA) or Stand Easy (UK),
- Step Off,
NOTE: to avoid a downgrade for not stepping off on-tempo, consider making your first step a half stride.
- Left Turn/Wheel/Column,
- Counter March,
- Right Turn/Wheel/Column,
- Mark Time,
NOTE: During the Mark Time preparatory signal, you must maintain normal stride, forward momentum, even if marching backward.
- Halt,
- Dismissed (right face/turn).

Advanced Foot Drill

Most of the competition circuits have several levels. Generally, there are beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Each circuit has its own labels for each level.

As one progresses to more a more advanced level, most Drum Majors only consider adding more complex flourishes. These Drum Majors are not fully developing the potential of their performance.

Consideration should be given to add more advanced foot drill to the performance.

Advanced Foot Drill might include:

- **Slow March/Trooping**
Note that a slow marching or trooping is not ...*marching...real...slow*. There is a defined technique that is used both in British and American settings. Examples of proper slow marching can be researched online. Use a mace or baton signal to enter into and out of the slow march.
- **Half Step**
If you elect to use a half step, use a mace or baton signal to get into and out of the half step. Also ensure that the half step is seen to be a visually smaller stride than your normal stride.
- **Bent Knee Mark Time**
A drummer's low Mark Time is marginally acceptable for beginning Drum Majors. For intermediate and advanced Drum Majors, the knees need to bend and the feet need to come off the ground. You are the exemplar of foot drill so display your mastery of your idiom's Mark Time.

Mace/Baton Signals

Background

The mace or baton is used to signal the band. When the band is playing, it is difficult to hear voice or whistle commands; however, they can more easily see the mace or baton.

The ceremonial staff (or mace) originated in Europe. It is a stylized version of the medieval mace which was a weapon consisting of a spiked ball, connected by a chain to a stick. The ball of the baton or mace is typically called the ball or crown, while the pointed end is called the ferrule.

Until the early 1960s, the United States military bands used the Signal Baton. However, during a period of Europeanization of the United States military bands, Drum Major John Moon of the Scots Guards was retained by the U.S. military to teach the United States military bands in the use of the ceremonial staff (mace). Drum Majors of all branches of service now use the mace with one exception. The Drum Major of the U.S. Army Old Guard Drum and Fife Corps uses an Esponto. The Esponto is a long pole with a metal blade at one end.

The United States Marine Corps (Navy), Army, and Air Force each has its own mace drill.

The British Army Drum Majors use mostly hand signals while Scottish Regiment Drum Majors, despite also being British Army, use primarily mace signals. The Royal Marines have their own signals.

Canadian military mace drill also has variances between the branches of service.

This highlights that a variety of signals are available for you from which to select.

Basic Signals

To be most effective, signals appropriate to your idiom should be used. Signals should be unique to the information being provided to your band. Your Left Turn signal should be opposite from your Right Turn signal. Your turn signals should be dissimilar from your other signals. Generally, ball up indicates a music signal while ferrule up is a drill signal.

Signals should be VISIBLE to your band. Signals that cannot be seen by the band are wasted effort.

Each signal should have a preparatory and an execution signal.

The basic signals that should be used at every competition skill level are:

- Forward March,
- Left Turn,
- Counter March,
- Right Turn,
- Mark Time,
- Halt.

Advanced Signals

Similar to foot drill, as one progresses to more a more advanced level, consideration should be given to provide advanced signals to fully develop your performance.

Advanced signals might include:

- Roll Off,
- Augment Front/Diminish Front,
- Half Step/Advance (Resume),
- Mark Time/Advance (Resume),

- Tempo Change,
- Tune Change,
- Music Cut Off.

Salute

Research the idiom appropriate salute for your equipment. There is no United States military heritage related to a hand salute with the signal or standard military baton. The baton is held inverted, ferrule pointing down with the right hand at the left shoulder, grasping the baton with palm forward and thumb pointed down.

The American idiom for mace is a standard military salute. The right hand has the palm down flat and is in-line with a straight wrist. The fingers of the right hand point to the temple or headgear visor.

For British Army including the Scottish Regiments, the salute has the right palm facing forward with the tip of the forefinger above the right eye (i.e. not to the temple). The right wrist is not bent. For the British idiom, the right arm travels the long way up to the salute and the short way down, back to the side.

The salute should be crisp and **dignified**. Less is more for effective salutes. Avoid the “pancake flip” of the right hand prior to the salute. Avoid the DCI “hand catch” after the salute if not in your idiom.

The standard for salutes in American circuits is generally six paces to the judge and six paces away. This may differ from the actual idiom, but your judges will expect six and six.

Snap the head as close to 90 degrees as possible to the direction of the judge. Hold that position. Your eyes should be fixed as you pass by the judge.

When saluting at Attention, DO NOT twist the torso left and right while holding the salute. Such movement is a break in bearing.

Keeping Tempo

Beating Of Time

Beating of time or mace swing may be in the right or left hand depending on your idiom

British or Scottish idiom has the mace in your left hand. British Army has a “J” pattern for the mace swing while Scottish Regimental uses an “I” pattern. The Royal Marines do not use the mace swing.

Depending on your idiom, the flow of the swing can be flowing or crisp. The position and style of the beat will also depend on your idiom.

For baton, the “I” pattern is the most common; however, the military standard was an upside-down “U” shape beating of time. The “jab” was used primarily in field show applications

State or Cane Walk

Both the American and British military use the State Walk for the mace. This pattern has the ferrule planted on the ground unlike the common “high school” touchless cane walk. There is a State Walk for both Quick Time (regular march tempo) and Slow Time (slow march tempo).

Free Arm control

As with the above, your style of free arm swing will depend on your idiom.

British military have a straight arm, hand in a fist with thumb on top, wrist bent down to promote a straight elbow. The arm is swung smoothly like a pendulum on a clock, level to the ground on the forward swing and to a comfortable position when swung to the rear. **The arm swing DOES NOT look mechanical and DOES NOT stop abruptly at the pants seam or imaginary pants seam if wearing a kilt.**

American military use either the British straight arm or the bent arm swing (See USMC Drum Majors).

For Drum Majors using the baton, the left hand should be flat, fingers together, with the thumb pointing back to allow the left hand to rest on the hip (iliac crest). The wrist should be straight so the hand and wrist are in-line with the forearm. The elbow should be in-line with the chest and not allowed to droop.

STEP FIVE: ADD FLOURISHES

Flourishes are the last item to be added to your performance. Drum Major is a leadership position first and foremost, and a showman second. As Drum Major, your primary directive is to be responsible for the band's dress, drill and deportment; and successfully lead the band from the beginning of the parade to the end of the parade. Only after mastering these qualities do you add flourishing to your performance.

Risk Benefit Analysis

As you are aware, there are many flourishes of varying visual impact and complexity. As you progress, your flourishes may become increasing complex and visually impressive.

A flourish that was high risk when you started out may now be low risk if you are at the senior levels. As you learn flourishes you will gravitate toward some flourishes and away from others. The state of flourishes continues to evolve and improve.

For your performance, list every flourish you know, easiest to hardest, highest success rate to lowest success rate, and in which plane in that it has the most visual impact (front, side, incline, back). This assessment will change as you progress and improve. Then create a risk/benefit matrix for front, side, and back flourishes (below), and place each flourish in one of the boxes depending on the attributes or risk and benefit:

- Low Risk: You can perform the flourish perfectly on each attempt.
- Medium Risk: You can perform the flourish perfectly greater than 90% of your attempts.
- High Risk: You can perform the flourish perfectly less than 90% of your attempts.
- Low Benefit: Minor visual impact, may be used for transitions between more complex flourishes.
- Medium Benefit: Some good visual impact.
- High Benefit: High visual impact – the WOW factor.

Hi Risk/Low Benefit: AVOID	Hi Risk/Med Benefit: AVOID	Hi Risk/Hi Benefit: Advanced Only
Med Risk/Low benefit: AVOID	Med Risk/Med Benefit: USE SPARINGLY IF AT ALL	Med Risk/Hi Benefit: Intermediate, Advanced
Low Risk/Low Benefit: Beginners, Good for transitions	Low Risk/Med Benefit: Beginners/Intermediate	Low Risk/Hi Benefit: All Levels

Edit

Like any composition, consider removing items that have less than a 90% success rate, and/or are redundant. You should provide the judge with a vast variety of flourishes. Consider removing redundant flourishes and replacing them with different flourishes. Once the judge has seen a given flourish a couple of times, the judge is ready to see something new.

Interpret The Music

Because you spent significant time selecting quality music with lots of expression, here is where it will pay off. Design your routines to the music. High tosses will accentuate crescendos, bumps will emphasize accents, large arm movements will highlight swells in the tune, etc.

Modular Routines

You may consider developing modular routines so you can rearrange the routines as your performance environment changes. For example, if the sun is directly in your eyes where you have placed high tosses in your performance, you might be able to swap out one routine module for another module that is easier to execute when the sun position is problematic.

Errors And Drops

If you make a mistake, do not break bearing. Act like the error was a deliberate portion of your performance. You (and perhaps your instructor) may know that you made an error, but the judge and audience may not.

Every Drum Major has dropped their baton or mace. Practice your drop recoveries so they are recovered as efficiently, effectively, and expeditiously as possible while maintaining proper deportment. A clean recovery may minimize your penalties, but a clumsy recovery may add penalties.

STRATEGY

WHEN AM I READY TO COMPETE?

You should have a coach or instructor that can assist in your development in learning the art of being a Drum Major. Your instructor will be able to tell you when you are ready to compete. If the instructor indicates that you are not quite ready, do not be disappointed. If you compete when you are not adequately prepared, you may be embarrassed and discouraged if your performance was lacking. Instead, have your instructor identify what areas you can improve so you can build up those sections. This will allow you to compete with confidence. If you are able, watch competitions to see what your soon-to-be competitors are doing.

PRIMACY AND REGENCY

People and even judges are impressed with, and tend to remember, strong openings and strong closings. The key is once you catch the judge's eye with your strong first impression, to keep the judge's attention by offering a variety of flourishes and drill in keeping with your skill level.

The Opening

Once you are in uniform, you are “in character”. Be mindful that your “opening” is not your opening flourish sequence. **Your “opening” is when you are staging.**

When waiting your turn to advance to the starting position, be off to the side near the start line, and assume the position of Parade Rest/At Ease.

Once the course has cleared, assume the position of Attention, march to the start line, face to the appropriate direction and depending on the timing either stay at Attention or assume Parade Rest/At Ease.

When signaling the music engineer to adjust music volume levels, do so “in character” and with proper military bearing.

As the judge approaches for dress inspection, assume the position of Attention. If the judge asks you a question, answer directly, clearly, and concisely.

The Closing

A strong closing includes not rushing through the dismissal sequence. After the Halt, **pause and take a breath**. If you wish to salute the judge do so then **pause and take a breath**. If you wish to salute the audience do so, then **pause and take a breath**.

Salute appropriate to your equipment and idiom. If there is no audience, then do not salute an imaginary crowd. If you salute the crowd do not salute and then twist the torso left and right. Twisting the body is a break in bearing. If you generally face the audience and salute, they will understand that your salute is meant for them.

After your salute(s) is(are) done, **pause and take a breath**, then call “Band, Dis Missed” (in tempo). Execute a right face/turn, then march completely off the course. Do not rush this sequence, it is part of your performance.

PERFORM TO THE JUDGE

The judge is your audience. Most judges are predictable as to where they stand during the performance. Design your routine to provide the most visual impact in relation to where the judge is standing. On the step off, concentrate on frontal plane spins. As you pass the judge, concentrate on side plane spins. When the judge is behind you use back plane spins and a variety of back passes. Horizontal plane spins can be anywhere in the routine. Will you know every time where the judge will be when you design your routine? No. But you can make an educated guess and design accordingly.

KEEP THE JUDGES EYES ON YOU

At some point you may find yourself being upgraded a level or two. Most competitors will believe this means the complexity of flourishing is the only component to be upgraded.

As mentioned above, to provide your most robust presentation, you should also upgrade your marching and mace/baton drill. When you are at the most advanced group, your routine should have no filler in it. **Your presentation should have a variety of advanced signals, flourishes, and foot drill.** Make every pace count such that the judge cannot take their eyes off you to see what your competitors are doing.

HOW TO STAND OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS

Most competitors believe that the only way to stand out from the competition is to perform cleaner and/or more complex flourishes. That is one way to stand out, but there are other ways.

There has been much discussion on idiom. To the extent that you can stay true to your idiom, you will stand out. Judges, if they are students of the craft, enjoy and appreciate well executed performances in idioms that are different from the majority of your competitors.

Add advanced foot drill and baton/mace signals to your performance. Many of your competitors will stop and flourish before a left or right turn or the counter march. You can display to your judge that you understand the responsibility of the Drum Major by bringing your imaginary band to a Mark Time or Halt, perform your flourishes, and when done, give the imaginary band an advance signal to resume the course.

There are idioms that have fallen by the wayside. There are manuals displaying military signal baton signals, manuals performed by different military bands, and other manuals. You may consider adopting and perfecting these manuals in idiom. To the extent your competitors all have a similar look and presentation, a different defined idiom will set you apart.

USEFUL TOOLS

GPS and Map Apps

If you are aware of where the competition course is located, you can use Google Maps or other map apps to determine how the course is oriented (facing North, South, East, West) and where the sun position is likely to be. In addition, satellite maps can identify other environmental issues such whether the course is dirt, grass, concrete, any plants or trees that may be an issue, etc. Use this information to make any revisions to your presentation so you can put forth your best showing.

Wrist Watch

A wrist watch is an important tool for the Drum Major. Competitions and other performances all have report time requirements. You as Drum Major and the band's leader should not be asking others for the time.

It is much easier to take a quick glance at your wrist watch than fumble around for your phone to check the time. Most uniforms do not have pockets and if they do, they may be on the inside of your jacket. Seek a watch that is understated, easy to read, and will not attract attention should it become visible when worn.

Cellular Phone

A cellular phone can be quite helpful to maintain easy communication between you, band leadership and key band contacts during your term as Drum Major. **If you have your parent's permission and oversight**, add the phone number of your director(s), instructor(s), and section leads.

Paper and Pen

There will be times when you may need to note information. Having a small notebook and a writing implement will come in handy when you least expect it.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

HOW TO ADDRESS IDIOM INCONSISTENCIES

If your research reveals that your band has issues pertaining to idiom, you may wish to alert your Band Director of your findings. If you decide on this course of action, you will need to plan the best way to address that with your band director, band boosters or band council. Do your research, put together a presentation with your findings and recommendations. Most uncorrected idiom issues are the result of inertia. Common idiom issues involve dress and/or drill.

Particularly with uniforms based on military units, respect should be paid to those that wore such a uniform in the service of their country by wearing it correctly.

You can educate those in power with the facts and your recommendations. Seek out as much documentation as possible to support your findings. Make your presentation and then let band leadership make the decision or path forward.

Drill issues are generally easier to change if supported with your findings. Drill revisions generally do not cost anything, but will require effort from veteran band members to adapt to the new drill.

Idiom corrections, particularly those that have costs associated with them, are often difficult to have approved by band leadership. If the decision was made to not make any changes, rest well knowing that you made the effort to make positive change. The information that you provided may be acted upon favorably in the future. That is what being a leader is about.

USE YOUR SPECIAL POWERS FOR GOOD

Don't be arrogant or have an "attitude". Help other Drum Majors improve their skills and performance. Remember, you didn't get on the competition field by yourself.

Help identify and nurture aspiring Drum Majors. At your band camp identify those entering students that have natural leadership attributes or a strong interest in the band and talk to them about Drum Major training. Do not rule out shy band members (I was such a person), they may be writing an article such as this in the future.

AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

If you enjoyed your Drum Major experience there are opportunities after you graduate High School to stay involved in the activity. You can become an instructor or a judge. You can join a college or military band and rise through the ranks. There are Scottish Games Drum Major competitions that have no age limit.

BE A STUDENT OF THE CRAFT AND HAVE FUN!

There are many resources to research idiom that did not exist twenty years ago. When I started, there was no internet, no YouTube. Idiom was derived from guesswork and a few photographs. Those derivations survive decades later despite resources available to help correct inaccuracies.

You will encounter many in the Drum Major activity that are not curious about the idioms, roots and traditions of the craft. Help stop the inertia and assist in correcting idiom by being, and encouraging others to be, a student of the craft.