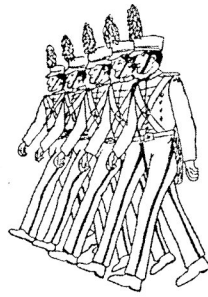


National Association
of
Military Marching Bands
N.A.M.M.B.



How to Use Your March as an Educational Tool

A Middle School Director's Perspective
Ben Davis, Lindale Junior High School

Clinic Presented at
Texas Bandmasters Association Convention
July, 2006

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Introduction:

Over the past eight years of teaching at the JH level, I have created a file of every march that I have read, or performed with my students. That file contains information including level of difficulty, key, meter, form, orchestration, and date performed. Every year I add to this list of marches.

In 1998, NAMMB sponsored a clinic at TBA and compiled a book, *The Quick-Step March: From the Field to the Concert Stage*. This book has information and comments from highly respected directors on over 170 marches of all difficulty levels. This work has been an invaluable resource for me.

One of the most important keys to a successful performance is selecting music that fits your band. Ask a veteran director about marches that would fit your band. Every year I ask Harvey Durham, Steven Moore, Butch Almany and Brent Cannon about marches (and concert pieces) that I should try with my kids.

TAMU Bands have wonderful reference recordings of marches. Check those out.

Concepts I Drill In Teaching a March:

And then transfer these concepts to all of the literature that I will perform with my band...

- Note length/style... this is huge!
- Consistency of style throughout the performance
- The dotted quarter-eighth (“day-today”) rhythm
- Not holding big notes full value – especially tied notes
- Phrase endings are as important as the beginnings; see the example below from *Kiefer’s Special*:



Take note of the whole notes tied across the bar-line. Students will often release those notes early, leaving the accompaniment to finish the phrase alone. This makes the phrase endings ragged. Be sure to follow through those big notes.

- Balancing accompaniment (march machine) and counter-melodies to the melodic line
- Creating interest through dynamic changes
- Percussionists playing with dynamics, too
- Matching: Pitch, Tone, and Energy within each section and across the ensemble

Experiment with the Arrangement:

Sometimes I write some of the clarinet parts down an octave. Be careful not to cheat your clarinet section out of valuable growth by “hosing” the entire part.

When appropriate, give the horns the baritone part. However, there are times when you need those upbeats.

Have fun with the trio. First time through, try woodwinds only. Or, no clarinets 1st time, etc. Create texture changes in the trio and out-strain by changing instrumentation and/or style. First time through trio play legato (contrasts with top-half of the march), then play marcato in the out-strain.

I like the stinger to be played as a full-length quarter-note (a bit longer) in order to end the march with a warmer, rounder sound.

Check articulation markings very carefully, and edit for accuracy. There are almost always misprints in the parts.

I also frequently change articulation markings to improve precision and clarity. See the examples below from *The Lieutenant-Commander*: We usually don’t slur to the third note when we have patterns like this.



Grade 2-3.5 Marches from my list:

***Aces of the Air* -K L King**

Grade 2, cut time, 3 flats-4flats, no WW doodles, not much for low brass

***Alamo March* -K L King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3flats, no WW doodles

***Arkansas School Bands* -K L King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, tenor brass melody 2nd strain with a short bugle-call in trumpets, no WW doodles

***Columbian March* -KL King**

Grade 2.5-3, cut-time, 3 flats-4 flats, top ½ is really good, nice tenor line in the 2nd strain, trio not as interesting, very simple WW doodles

***Flying Cadets* -KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 3 flats-4 flats, nice counter-melody in tenor brass in 1st strain, very simple doodle figures in out-strain.

***General Grant* -KL King**

Grade 2, 2/4 time, 3 flats-4flats, no WW doodles

***General Lee* -KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3flats, G minor 1st strain, Bb major 2nd strain, Eb major Trio, low brass/reeds have melody in 1st strain, very simple doodles at phrase endings in trio. Young kids like the dark 1st strain

***Glorious America* -KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 4 flats-5 flats, key is the hardest part, nice tenor brass melody in top-half, there is a break-strain, no WW doodles

***Henderson Field* -KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 4 flats, F minor-Ab major, excellent top-half, trio not as interesting, no WW doodles, this march is played often at contest

***Hosts of Freedom* -KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, easy WW doodles in trio

***The Huntress* -KL King**

Grade 3+, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, bugle-call in trumpets in 1st strain, rag-time figures in upper WW's in trio and out-strain

***Imperial March* -KL King**

Grade 2.5, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, good 2nd strain w/ baritone runs, some WW doodles @ phrase endings in trio

***Kiefer's Special* -WH Kiefer**

Judson Middle School Varsity Band UIL, 2000

Lindale JH Varsity Band UIL, 2006

Grade 3+, cut-time, 1 flat-2 flats, excellent march w/ great melodies, good WW doodles, timing in break-strain can be tough

***Liberty Fleet* –KL King**

Easy grade 2, 2/4 time, 3 flats-4 flats, no WW doodles

***The Lieutenant Commander* –KL King**

Lindale JH Marching Band, 2004

Grade 3-, cut-time, 4 flats-5flats, key is the hardest part, all of the doodle parts fall easily under the fingers, excellent march, good low brass work in this one

***Mighty Mite* –Ted Mesang**

Lindale JH Marching Band, 2005

Grade 3, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, excellent march, kids like the G minor 1st strain w/ low brass melody, good WW doodles, excellent march for the field, used to be Lindale JH Fight Song...no extra charge for that bit of trivia!

***Military Escort* –H. Bennett**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3flats, no WW doodles

***Miss Liberty* –KL King**

Judson MS Non-Varsity Band UIL, 2002

Grade 2-, 2/4 time, 3 flats-4 flats, all melodic content is in upper voices, no WW doodles

***Monterey* –KL King**

Judson MS Marching Band, 1988

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, tenor brass melody 1st strain, counter-melody 2nd strain, no WW doodles

***Night Flight* –KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, tenor brass melody 1st strain and trio, no WW doodles

***Pan American* –KL King**

Grade 2.5, 2/4 time, 1 flat-2 flats, Spanish march, nice melodies

***Parade of the Champions* –Paul Yoder**

Judson MS Marching Band, 2001

Lindale JH Marching Band, 2005

Grade 3, cut-time, 4 flats, driving march with melody in the low-brass while upper voices do some finger-wiggling, trio is not as strong as top-half

***Peacemaker* –KL King**

Lindale JH Marching Band, 2006

Grade 2, cut-time, 4 flats, another good march for your low brass, trio is not as strong as the top-half. This is one where you could have the woodwinds only play the trio, and add brass in the out-strain.

***Pride of Arizona* –KL King**

Grade 2, cut-time, 3 flats-4 flats, 1st strain has a rag-time-type syncopated rhythm that some think a bit trite, 2nd strain, trio and break-strains are strong

***Salute to Washington* –WH Kiefer**

UIL Concert Contest Judson MS Varsity, 1999

Grade 3.5, cut-time, 4 flats-5 flats, timing in 2nd strain is tricky, break-strain is tough because of key and accidentals, great march

***St. Mihiel* –KL King**

Judson MS Varsity Band Christmas Concert, 2000

Grade 2.5, cut-time, 2 flats-3 flats, no WW doodles

***Symbol of Honor* –Ted Mesang**

Grade 2.5, cut-time, 3 flats-4 flats, driving 2nd strain, the WW doodles are in the 2nd strain

***Torch of Liberty* –KL King**

Judson MS Non-Varsity Spring Concert, 2000

Grade 2, 2/4 time, 3 flats-4 flats, *easy* JH march

***The University of North Dakota* –KL King**

Lindale JH Varsity Band UIL, 2004

Grade 3, cut-time, 3 flats-4 flats, excellent march with WW doodles in trio and out-strain