


Timing judge's clipboard, 1981 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Chapter 7 by Christopher Atkinson and Allison Close

The judging of excellence in performance is surely as old as performance itself, and as long as there have been drum corps, there has been drum corps judging.

Part of the enterprise of judging is cold evaluation -- a disinterested look at performance outcomes and the relative merit of the programming of a show. This



American Legion judges evaluate the performance of the Connecticut Yankees at the 1954 championships in Washington, D.C. (photo by Chase Ltd. from the collection of Robert Zinko/American Legion archives).

is the stuff of perfection -- percussion performance, intonation and technique in the brass, and quality of work in the guard.

To the outsider, the criteria of the drum and bugle corps judge becomes a strange calculus of numbers and boxes on a cryptic sheet of paper.

And then there is the art of judging -- something nebulous and magical called "general effect," wherein the judge is the Everyman of the audience, reacting spontaneously and with great emotion to the work of the performers on the field, judging the relative weight of a fiery Stan Kenton book and the unstoppable vitriol of Barber or Bartok, performed on the same field in the same evening.

Apples and oranges, to be sure, but for

And now the scores . . . the art and science of the drum corps judging

very definite reasons to a judge, this apple is relatively better than that orange at achieving the ideal type of apple, the professional opinion of the resident aesthete in the stands.

"Ridiculous," says an outsider. Drum corps is all things to all people, but the opinion of the judge is the formal, sanctioned opinion of the organization hosting the show. (Monterastelli, 2003)

Still, to drum corps fans and performers, sitting anxiously in their seats after the show or standing on the field in quiet repose, betraying the stomach butterflies underneath the uniform jacket, the scores are of prime importance. The

The philosophy of judging

Judging is an important component of the drum corps activity and its process of evolution and corps improvement. The scores, depending on the general trend over several shows or even an isolated increase or decrease, can have tremendous effects on a drum and bugle corps in terms of practice and performance.

A downward score trend may result in a loss of vitality in the unit, or it may force students to defiantly stand by their show product and performance.

An upward trend might spur greater tenacity and attainment of even higher levels of excellence, or it might cause a group to become lax in practice, thinking they are unbeatable.

This said, it is incumbent upon the judging community to approximate a rational, scientific approach to its action to the greatest extent possible.

This is not to say that drum corps judges do not have feelings or emotions. Admittedly, there have been issues over the years where more human or fallible responses from judges may have led to decisions with which some fans may not agree.

Drum corps may not be high stakes in the grand scheme of world events, but corps personnel and fans certainly consider it a matter of great importance. To its credit, the judging community has responded in a manner that is, more often than not, fairly consistent and representative of performance quality of each unit in a contest.

By scientific rationale in the case of judging drum corps, it is largely the same as other situations where an objective means of situating one work in relation to others is needed. Obviously, the less unvarnished opinion that finds its way into a scoring outcome, the better -- the judging outcome should be a reflection of the outcome on the field, given the judge's relative expertise in whatever facet of the activity he or she happens to judge.

An issue like tone quality, where one corps is relatively better than another, is one point, but then there is also the achievement of the unit at that time relative to the judging criteria as reflected on the score sheets.

A judge might have quite high standards, and while a performance might not be perfect, it might be perfect as far as judging criteria are concerned. So given the particular rules of the activity, the expectations of the judging community at large and the performance at hand, judging becomes a type of applied social science, where expertise is used to discern relative worth or achievement by a unit.

Even under the former "tick" system of judging, which many feel to be more objective because it concentrated largely on errors rather than a "build-up" system reflecting relative achievement (total show error versus total show accomplishment),

scores of the evening's performance can be, for a few moments, almost as important as the thrill of competition and performance.

The thrilling come-from-behind victories, the undefeated seasons and the small victories like winning the drum or horn trophy all depend greatly on the judging community.

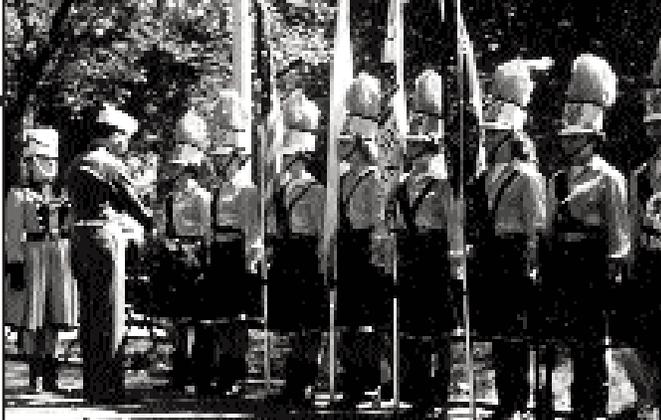
There is rhyme and reason to the way judges perform their tasks, just as there is an apparent connection to the past in terms of the evolution of drum corps judging.

In this chapter, we will examine the growth and development of judging, its changing face over the years and the philosophy behind the assessment of performance in the drum and bugle corps activity.

objectivity and subjectivity are not necessarily so obvious. As judge Jeff Mitchell has put it, "When is a tick not a tick?" (Mitchell, 1997)

Close examination reveals this dilemma to be one of judging tolerance, but as pointed out by Nikk Pilato (2000) and others, the tick system made the connection between minute aberrations and ticks a fundamental point of interest and ultimately led to DCI's change to a build-up system.

Under the tick system, a judge might use his or her discretion to tick a corps harder, relative to other units in competition, thus resulting in a lower score. In an activity where champions were increasingly being decided by a tenth of a point, the tick system triggered accusations of judges finding an extra error to trigger an intended result, even if judges had a right and responsibility to call the show and the score exactly the way they saw it happen.



All-American judge Ray Fardy inspects members of Our Lady of Loretto from Brooklyn, NY, in 1958 at VFW Nationals (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

approach to this and the organizations have a set of sanctions against judges that do not approach their judging assignments in a manner that is acceptable.

Like other fields that use this philosophical guide or community model, the judging community is self-policing. It is also policed by fans and the corps themselves. Over the years, the community has

established credibility that it is equal to the task of judging what is on the field, thus adding significantly to the weight of the community's pronouncement on the outcomes of drum corps competition.

(Monterastelli, 2003)

The earlier years

It is worthwhile to examine the state of drum corps judging earlier in the activity's history if one is to understand how the activity and its own internal evaluation process has evolved over time.

Drum corps judging began as more or less a rudimentary activity; drum corps in the years immediately following World War I were characterized by a community focus and varying levels of talent. Most shows involved a "three- and four-man squad drill movement . . . two-dimensional block" approach; one could say they more closely approximated a beat retreat, since the corps basically moved up and down the field in a block.

The corps were judged on the quality of the block and whether or not they sounded

"good," relatively speaking. With judging in its infancy, very little in terms of musicianship and quality of drill was addressed.

Sam Rowland's 1929 account of judging drum and bugle corps is a valuable guide to seeing how the activity was judged in its infancy.

The 100-point scale was still used, but it was divided in a manner quite different from that seen today or even at the dawn of the DCI era. Inspection (uniform and general appearance) was accorded 15 points. Cadence was scored at a possible 10 points (a level it maintained through the American Legion and VFW eras).

Marching and maneuvering, defined as intervals and distances, files and ranks, in step, execution and drill, originality, precision and military bearing, received a possible score of 35 points. Finally, general playing ability on the part of the performers had a potential total of 40 points -- 20 points each for bugles and drummers.

For each section, the following aspects of performance were the basis of the general playing ability score: position of instruments, execution, ensemble, expression, rhythm, originality and repertoire. The glossary that accompanies the account mentions terms like "countermarch" (marching in the opposite direction of the direction the corps is going) that are seldom seen in modern drum corps and that are much more characteristic of the British-style beat retreat performances mentioned previously.

The marching band movement, which began in the 1920s and evolved greatly in the 1930s, far surpassed the drum corps designs and hence had a more cohesive approach to judging. A judging method more characteristic of the band movement was picked up by the drum corps activity by the 1940s, as drum corps attempted to more accurately record the results of a contest through its judging method. (Casavant, 2000)

The Interstate Junior Bugle Fife and Drum Corps Alliance is an ideal case study for the period leading into the pre-DCI age of drum corps. The alliance had judges for cadence, inspection, marching ability, maneuvering and drill, bugling and drumming. (IBFDCA, 1940)

The organization used a 100-point system, broken down as follows: inspection, 10 points; cadence (maintaining a standard pace throughout the performance, usually 128-132 beats per minute, with ticks assessed for pace above or below that), 10 points; marching ability, 20 points; maneuvering and drill, 20 points; playing ability (bugles), 20 points; playing ability (drums), 20 points.

Marching ability was further divided into four categories at five points each: military bearing, files and ranks, intervals and distances, and in step, uniformity of pace.

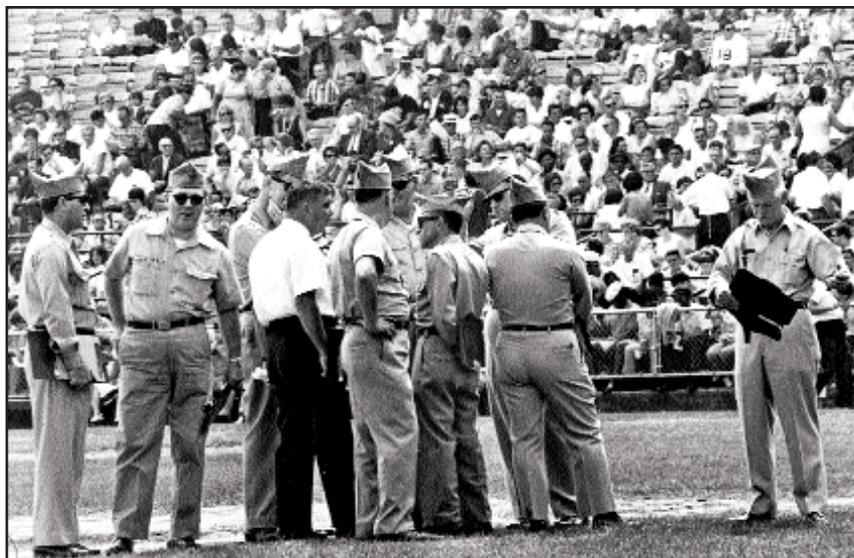
Similarly, maneuvering and drill was divided into four sections: execution of drill, precision, choice of figures, and originality and flash.

Bugles were evaluated on execution, ensemble, rhythm, expression, repertoire and general effect (three points each), as well as position of horn (two points). Drums were evaluated on execution, ensemble, rhythm, expression, repertoire and general effect



Metro All-American judge Danny Raymond Sr. evaluates a performance of the Newark, NJ, Woodsiders at an April 20, 1968 parade in Belleville, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

This does bring up the issue of ethical standards in the judging community. Drum Corps International and Drum Corps Associates are fairly rigorous in their



Michael Petrone (in white shirt), goes over details with the judges for the August 21, 1966, National Dream contest in Jersey City, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

(three points each), as well as position of sticks/drums (two points).

One particularly telling account of the tear between traditional military bearing in drum corps and the evolution of the

activity as a unique art form as far as judging is concerned is evident in Ralph Boyle's account of "Drum Corps of the Legion."

He notes, "Under the old rules corps in competition groups were required to march at a cadence of not less than 128 and not more than 132 beats per minute for which a maximum of 10 points was allowed in the scoring. This point feature has been

eliminated and the 10 points added to general effect. It was noted in the 1952 contest that several corps did such steps as a jig and rumba. The points for general effect can very well distort an equitable score between a corps that maneuvers at a military pace and one that uses fancy steps, no matter how difficult the performance."

Judging sheets, circa 1947

The judging sheets of the period

provided evaluation criteria for judging corps and assigning scores. The marching and maneuvering sheet made specific points about intervals (dress in columns, platoons, company front, at a halt); intervals between men, distances between ranks, files not covered; in step/execution (out of step buglers, drummers, others); dropped equipment, fixed pivots, moving pivots, sagging at columns, turns, anticipation of turns; precision and military bearing (bad breaks from formation, incorrect position of



Central States judge Les Dlabay records ticks at an early 1970s contest (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

soldier, turning of heads, false stops, false starts); off center or out of position (drum major, color guard, other); and talking in ranks. All of these items were on a tick basis, with a tenth of a point taken off the final score for each infraction.

(*IJBFDCA, 1947*)

The drumming sheet addressed the following: position of bass drums, cymbals, tenor drums, snare drums; dropping drumming equipment; drum heights, drum angles, position of stick, raising and lowering of arms together; playing position, non-playing position; attack and execution (hitting hoops, stiff wrists, attacks, releases); fingering, taps, rolls, flams, flam accents, other rudiments; rushing and slowing cadences; ensemble expression and rhythm (accelerando, retard, heavy battery balanced with the snares); battery balances with bugles, playing mechanical; contrast (forte and piano); diminuendo and crescendo; not playing together; rhythm not sustained; and expression.

A tick basis was used for evaluating each issue. The drum sheet included a repertoire category, with criteria for such being number of rudiments, difficulty, effect, variety and adaptability to bugle music. The judge was directed to "build up grade thus: poor, ordinary, fair, good, excellent."

Even though this system was based predominately on counting errors, there was still a build-up interpretation provided on the sheet to assist the judge in accurately marking a competing unit. The build-up category for repertoire, which stayed as repertoire throughout the age of pre-DCI drum corps and later became known as "analysis" under the DCI system, was a small portion of the overall rating of a drum corps.

However, the seed of the current system, grounded in evaluation of relative merit and demand, was present even in the earlier years of drum corps judging. (*IJBFDCA, 1947*)

The bugle judging sheet was similarly focused on discerning error as a method of evaluating excellence and included intonation as to pitch and quality; articulation; rushing and slowing cadences; incorrect bugle positions while marching/playing; bugles not up and down together; dropping bugle equipment; ensemble and rhythm/ensemble thin (too much lead, not balanced harmony);

accents not marked; instrumentation unbalanced between G's and D's; not playing together; rhythm not sustained; attack and expression/diminuendo and crescendo; accelerando and retard; attacks and releases; playing mechanical; contrast forte and piano; not whole section playing throughout pianissimo passages.

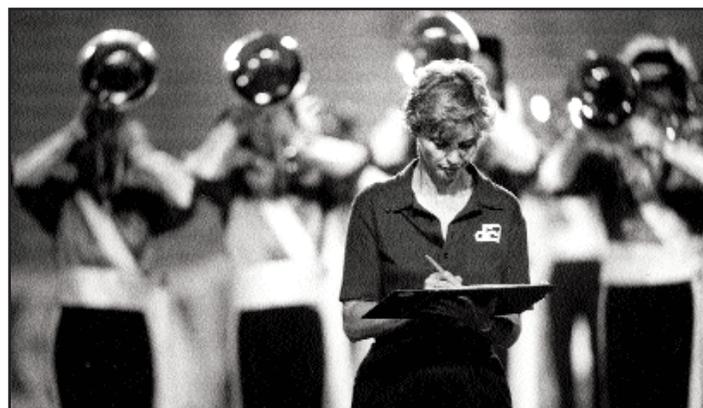
Like the drum sheet, the bugle sheet included a build-up basis for repertoire assessment: number of melodies; difficulty, effect, variety and adaptability to drum music. (*IJBFDCA, 1947*)

Perhaps the most intriguing sheet of this era was for general effect. It included a wide variety of evaluative criteria, consisting mainly of different adjectives for the judge to choose from and check off for each competing unit. Examples . . .

Maneuvers: simple, complex, varied, dull, interesting, monotonous, many, few, sloppy, snappy, difficult, easy, intricate, flashy, centered on the field, not well-distributed on the field, novel.

Music: simple, complex, varied, dull, interesting, monotonous, flashy, difficult, easy, intricate, pleasing, many melodies, few melodies, novel. Are maneuvers well keyed to music? Are music and maneuvers well or poorly adapted to each other? Maneuvers executed to full ensemble music or drum beats alone?

The sheet also noted showmanship and effectiveness of entry on the field, maneuvers, presentation of colors, concert and exit from



DCI judge Sandra Opie evaluates North Star at an early 1980s Drum Corps International competition (photo by Orlin Wagner from the collection of Drum Corps World).

the field. Judges of the period looked at the overall color scheme and effectiveness of uniforms and equipment, flashy handling and playing of instruments. (*IJBFDCA, 1947*)

General effect also included appeal, as indicated by spontaneous audience reaction. "Grossly apparent" problems like lost men, lost squads, lack of coordination and unintentional solos all detracted from the general effect of the performance. The sheet notes, "It is superior showmanship to present an entire performance without signals."

Does the drum major show control of the corps and appropriate bearing? Does the drum major actually direct the corps? Is the color guard an integral part of the performance? Are they an "impressive" unit?

Bearing is stressed throughout the sheet.



DCI judge Karson Klund goes over a score sheet with staff members from the Coachmen during a mid-1980s critique (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

(IJBFDCA, 1947)

Changes through to the dawn of DCI

The criteria discussed above remained largely unchanged by most of the judging community at large until the late 1960s. Some minor changes were implemented here and there. In the 1950s, the VFW judging sheet added “chewing gum in ranks” to the precision section of the maneuvering and marching sheet, for example.

The scoring framework remained thus: marching and maneuvering still at 30 points, performance at 20 points each for brass and drums, 10 points for general effect, 10 points each for cadence and inspection. Brass and drums were all on the tick system except for the repertoire section, which was based on a build-up assessment. General effect was also build-up. Maneuvering and marching were all tick-based.

Interestingly, and perhaps tellingly, haircuts were added to inspection sheets in the 1960s. The American Legion was definitely aware of the changes that were afoot in youth culture that could potentially be detrimental to continued uniformity under the old rules.

The cadence sheet was expanded somewhat to include penalties: leaving the field improperly, less than eight minutes in motion, leaving colors on the field and others. The bugle sheet included things like tone quality, register and tonguing. Repertoire language included a “quality of music” criterion. Repertoire was indicated on the drum sheet to be a comparative value based on the number of selections played and difficult or simple music.

The point of this was to induce drum corps to program for quantity of tunes and quality of selections. A common general effect sheet of the 1960s indicates general effect “meant all these elements in the presentation of a corps which collectively present the finest, smoothest and most pleasing performances.” (AL, 1961)

Over the period prior to DCI, many fine individuals worked tirelessly to improve the system of judging and standardize the method and approach of the enterprise of drum corps judging. Among them were Dr. Bernard Baggs and his protégé, Donald Angelica.

Darcy Davis, who compiled and preserved many documents used in this chapter, marched in the Lt. Norman Prince Post “Princemen,” among others, back in the 1940s and 1950s, and worked extensively as a

judge from 1950-1980.

Davis notes, “There is no perfect system, and even if there were, it would have limited effect in the hands of human beings using it. It became the duty of judges, given a certain system, to try to use it so that the ‘best’ corps would win and the rest would be placed in a ranking that made some kind of sense to a majority of those being judged and, of course, the audience.” (Davis, 2003)

Davis continues, “For some years an opening season get-together was held which all units who wished could enter to get an evaluation by all the judges of a certain association. This could be helpful in evaluating important concerns with a program and how judges in general would look at things.

“Also, it would possibly help standardize the way judges might be asked to operate within certain guidelines and also helped in determining strong or weak candidates for judging.

“In diving events at swim meets, each type of dive is given a difficulty rating and the individual judges mark only on the performance (how well it is done) which is then multiplied by the difficulty rating (a 2.1, for example) to determine the actual overall score.

“Drum corps have gone this route with the advent of a separate score (in the 1970s) with a five-point caption for content analysis. This would encourage groups to try something more difficult (and hopefully more interesting) and not get into the rut of doing the easier thing perfectly, although that can also be worthy of consideration.” (Davis, 2003)

Davis (2003) notes, “Another factor that enters the picture in judging is fatigue, in addition to the personal interest (and) abilities or likes of a judge, which should not be allowed to enter the picture, of course. I might mention a couple of examples of ‘overkill’ in this regard.

“The CYO Festival for Boston-area corps involved a large number of groups spread over Saturday morning (and) afternoon and Sunday afternoon for three classes according to size and experience.

However, each class involved bands, drum corps and drill teams, and the groups were not separated in their performance times, with a band followed by a drum corps followed by a drill team, etc.

“After several hours of this, it became a real challenge for minds like mine to keep a clear picture of the relationship of an individual group to

one of that type that had happened hours before, even though the really good ones and the really weak ones did seem to stand out.

“The middle area became a complete blur. Another example of this kind of thing occurred in the VFW Prelims in some years, with two days of 10-minute shows involving upward of 60 units.”

Mitchell (1997) notes the intriguing concept of judging tolerance: “Tolerance was defined as the degree of error deemed serious enough to be considered a tick. How long did someone need to hold a note past the release point before it was considered a tick? How far out of line could someone venture before incurring the wrath of the judge? How early did a snare attack have to be before we ticked it?”

“Judges made these decisions on the first corps and then maintained that tolerance throughout the contest. The tolerance was frequently set on the worst corps in the contest, who came on first.

“It should be noted that judges ticked only the most severe, public errors. From my experience, they ticked between 25 percent and 33 percent of what they heard or saw as errors. The key was to be able to note whether the deviation fell beyond your tolerance (or intolerance) for that given evening.”

This notion of tolerance continued into the DCI era, not only into the tick system through 1983, but into the “build-up” system constituting most of what judging is today.

Judges set a tolerance level for error; whether an aberration of one kind or another is enough to constitute an “error” in terms of scoring is a matter of judging tolerance, because minute errors of a background sort are more or less a fact of life in drum corps performance.

It might be grudgingly admitted that the number of individual aberrations might well have increased from the perspective of fans in the stands, given the extreme difficulty of what modern drum corps do in terms of performance. Yet, the scores have remained very high, because perfection in drum corps is, relatively speaking, a matter of judging tolerance. (Monterastelli, 2003)

Mitchell (1997) also notes that judges had to “sample” each section to get a thorough view of what was occurring in terms of performance so the score would be

(Left to right) DCI tabulators Ann Kazazian, Loretta Baggs, Ginny Sampson and Penny Crooker at an early 1980s DCI Prelims competition (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).



appropriately reflective of what actually happened on the field. It is easy enough to follow obviously weaker performers around the field, but doing so would provide a potentially unfair score in relation to other groups, assuming they were judged less harshly and more representatively in terms of section coverage.

From the very beginning, then, judging in drum corps assumes accuracy, fairness and fairly high ethical standards on the part of the judging community. Tolerance and sampling issues are perfect examples of the uniqueness of judging in terms of assessing performance and turning subjective opinion into a more scientific, rational, objective outcome.

Davis writes, "With the general military aspect of early corps activity, many areas were judged pretty much solely on how precisely they were performed and this involved using a "tick" system; that is, putting a mark down for any little error or defect and deducting that from a perfect score of 100.

"In further evolution, it also became allowable to give a group or number of ticks for a particular 'mess' in a given area at a given moment. And this, of course, led to the inevitable discussion of 'when is a tick not a tick.' Eventually systems were devised for putting the ticks under various elements of performance, which would indicate where the problems were.

"To even further be of help in this respect, judges would circle the tick and draw a line to an area of the sheet. This would allow a comment to be written regarding that particular tick."

Davis continues, "Another system for a time had a code for bugle judges to put a little horizontal mark to indicate which area of the horn line (high, middle or low) was responsible for that particular mistake. Of course, all of these would take a little time when the judge would have his attention away from the task at hand, so they had their limitations.

"With the advent of the hand-held tape recorder, the solution was found so that the judge could indicate the exact time and place of concerns and also be able to commend a unit for particularly effective moments or areas. Here again: can a bugle judge talk and listen at the same time?"

Eventually the tick system was replaced by arriving at an overall score in a given area after making as many comments on the tape as possible. Various charts were drawn up in the different areas of judging to help define which level of performance would fit into a given range of numbers and this was helpful in bringing a degree of standardization into the whole process." (Davis, 2003)

The DCI era

Mitchell (1997) calls the first 11 years of DCI through the dawn of the modern system of judging (beginning in 1984) a transitional period. In many ways, the newly formed DCI had to deal with the ghosts of the former system of judging; there was no new "DCI system" as much as there was the initial

judging paradigm of the American Legion and VFW days and the ability for the corps to freely modify the system by which they were judged.

Both Mitchell (1997) and Monterastelli (2003) note the concept of music analysis, percussion analysis and visual analysis. These relatively small portions of the judging system, wherein a build-up value was assigned for relative worth in terms of demand and value of the music being performed, eventually grew into the non-tick system that took hold in 1984.

This content analysis relied upon the judgment of an increasingly expert corps of judges, who were music educators at the high school and college level and musicians in their own right. This began in the brass section and then extended to the percussion section thanks to the increased use of tonal percussion instruments (xylophones, etc).

The thinking was that a corps that tried to do more in terms of difficulty musically should get more credit for that than a corps that, while near perfect, did little more than play quarter notes and march in common ways that were not substantially difficult.

Davis writes, "My own personal experience in this area came at a World Open in Boston one time when Madison Scouts presented a program that overwhelmed me and, although judges were never supposed to give a perfect five (even to the last corps in a contest) and they were in the middle of the show, I could not do anything but give it to them."

Monterastelli (2003) has indicated that both Madison and Argonne received perfect five scores on several occasions in the early 1970s. This phenomenon led to the release of an album called "5.0," that was primarily a money-making venture for the young DCI organization during the first season in 1972.

In terms of performance, it has been noted (Monterastelli, 2003) that drum corps instruments in the 1970s did not allow for such nebulous concepts as "intonation," because the instruments themselves were inadequate to such concert-hall-like distinctions. The performance judges, therefore, recognized the uniqueness and limitations of the medium and attempted to adjust their tolerance accordingly.

Ultimately, the shift is a fundamental one, toward expectations of "the best one could possibly expect" as being an ideal, rather than "zero errors" or perfect intonation or marching. Shows in the 1970s became more complex and difficult to judge; the notion that a single judge could examine a total

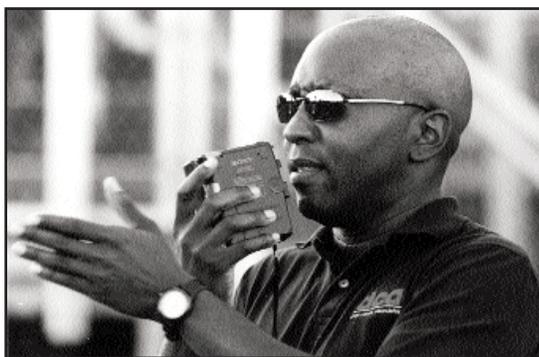
show for whatever caption in a complete and meaningful way, as far as catching all errors, had become quite impossible.

DCI eliminated the tabulators that had been a staple of pre-DCI judging. With so many people involved in the show and with errors in tick calculation potentially costing a championship, the activities of such personnel were deemed more problematic than they were worth. (Mitchell, 1997)

Ticks continued to be used at a level of importance that decreased over time. Part of this had to do with the use of cassette tapes (Mitchell, 1997; Monterastelli, 2003) to supplement the score indicators and brief notes indicated on the judging sheets. Judges became de facto corps staff members, at least on a limited basis, in that their critiques began to focus more on demand vs. talent level of the group vs. potential ways to improve the show, design aspects that detracted from the total

product of the program and other micro- and macro-level aesthetic concerns.

These criteria were more difficult to work with under the system because ticks could not accurately portray such concepts in anything more than relative terms. The thinking was that the tick system held



DCA judge Eric Smith comments on a senior corps at a 2002 competition in New York (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

corps back from achieving their maximum range of expression and playing and performing material that would truly push the bounds of the activity.

Another reason ticks became less important was that it became apparent that all ticks were errors, but all errors were not necessarily ticks (Mitchell, 1997; Monterastelli, 2003). Things bring up the issue of tolerance, which is nearly impossible to quantify and make meaningful in any rational way.

As far as making a judging decision defensible and something other than simply one's expert opinion (which was always difficult for a corps to stomach when it was graded down on such a basis), the notion of the tick had become a significant problem.

The size of judging panels has been variable over the DCI years given the changing climate of the work around drum corps, financial and other considerations and the caprices of the corps directors. In the 1970s, judging panels, including tabulators that were frequently local personnel from hosting organizations and not judges per se, numbered 14 until tabulation was eliminated. Twelve-member judging panels were in place until 1983.

Beginning with the 1984 season, the directors of the DCI corps voted to rid themselves of the tick system and replace it with a build-up system. This system began with a more simple approach: a 0-100 scale, with the lowest range being poor and the

highest range being excellent.

This was subsequently changed to the so-called box set-up the activity has today. For each level of achievement in each caption, a description is provided that explains what a judge should be looking for to set a certain group's score at a certain level. While the criteria were aesthetic and opinion-based, the exactness of the description, when implemented consistently across all groups in competition, would provide a degree of rationality that would make the judge's position of the performance quantifiable and more defensible than the tick system.

The difference in scoring between the 1983 and 1984 seasons was marked. The first place score jumped from a 94.4 in 1983 to a 98.0 in 1984. In fact, during the first four years of the nine-man panel (1984-1987), 14 corps scored above 95.0. In the 12 years

before, only one (the 1982 Blue Devils, 95.25) had managed to achieve that remarkable feat. (Pilato, 2000)

The Garfield Cadets accomplished the impressive feat of winning under both the tick system in 1983 and the first year of the build-up system in 1984 and followed up by winning again in 1985 for DCI's first-ever "three-peat."

A nine-member panel was used from 1984 to 1993, when it was reduced to seven members (Monterastelli, 2003), except for 1988 and 1989, when the panel numbered six judges for "financial reasons." (Mitchell, 1997)

Pilato (2000) notes, "Budget concerns reigned supreme and after the 1987 season, DCI was forced to come up with something that would cut back the number of paid judges. In 1988, DCI instituted a new system that was to reward general effect more heavily than before and to slightly modify the approach to "performance scoring." The brass performance judge was upstairs and took an ensemble approach, while the percussion and visual judges continued on the field and concentrated more on individuals.

In addition to the 55 points then being accorded the GE captions, the 1988 championships also saw a short-lived "blind draw" methodology of ordering the show. In 1989, the previous high DCI Finals score of 98.4 (Garfield Cadets, 1984) was beaten by the Santa Clara Vanguard (98.8). Phantom Regiment took second with a score that tied the previous high mark.

In 1994, the general effect captions were altered to judge music general effect as one category, when it had previously been brass general effect and percussion general effect, and the judging panel was changed to seven members. (Pilato, 2000)



DCI judge Charlie Poole dodges the Crossmen battery in 2002 (photo by Dan Scafidì from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Similarly, ensemble brass and ensemble percussion were integrated into an ensemble music caption. (Monterastelli, 2003)

In 2000, the color guard was finally given its own caption. It had previously been relegated largely to a major component (but still, a component) of the visual score. The judging panel was increased at that time to eight members.

The most recent scoring methodology accords 20 points to GE music, 20 points to GE visual and adds the total of a number of categories (performance visual, ensemble visual, color guard, performance brass,

performance percussion and ensemble music) divided by two.

Under this new system, the phenomenal work of the color guard has become an important component for deciding the championship

each year.

The Cavaliers, in particular, have become a dominant leader under the new system, with championships three years in a row (2000-2002) and a perfect color guard score at DCI Finals in 2002.

Concluding thoughts

Without question, the removal of the tick system has fundamentally changed the way drum corps approach their performance design. According to some, this has caused the loss of a significant amount of perfect bearing that was once a hallmark of the activity.

For others, the corps-staff-led changes in judging have allowed the corps themselves to try more and accomplish more, their achievement being limited only by their creativity and the talents of the members.

Drum corps, rather than performing in a pseudo-military fashion, have gone on to turn color guards into dance troupes and relatively simple formulas of acceptable drill and a stronger focus on music to amazing drill (given the present focus on visual integration into the finished product) and music.

The judging community largely sees itself as more equipped to judge the varied products of modern drum corps thanks to the changes that have occurred over the years in terms of criteria for judging, professionalization of the judging community and change in judging philosophy toward a more rational, scientific approach to consistency and accuracy.

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