

Teaching Tip: Using Finale to Teach and Coordinate the Elements of Your Show



Subject Area: Marching Band

Grade Range: High School, College

Materials Needed: Finale, computer with quality audio, email access by computer.

Optional: Sound system and digital projector

Goal: To use technology to coordinate learning and editing of your show.

This teaching tip is inspired by the video piece on how the Cavaliers Drum Corps use Finale throughout their preparation of their show each year (found on the DCI Finals 2005 DVD, Disc 2, "Vignettes").

Point #1: Creating the music score. This is for those who use separate arrangers for the horns and percussion.

- A. The horn arranger will produce the score with the woodwind and brass lines completed and the percussion lines blank.
- B. The arranger then emails the score to the percussion arranger to begin the job of writing the percussion portion of the music.
 - i. Not only can the percussion arranger see the horn score, he can listen to the score with Finale's playback.
 - ii. The percussion arranger can save the audio to CD to listen to the score in places where no computer is present.

Point #2: Editing the score. Once the score is complete with winds and percussion, the director and color guard staff can have access to the Finale score by email.

- A. At that time, the staff (and possibly student leaders) can review the score and email suggested edits to the arrangers.

Point #3: Creating the visual program. Once the score is revised with input from the staff, the score is saved to CD as an audio source for the drill and color guard to write/choreograph the visual show.

- A. With many drill writing programs, audio or MIDI files from the score can be synchronized with the drill to actually see the complete

simulation of the audio-visual program together BEFORE it is ever put on the field.

- B. Through email, the staff can collaborate throughout the design process.

Point #4: Teaching the show. Once the complete show has been written, the performers can use technology to learn the show.

- A. An audio-visual presentation of the show using a computer, sound system, and video projector can communicate even to a large group exactly how the show works.
- B. An audio CD provided to the color guard provides an accurate musical performance for the group to learn their show even before the musicians have rehearsed the music.
- C. An audio CD playing through an outdoor sound system can provide the music while the entire group is learning the drill, isolating just the visual demand before the music performance is introduced.

Point #5: Revising the show. Once the show is on the field, the staff can use Finale files through email or other means to make desirable revisions.

- A. Even if the arranger, director, percussion writer, drill designer, and/or color guard instructor are in different cities, revisions and communication are accessible through email.
- B. Counts can be added and deleted. Instrumentation can be revised. Instrument parts through the Extract part feature and Print feature can be made available to the performers quickly and easily.

Synopsis: While technology will not replace the skill and creativity of the directors and staff of the marching band, Finale is a tool to make the job much easier and more productive. While the use of Finale cannot replace the teaching aspect, it can make it much easier for the performers to learn and improve the show. The rehearsal time saved can be a key to the marching band achieving its highest possible level of excellence.