The Purdue All-American Marching Band- An Annotated Bibliography

Introduction:

Take one Purdue University student, mixed together with an instrument costing thousands of dollars and sheets of music that sometimes even staples can’t hold together, then combine a uniform that needs to be kept in “tip-top” shape, united with a schedule where everyday from 3:30PM-5:30PM there is an opening, and finally seeing the a familiar twinkle in their eyes when they hear “Hail Purdue” and you have found someone unique . . . a Purdue All-American Marching Band Member!! This group, found on campus, is one of the most notable because of its public appearances and all around “rah-rah” attitude. In this annotated bibliography, the reader can gain a more in-depth look on what actually takes place prior to game day and just how extensively the band works on a consistent basis to look its best. There are six main aspects of the daily rehearsal that every band hits when they come together to practice. The six headings below provide a proficient and essential framework for analyzing this type of group and what to expect at rehearsals.

Director’s Influence:


“Some directors seem to have good marching bands year after year because they balance the entertainment aspects with work on the fundamentals of good musicianship.” (Bough
Quoting this sentence from Mr. Bough seems to be a great way to introduce just how important the director’s attitude is in how effective the band can be. The article does a great job of explaining how the director approaches picking musical selections for each field show throughout a football season and how he uses other resources (assistants, professional choreographers, etc.) to fully connect the music with all aspects of the group. He also uses this sentence to explain to the interviewer how much his attitude affects his relationships with the members, ‘I decided long ago to make rehearsals enjoyable. Music certainly takes discipline, but when I have fun, students have fun!’

Townsend, Brad. ‘College Marching Band Members: Recruitment and Retention.’

This article published at the beginning of this college school year focuses highly on the impact the director can have in personally recruiting incoming freshmen to joining the marching band. Statistics from this article state that almost 30% of college band members are incoming freshmen. It also gives a great description of the perspective that incoming and returning students have on the band as a whole and of the director.

Never Skipping Warm-up:

Dunnigan, Patrick. ‘The Best Marching Bands Never Skip the Warm-up.’ The Instrumentalists 56.3 (2001) 46-48

‘No matter how busy or overwhelming the marching season becomes, every marching
band rehearsal should begin with a complete warm-up to limber up embouchures and prepare wind players for the long rehearsal ahead. A good warm-up should also develop new skills and refine the ensemble’s playing. This second goal is commonly overlooked. A good warm-up can be completed in 10-15 minutes, and with each passing week the tone and musical level should improve.” (Dunnigan 46)

Not only does this quote precisely describe a main aspect of the marching band lifestyle but it also clearly explains how it should be done. The author is defiantly very experienced with his methods and has more wisdom beyond his years in this aspect. This article is a great source of information for any band director or musician and I highly recommend it.

In this article, the author also undoubtedly makes a great effort to stress the importance of one the main aspects of warm-up: tuning. Like the article above he explores the endless possibilities that lie within this activity but he makes a clear and concise statement in saying, ‘Good band tuning goes far beyond pulling out an electronic tuner and telling students if they are sharp or flat. The goal is for the students to make adjustments without help,’ which helps a reader understand what tuning is all about and how they can improve their knowledge in some basic musical fundamentals.

Making Exceptional Music:


As the title of the article states, accuracy is a main aspect of a musical performance that
all musicians try to master. The article above highly stresses the importance of the
musician’s interaction with the musical selection that they are performing. Feeling the
music, memorizing the notes and articulation, and being able to clearly distinguish
precisely the types of selections that are appropriate for the group is imminent. If these
three aspects are not thought about while performing, the performer will be displaying a
false interpretation of what they music actually entails. To prevent this, most directors
incorporate musical background into their daily lessons and rehearsals. He states, ‘Only
performers who understand what emotions they want to communicate within each section
of the music move the audience and the judges. This takes place when each student
knows his/her responsibilities and understands his/her contribution in the general effect.’

Unknown, “Welcome Week.” the Official Website of The University of Wisconsin
http://www.badgerband.com/season_pictures/welcome_week.html

This is the Official Website of the University of Wisconsin Marching Band. Because of
the nationally known reputation of this band similar to Purdue’s, I felt that they make a
great website presentation on band life. The website includes many testimonials and
interesting facts that students of all ages enjoy reading but also includes many pictures
and songs. This website is a great example for other interactive websites! This band has
performed at many football bowl games and is known especially for their ‘high step” like
Purdue’s Big Bass Drum!

Using Your Time Wisely:

This book is fully dedicated to preparing a half-time show for a college band. The first section describes preparing for the first day of rehearsal. There are many small elements that are part of making the big picture complete and this book is a great resource for all musicians with all different types of music levels. The main aspect that this section of the book hits is how to use all the available time to best benefit the band.

Exploring Presentation:


In section two of this book, Bergan hits the nail on the head about proper posture that will gain the judge’s attention. He states that the marching stands is, “Heels are placed together; toes at a 45 degree angle; knees straight; hips drawn back, but not stiff; chest out; shoulders back; head erect with eyes straight ahead; arms at the sides with the thumbs along the trouser seams, this is what will gain the judges eyes!” If you look at any college band, they will have 4 or more of these elements at all times, therefore it stands as an important standard. (Bergan 1-17)

This is the official web page of the Purdue All-American Marching Band. It has some great information although I think that they could have more facts from year to year. This is a great representation of the heritage and the many ‘firsts’ that the band has made. For a future band member, this is a great tool for learning more information, the students, and the faculty. They not only talk about local reputation but also the international reputation that they currently gain, including the Big Bass Drum! There is lots of concrete evidence that one of Purdue’s main focus is on the presentation aspect of their performances which makes it a great resource to other directors and students.

Being Part of the Band Culture:

Townsend, Brad. ‘College Marching Band Members: Recruitment and Retention.’


‘Many of the students felt a differing intensity level in the college band, and responded favorably to performing different halftime shows with less emphasis on competition. Many seemed to enjoy the different pace of college band and the lighter schedule.”

(Townsend 74)

There are many references in this article about the cultural aspects or being involved in the marching band. It acts as an extracurricular for many students on campus but also lets them be themselves, gaining new friends in the process and learning just what an impact it can have on their social lives.


As the years go by and times change, so does the culture and how the people who live in that culture. This book is completely dedicated to analyzing the changes in culture and how this affects the people. This book is a great resource for those who are studying lifestyles of those who change over time. It very well presented, clearly thought out and laid out in an annotated bibliography setting so that makes it that much easier to read.


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