

## Karl's Tips to Early Season Wins!

Keep these points in mind as you work through January. You likely know all of this already, but let this serve as a reminder ...and as a warning!

### Use of Motion

*Motion: Moving through space over time*

You can win with this! Motion can be a deal breaker even in April!

This has become a lost art ...and it's so easy to do!

Using motion:

- Creates developments out of transitions. This distinction is huge in Design Analysis but also easily creates depth in the pacing of effects too!
- Offers a variety in the approach to both Design and Effect
- Gives you an opportunity to show you can spin and dance "on the move". This increases your variety of skills and depth of vocabulary in both Individual Analysis captions.
  - As an example- Leaping and moving in and out of the ground usually have an aspect of moving through space that is often ignored. It's easy to create a long phrase of motion related skills that will get you big money from judges and exploit an entire set of skills that your competitors are ignoring! Travel!

### Style

Technique is the essential prescribed method for achievement. Technique is often similar between large numbers of units. Style is the Choreographers'/Designers' fingerprint of the method that gives your approach life and identity. Style can be customized to fit each unit individually. (I would argue that it is the creative responsibility of the staff, to make sure that each group you teach has its own customized approach.) Style has been overlooked over the last several years as we discover new techniques in equipment and movement. In large part, young designers and choreographers have ignored style. We, as a creative community, no longer understand that style is hardwired into the creative process. This is the time to make that oversight a competitive liability. Style is available to everyone ...no matter your point of development! You can easily separate yourself from the herd in the struggle to be remembered in those early season shows. Remember that judges adjust their scores and placements as the contest goes on. It is important, if you go on early in the round, that you be remembered. Style is your easiest card to play in a judge's memory. Style is easily rewarded in all captions. We'll talk more about this inside the season!

### Connections

Connections are one of the biggest determiners of competitive neighborhoods during the early part of the season! Not addressing

connections can give the impression that you are unfinished and allows the judge to believe that the staff lacks awareness.

The easiest places to see poor connections:

- **Lead-ins** - If you cannot connect phrases, take a look at the 4 counts going in to and out of your featured moments. Think of this as “choreographic fades”
- **Transitions** – So many young designers take a “park-n-bark” approach to choreography and staging, (judges call this a ‘presentational’ approach). The transitions between these moments are also moments of motion that can be exploited for reward. This is an opportunity to show motion-related skills. Even if you ignore displaying a meaningful skill, sculpting the visual presence of equipment (think visual volume) through levels, plane or speed can assist the design and get you credit in the upstairs captions.
- **Equipment Changes**- Especially if you change equipment along the front, you MUST choreograph your equipment changes. If you are there for a while, you can create a movement moment (perhaps in the ground) that will not pull focus from the event on the floor and still earn points (*skills* in IA- *interrelationship of parts & unity* in DA- *coordination* in GE). Having a movement phrase seamlessly deposit you into an equipment phrase is worth a big number of points! Turn these perceived challenges into opportunities!
- **Carry Positions** – Using typical carry positions (tuck, slam, flat, cradle) can be sign language for “incomplete” and “unattended to” ...you are also abandoning your choreographic opinion and any attempt at style.
- **Starting positions**- This may be just me, but starting phrases in common positions allows us to peek into your process and tells us what was written first and what was not considered as you made connections. Ultimately, this shows a lack of detailing and potentially a lack of creativity. It is so easy to disguise this.

### **Length of Weapon Phrases**

We all seem to understand meaningful phrase length in the flag book, BUT we are dropping the ball when it comes to our weapons. Use every crayon in the box when it comes to your weapons. They do more than tosses! (This goes to the Variety comments below). Prove to us that your weapons can count beyond 8 or 16. Phrasing (spinning/dancing over time) offers you opportunities to increase your vocabulary score. You can pick up points that others are ignoring! More on this later too!

### **Crafting**

How you fill time choreographically must feel like the product of thoughtful planning. How you fill a phrase over time gives the judge a clue into your choreographic opinion as well as your choreographic discipline. A good

designer touches everything! Check ANYTHING that feels functional and ensure that your choreographic approach lets skills and their connections be considerate of each other and to your choreographic aesthetic. This also applies to the staging and the management of the space! ...And of course reflects in your production values too! (Especially your soundtrack)

### **Variety**

Variety is rewarded in EVERY caption!

- Variety of skills
- Variety in the use of space
- Variety of effects

### **Dynamics** –Speed is the easiest one!

Even if you explore a variety of skills and effects, there can be sameness because of your similar approach to their speed. Explore how slow and controlled you can be as well as how much you can surrender to flow and gravity through the use of high speed. Creating the obvious extremes allows your “common” moments to live as relief and as another point in the spectrum of speed. In this context, your “medium” speed now looks like another skill and not simply a default.

Remember that effect comes through contrast. Contrasting speeds is one of the easiest things for choreographers and designers to do. YET, utilizing a variety of speeds is often overlooked! Exploit other people’s oversight! Don’t forget that a range of dynamics (Space, Time, Weight, and Flow) earns you points through every caption’s special lens!

### **Strategic Writing / Compatibility**

Not understanding the connection between choreographic choice and the abilities of the performers is probably the biggest early-season competitive liability. It is understandable that your performers are not perfect at first, but there should be a clue that they are capable of everything we see them attempt. Often times we see the designer/choreographer’s ego in the writing more than we see their ability to teach! Often times this only results in a “one and done” Regional weekend.

### **Individual Detailing during Individual Efforts**

Often, we use our superstar performers to patch from one event to another, or to cover a transition or an equipment change by creating a strong individual focus. Make sure you understand that, once you tell us to look at one individual, you are not allowed to pretend that we don’t see them once they have finished! (No “catch and squat”). Once the individual has our eye, they also have the responsibility to redirect us! Let them send the audience to the next focus!

**Give your common 'big' skills some type of fingerprint-**

- **Energy/Dynamics-** Explore a different quality (weight and flow) in like skills to set them apart from their typical application. Explore unexpected qualities that give the skill a different characteristic.
- **Context** - So many times we use very common “big events” to end phrases or to feature single performers. Try pushing these events into different parts of the phrase. Then, find ways to fulfill the rest of the phrase with unexpected approach. I.E. -Use character inspired movement to finish and give an emotional aspect to the choreography, or let the big skill slur into another equipment event that finishes with a greater stylistic identity than the “common” skill.
- **Elevation-** often times initiating or finishing a common skill in an unexpected way, can give the impression that your achievement is greater than your competitors.
- **Different Shaping** – Just adjusting the shape of the body or equipment during any part of the big skill can give it a customized feel that gets you closer to your stylization!

**Proofs of achievement! ... not just evidence of an 'eventual' skill**

Make sure you have an extended section that appears spotless and impressive! This offers proof in that moment and evidence that you understand what achievement is. This will often buy you some forgiveness during the early part of the season. Not providing any early season proof suggests to a judge that you are “more hopeful than able”.

**Beginning / Middle / End**

During the early part of the season, giving the impression of a complete show will give you the competitive edge. Even if the intro or ending is only temporary. Taking the time to “patch in” a temporary intro or ending is well worth the writing time during the early season!

**Create moments of “Programmed Confidence”:**

Create/Allow time for the performers to express confidence through expressive communication efforts as well as skills where they can say “Nailed It!” – Confidence creates a lasting impression on a judge and gives them permission to give you the benefit of the doubt in close calls.

If you are a designer or choreographer, December and January is YOUR time to perform! Make things worth stealing and then give them away for free! The activity needs great work, so be Brilliant!

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