

WGI Winds

Evaluating the Accompaniments

There was much discussion at the May 2017 Winds Advisory Board Meeting and the January 2018 Winds Judge Training sessions on the subject of how judges are evaluating the various types of a Winds accompaniments - percussion, electrics and pre-programmed tracks. This paper will summarize and clarify those discussions and the WGI Winds adjudication philosophy.

- I. Accompaniments - since we value the variety and diversity of instrumentation in WGI Winds, there are many ways to create accompaniment for the winds.
 - A. Percussion ensemble of any combination as one would find in a concert band, jazz ensemble or marching band. It should be noted that these ensembles have been most successful when placed in the back or a back corner of the floor.
 - B. Battery - marching percussion
 - C. Synthesizers and other electronic instruments
 - D. Electronic pre-programmed accompaniment tracks
 - E. Accompaniment instruments within the wind sections

- II. How much “weight” should be placed on evaluating the accompaniments?
 - Battery/Percussion Ensemble/Electronics/Tracks
 - A. This was a question followed by discussion at the judge training session.
 - B. Regardless of the type of accompaniment, it is an important musical element of the total music performance and needs to have discussion and consideration in rating and ranking (there has been some misunderstanding amongst wind directors/staff that the accompaniments were not a factor of adjudication).
 - C. The consensus of the judges’ discussions was that there is no predetermined amount/percentage of weight placed on the accompaniment versus the wind instruments. It depends on many factors:
 1. Genre of the music selected - how prominent is the accompaniment? It is certainly very different in a contemporary concert band piece than a chorale or ballad. In an early concert band piece (Holst) it is not very prominent. A jazz ensemble styled piece calls for a strong emphasis on the “rhythm section.”
 2. It is a changing scenario as the music unfolds.
 3. Soli - at times the accompaniment group becomes the focus and is weighted 100% for that segment, whether short or long.
 4. The best reference and comparison is how does the accompaniment function in any music ensemble? (i.e. Concert Band, Orchestra or Jazz Ensemble)
How does one evaluate/adjudicate those groups?

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5. Electronic pre-programmed accompaniment tracks - Most importantly, it needs to be made clear to all directors, designers and judges that the use of electronic pre-programmed accompaniment tracks is a choice that is acceptable, fair, and valid for those groups that choose to use this type of accompaniment.
- III. Using the adjudication sheets - terms and criteria
- A. Upper sub-caption considerations - Repertoire Effectiveness/Composition
 1. Depth and variety
 2. Range of dynamics, expression and musical choices
 3. Idiomatic appropriateness to the music. Do the accompaniment and winds match stylistically? Is the chosen instrumentation appropriate to the wind writing?
 4. Does the accompaniment writing enhance and support the winds?
 5. Quality of the accompaniment composition/arrangement - An accompaniment that is composed well will have a positive impact (and a negative impact if poorly written.)
 6. Quality of the sound - If pre-programmed, does it sound like a studio track or a Band-in-a-Box track?
 - B. Lower sub-caption - Communication Effectiveness/Achievement
 1. Expressive qualities - Does the accompaniment use dynamic shaping in sync with the winds?
 2. Does the mood and emotion of the accompaniment match that of the winds?
 3. The terms under Achievement in Music Analysis apply equally to the accompaniment.
 4. Performance achievement of live accompaniments versus pre-programmed accompaniments must be considered - one person pushing a button compared with one or many players performing live. (How much credit can be given to one player pushing a start button?)
 - C. Visual Analysis
 1. The accompaniment affects the timing of the group visually as well as musically.
 2. Whether the accompaniment is a live or a pre-programmed performance, timing and precision is evaluated in the same manner.

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IV. In summary, the accompaniments, regardless of instrumentation, will be evaluated as part of the total production and performance. It is important that the judges consider this aspect in their ranking and rating and discuss this musical element as part of their commentary as well as in critique.