



## Reflections on a Webinar

By Chris Casteel

In early December, I had the privilege of interviewing Karl Lowe for the WGASC education webinar series. While there were certainly many nuggets of color guard gold that came from him during that interview, there is one in particular that I found to be especially compelling for this time of the year. I really appreciated his view on transitional moments within a show. So much so, that his perspective changed not only my verbiage on this topic, but also my entire philosophy regarding transitions was altered.

Without a doubt Karl is known for the intricate and compelling way in which he designs color guard shows. Over the years, we have watch masterpiece after masterpiece come to life through the performers and performances of Fantasia. I have often sat in the audience and wondered what it would be like to design in such an all-embracing method. Considering this, I was struck by his comment regarding how he designs 'transitions'. He simply stated that he never designs a transition in a show. However, what he does design are moments of 'development' that lead from one idea to the next.

Think about that for a moment.... We tend to think of these moments as the opportunity to move our performers to a place where they can pick up a new piece of equipment, manipulate costuming or simply to create a visual weight shift in the stage. Often the audience is left watching performers bend over (sometimes not so appealingly), pick up a new flag and dance off into the form once again. That philosophy only works as a functional opportunity. In addition, it speaks to the idea that our program may not be considered as a whole due to the constant pulling of individuals on and off the floor without consideration to design.

In contrast, if one were to purge the word 'transition' and replace it with 'development'....this really transforms thought. If instructors were to take the functional moments out of their shows and utilize them as opportunities to expand, enhance and advance the show through development; imagine how much more multifaceted color guard shows would be?

Choosing development definitely requires more thought on the front side of design, simply because there may be more time involved in the exchange of equipment. However, this also provides greater opportunity to express show concept, performer identity and dynamics.

Development also may not be something that comes naturally to an instructor while creating the show choreography. It may require a bit of ‘work shopping’ with the guard on the spot. This simply means taking the time within a rehearsal to work through thoughts with the performers in an effort to test and manipulate ideas. This also allows your performers to become vested in the process of design.

Finally, I realize this is mid January, and the majority of you are well into the design process. However it is not too late to take in a new word, a new philosophy and a new perspective. Try saying ‘development’ when directing your show. Instead of “let’s start at the transition”, say “let’s start at the development section”. I guarantee your performers will also view it as a distinctive moment. Perhaps this new word may even alleviate their temptation to fix hair or chat with a neighbor during these moments!! Wow, what a concept!! ☺

One last thought, consider every single moment of your show a chance to craft and develop your concept. Leave nothing for chance or idle interpretation. Always strive to design in a way that is all encompassing and multi-faceted.

Best Wishes for the 2010 Season!!!