

Putting it all together

- From the blank piece of paper to the finished composition

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The following are course notes for the drumming course at the Scandinavian School of Piping and Drumming 2001, and is by no means a comprehensive guide. Author Gordon Brown is the leading drummer of the grade 1 Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band from Scotland. Together with his father, the famous Tom Brown, Gordon has founded the drumming supplies company TG Drumming. Both Tom and Gordon are available for teaching, workshops, and summerschools – contact them at tgdrummer@aol.com or visit the Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band website at www.boghall.com

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The Tune

- **Talk with the Pipe Major about tunes and possible tunes.**
Q. Will it be a good band tune?
(Ensemble should be the main factor)
- **Establish what type of tune.**
Q. March, Strathspey, Reel, Jig, Hornpipe, Slow Air, other?
- **Establish where tune will be played**
Q. Start Tune, Middle/Linking Tune, End Tune?

Start Tune:

First two bars are important.

Middle/Linking Tune:

(Strathspey, Jigs, Reels, etc)

Must flow with rest of selection.

Again, first couple of bars are important.

End Tune:

Build up to ending

Last four bars in a Hornpipe (i.e. Mason's Apron)

- **Memorise the Tune**
 - Record the tune and memorise it.
 - Play it in your home, your car and the toilet.

- Try and memorise the melody of the tune.
- You should be able to whistle/hum the tune before writing it.
- Run a few ideas through in your head, what might fit to it.
- Get the sticks and practise pad out and try a few things.

Snare Drummers Composition

By the time you come to write the score, you should have already memorised the melody of the tune and have a rough idea what you want to put down on paper. Before doing so, take into account:

- **Level of drummers within Drum Corps**
 - Try and not write too high a level that only a few players can handle.
 - (It's not an EGO trip!)
 - If some of the corps members are having problems, it will cause the band problems with ensemble and the musical performance may suffer.
 - Start at a good in between level
 - Practise the rudiments and aim for the next level.
 - The more technical moves can be put in at a later date once all in the corps can handle them.
- **Think ahead**

Build in phrases to suit:

 - Bass & Tenor embellishments, Unison, Dynamics, Light and Shade
 - Remember to leave breathing spaces.
 - Don't make the score too busy.

Bass & Tenor

Work out where, when and how much to play:

- Split up endings with three tones
- Split up one or two bar phrases
- Pick out best parts for Light and Shade, Dynamics etc.
- Leave out a two bar phrase as a break in the tune
- Leave room for flourishing
- If the end two bars of a six parted march is too busy, it will be distracting to anyone listening, because it will be played twelve times.
- If it is a two parted starting tune, you would probably get away with a bit of work as long as it isn't too complicated or repetitive.
- Again, sometimes a two bar break works

Unison (Broken Forte)

- Aim to get the best from the score
- Pick out Light and Shade
- Pick out Dynamics
- Don't be too technical
- Don't be too busy
- Start tune, Good punch in first bar(s)
- Think of the Ensemble
- Think of the Musical Performance

Dynamics

To have a Drum Corps play tight together with Dynamics and Light and Shade takes a great deal of practise as it is one of the most difficult things for a Drum Corps to pull off. Any corps can play tight together if they play at the one level.

To get the best Dynamics and Light and Shade from a score:

- Write the score with Dynamics, Light and Shade in mind
- Pick out roll movements etc.
- Use the Bass section to capitalise on phrases, endings etc
- Work out the normal playing volume
- Really come down at the quiet parts
- Play out at loud parts
- Think all the time !

Source: The Scandinavian School of Piping and Drumming, 2001

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