



Spring Show Mania by Kristi Creamer Director of Duncanville High School High Hats



Spring Show—the planning, the practice, the details, the money, the aching muscles, the tired minds and bodies.

Spring Show—the excitement, the emotions, the entertainment, the professionalism, the production, the memories, the tradition.

Chances are that you fit into one of these categories when you think of producing a Spring Show. This will provide suggestions and ideas to help you fall into the second category more than the first. There are many levels of producing a Spring Show. Some schools do not have a show due to their heavy competition season. Some schools are the exact extreme, devoting their entire second semester to an extravagant stage production because they do not choose to compete. Yet, some schools are able to incorporate their competition routines and choreography into their show and cut down on their preparation time. The most important thing is to do what is best your team and your program. Look at the amount of time and energy that is put forth to this single event. If this is your grand finale for the season, you want to remember the show as something positive and memorable, so only do what you feel the team is capable of presenting.

At Duncanville, the show is a grand production because the High Hats do not compete during the spring. The entire focus of the Spring semester goes to planning every detail of the production. Over the years, you learn what works and what doesn't and hopefully you have documented these findings. If you have never attempted a Spring Show, it can be a very rewarding and learning experience for your team as well as the other students involved. You can also utilize your Essential Elements of Dance (TEA, Chapter 75, Subchapter D, 1997) to carry out choreography, composition, historical and cultural heritage, as well as response and evaluation through your stage show production.

Getting started. Decide on a theme. It can be as general or specific as you want or need for it to be. (There are several suggestions listed at the end of this segment.) Try to select music that will tie into your theme choice. Sometimes it takes a great deal of creativity to choose music that will integrate with your theme, but it seems to make the show have a purpose and flow. You can establish a permanent show title that is traditional from year to year, that can give you a broader spectrum of music and choreography from which to choose.

Create a traditional finale. This can be any type of dance routine that fits the strengths of your team. There are kick routines, lyrical routines as well as novelty or thematic finales. The High Hats have two finales. The first is a Senior finale to "One" (A Chorus Line.) Each Senior takes the stage under a spotlight for two eight counts for their final solo bow. They choreograph their own section themselves. Then, all of the seniors take the stage for the finale which is very similar to the choreography from the movie (A Chorus Line.) The second finale includes the entire team. The traditional song is, "It's Not Where You Start, It's Where You Finish." Each class: sophomores, juniors and seniors, come out in small groups of 6-10 students and perform an eight count bow that they create themselves. The officers take the stage and bow and join the entire team creating a long kick line and perform a short kick series to conclude the number. They slowly move into semicircles and the song ends with the outgoing captain retiring her hat with the last beat of the music. These finales were created 15 years ago and even though the dancers are different each year, the ideas, music and choreography have stayed the same. Creating a

finale that is traditional adds a lot of meaning to the show along with creating a sentimental remembrance for all of the alumni that return to watch the show.

Dance numbers and choreography. There are several dance numbers that should be included in your show. The opener should include all dancers in the show and the music should introduce the audience to the theme. The choreography should be a strong and could be a project created as a joint effort with the officers and the director. It can be a longer number with groups of dancers egress and regress from the stage. Sometimes the entire auditorium can be encompassed with the performance so that the audience is surrounded by choreography.

Each squad led by an officer can be assigned a number in the show that can include their own choreography and music selection. Progress can be checked at various stages and evaluation can be given for their efforts. The team can also be divided into three large ensemble groups. The High Hats present a jazz, a lyrical and a tap number for these three groups. Any type of choreography can be used for these and team members are placed in the group where they have the strongest performance skills.

Other specialty groups that perform are "High Hats of the Week," chosen during football season; social or council officers, dance officers and the captain's solo. You can also incorporate your show choir and band jazz ensembles to add variety and change time for your dance numbers. If you have a team member with a special talent other than dancing (singing, piano, etc.), have them demonstrate their special skills through a specialty number. One year, there was a song written in memory of a lost team member. The team 'escorts' can also perform a special number that is for comedy or serious entertainment. The length of your show should be manageable yet present variety and entertainment. Do not overload yourself nor your team members with too much material to polish, create costumes, choreograph and recall.

Costumes can really make or break a show. They can also break your budget if you are not careful. There are usually two new costumes purchased annually for the High Hat show: one by the team fund and the other purchased by individuals to keep. You need to build on your team 'wardrobe' so that costumes can be re-used and modified from year to year. Be sure to remember all resources when planning your costumes. Be sure to re-use, recycle, borrow and/or trade with other teams in your area.

There are many extras that should be taken care of for your show: lighting, sound, music, artwork, backdrops, program printing, videoing, etc. If you do have the budget, it is best to hire someone to take care of these jobs. But you should also look to the resources in your school or school district for some of these areas. Many times your art and theater departments have students that are eager to help with your show and capable of handling your technical needs. You will need back stage grips and other assistants to help with set changes, lighting, fog machines and other equipment. Have one of your art students design the logo for your show that can be used on your posters, program and T-shirts. The speech department can often yield a brilliant MC or perhaps utilize your escorts or managers for this task.

Most students are eager and honored to be a part of the show and some teachers will offer extra credit for their classes if students assist. Seek out area restaurants and businesses that will offer gift certificates that you can extend to these volunteers that assist with your show. Have your team members remember them with cards and baked goods. Most of all, give them the recognition and accolades they deserve.

Don't forget the parents. They are always eager to be involved and can offer resourceful assistance in many areas. They can help with sound, lights, printing typing, sewing and artwork. They can sell ads for the program, sell tickets, secure gift certificates, run errands and bring refreshments on dress rehearsal.

Parents and students can also take an active role on show nights by being ticket takers and passing out programs. Make sure to assign one parent to be in charge of collecting and counting all of the money taken in for the show. Any contribution of volunteers will be just that much less that you have to take care of yourself.

Two of the most memorable things about our show is our program book and the baby video show. The program is not your typical one. It is filled with advertisements but approximately 90% are personal ads from family, boyfriends or friends. It is full of personal messages and pictures that lasting memory for each team member and family. The team members also take advantage of the ad space to thank their parents and friends for the support and encouragement shown to them all year. It presents the opportunity to recognize officers, parents, seniors, council/social officers, escorts, managers, High Hats of the Week, three year members, All Americans, Honor Roll/Honor Society and always a special message from the director (me!). It is a lifetime keepsake

The baby video consists of a baby picture of each member followed by a recent photo. It is set to sentimental music such as "Thank God for Kids," "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You?", "Baby Mine" "Unforgettable," "Memories," just to name a few. The video lasts about 15 minutes and is a great break for the dancers to change before the finale number. It is always an audience favorite.

The most important thing is to make your show a memorable and enjoyable event for you, the audience and your team. It can also be a valuable learning experience and appreciation for the performing arts. Plan ahead; map out a budget; plan your rehearsal schedule; delegate duties and responsibilities. When I think of Spring Show, I always think of memories, emotions, entertainment and tradition. Each year just gets better and better—be sure to remember this when you get started. Good luck!!

Here are some Spring Show Theme Ideas:

"Hooray for Hollywood!" – the movies

"High Hats Hit Broadway" –musicals

"The Main Event" –sports theme (Space Jam, Caddyshack)

"It's Black & White" – use songs with colors, or use the newspaper theme.

Use a song from a Sports Section, Travel Section, Classified Ads ("Little Red Corvette", "Dear Abby", Love Songs, Entertainment (movie and TV themes)

"Rhythm Nation" –use songs that pertain to different cities across the country

"Let's Go Crazy" – use songs that pertained to each squad; this allowed for a broad theme

"Emotions" –songs that deal with love, hate, happiness, sadness

"Anything Goes" – another broad theme

"Come Together" –bring together popular artists from all types of music– country, rock, jazz...

"T.V. Toons"– great songs to choose from various TV show themes

"Space Odyssey" – various space music from TV, movies and cartoon themes

"Star and Stripes" – use All American style music with lots of red, white and blue

"Let's Go to the Circus" –various animal, clown and circus thematic music

"Dancin' Through the Decades" – fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties

Remember that new songs and themes are created each year and you can always repeat the movie them with all of the new movies that are released each year. Get ideas and input from your team members as well.