

WHAT IS DRUM & BUGLE CORPS?

Since the 1800's, drum corps has been a part of the American heritage-starting with the military tradition of drum and fife corps, as known during the American Revolution, through the bugle bands of the early 1900's, to the modern day drum and bugle corps which has evolved into the most disciplined, precise audio/visual display of musical pageantry in existence anywhere in the world.

Modern drum and bugle corps finds its origins in the post-World War I era. Impressed by the precision and pageantry of American military and parade units, parents launched drum corps in their own communities so their children could benefit from rigorous instruction and discipline. These groups, whose primary purpose was to march in parades and appear at ceremonies, were directly affiliated with posts of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Drum corps has grown steadily since the 1930s, finding sponsorship and support in groups like the VFW and the Catholic Youth Organization.

The junior corps movement took off in the 1950s with units that were made up essentially of members from the same neighborhood or town. At the activity's peak during the 1960s, there were several thousand junior and senior corps. The number began to decline as the activity became more mobile and corps began to spend more time each summer touring toward the August championship events.

Since the formation of Drum Corps International (DCI) in 1972, the sophistication of creative and artistic skills in drum and bugle corps has increased tremendously. The activity has developed to a level that is now considered to be a contemporary art form, while the organizational efforts of DCI have elevated the status of the activity to its current position as the second largest youth program in the United States.

WHAT IS DCI?

DCI stands for Drum Corps International. It is a mission driven, non-profit organization that provides organization and leadership for the drum and bugle activity for people 21 years old and younger. A key component of its mission is to promote, develop and preserve the operational and artistic standards of competitive musical sports. DCI organizes a series of competitive drum and bugle corps events called The Summer Music Games tour that culminates in a World Championship event each August.

HOW IS DRUM CORPS DIFFERENT FROM MARCHING BAND?

What makes this youth activity impressive is the level of performance quality displayed in the competitive drum corps achieved by members usually between the ages of 12 and 22 years and in senior corps have some people in their seventies. The exaggerated display of semi-military marching programs, precisely coordinated with progressive, classical, modern and marching music has grown into one of the largest youth-oriented, crowd appealing activities in the United States and Canada. The competitive atmosphere has much to do with the level of quality drum corps project into their performances. No other competitive or non-competitive youth activity has so consistently attained the performance quality that is common in the average drum and bugle corps.

Many of the performers have musical backgrounds, but some of them do not. Those with no previous musical training are taught from scratch by the staff of each drum corps. The fact that each section is so superb is due to many dedicated hours of individual practice and group rehearsals.

The competition itself is primarily a spring and summer activity for those who participate. Preparing for competition takes hundreds upon thousands of hours during the fall, winter and spring months to improve techniques and to learn and perfect the musical and marching repertoire.

Marching bands can range how many members there are on the field at one time. In Drum Corps, the maximum number of members is 135. In marching bands, you usually have the Middle School, High School, or College. Drum Corps ranges in ages, 5-70+. Drum Corps is also split in categories. Cadet Corps, Junior Corps, and Senior Corps.

Another major difference is the instrumentation. Drum & Bugle Corps do not use woodwind instruments. The corps' are split in 3 sections: brass, guard, and percussion. The corps spends their summer traveling around the country in deluxe coach busses, a semi trucks, practicing, eating, sleeping, and competing at drum corps shows. A Drum Corps will play many shows in a three-month season, while most marching bands only play/compete around 6-10 shows, not including the football games.

Drum Corps is an experience and not just an activity. It is 7-months of off-season practices and 3 non-stop summer months of rehearsal; perfecting, performing, more perfecting, and competing with some of the world's most beautiful and/or interesting music. All of this is done on a football field. Many marching bands attempt to do the same but the dedication and commitment to excellence does not come close to the achievements reached by a high school unit. This is something entirely unique and different. Drum Corps is are lightening fast - by the seat of your pants - in your face - edge of your chair - type drills, combined with classical, jazz, and pop music scores that are usually played by professionals.

Drum Corps is an all day and most of the night activity that presents many emotional highs and lows, intense competition, and an irreplaceable feeling of satisfaction when it's all over with. There is an enthusiastic fan base for drum corps and unlike high school; the fans at a drum corps show are there to see many corps and not one. Drum Corps fans will respond to every corps if they earn it on the field. The best thing to know about those fans in the stadium, they are not there to watch football, they are there to watch talented young youth marching the very best they were taught to march throughout the summer. You are watching them put their best foot forward, knowing that they may never see most of the new friends they made while on tour from other competing corps'. These performers are some of the best musicians, people, and friends on the planet. To see them perform is exciting; to be a part of it is an experience.

WHY IS DRUM CORPS FOR ME?

Drum corps is an activity like no other. 135 performers between the ages of 14 and 21 committing their entire life for 3 months to the same goal, the passionate and yet flawless execution of their show for tens of thousands of people. The horn line, front ensemble, battery, and colorguard all performing together to create a rich tapestry of sound, color, and movement intended to excite and entertain an audience. But a drum corps is more than the simple collection of all its elements.

A drum corps is a classroom. You can learn more about music, dance, performance, and movement in one season of drum corps than in virtually any other setting. The very nature of drum corps is one of meticulous attention to detail and that means intensive instruction on a daily basis to tweak and fine-tune their show to a level that a marching band or other such ensemble simply doesn't have the time or resources to attain.

A drum corps is an athletic event. Most people grossly underestimate the amount of physical activity being in a corps entails. Spending all day, every day running, dancing, marching, tossing, spinning, drumming, and playing as hard, fast, and loud as you can is quite the workout. In fact, it is not uncommon for most people to lose 10 or more pounds in one three-month season.

A drum corps is a chance for personal growth. Self-confidence, discipline, personal accountability, teamwork, leadership, and attention to detail are just a few of the many traits that are developed within a season of drum corps. These same traits stay with members long after they've aged-out and into their professional and personal lives.

A drum corps is a family. Certainly spending every moment of every day in the company of the same 135 people for 3 months can forge strong friendships that can last a lifetime. Of course you can get tired of each other from time to time, but those moments pass. After all, every member is in the same situation: hundreds of miles from home, working towards the same goal every day. The friendships you form in drum corps can be the strongest and longest lasting relationships you may ever have.

The only way to truly know drum corps is to be in a drum corps. It is this tricky duality that makes it difficult to describe and yet exciting to participate in, because every day is a new chance to get better, go further and learn more.