

# Classification

Classification is one of the most controversial issues facing our circuit as well as the indoor activity in general. The guidance that WGI gives regarding classification is as follows:

It is the responsibility of the instructional staff to classify the ensemble properly. Sometimes it is very difficult for the staffs to decide which class to enter, especially those ensembles with skill sets that fall between classes. We ask those staffs to contact the WGI administration for assistance with correctly classifying their ensemble. Ensembles in class A use a basic skill set, Open class an intermediate skill set, and world class an advanced skill set.

AIA judges do not classify units. The percussion coordinator, judging coordinator, and percussion advisory board are happy to assist staffs with this decision, but the initial decision lies with unit instructors. Staffs should decide on their unit's level of competition by assessing their unit's overall maturity. While breadth and depth of vocabulary are important, answers to other questions (in no particular order) may aid instructors in determining classification:

- 1) How many instructors are on staff?
- 2) What is the design experience of the staff (especially in the indoor activity)?
- 3) Does the unit own/use a floor and/or uniforms that relate conceptually to the show?
- 4) What is the available instrumentation?
- 5) What is the quality of the equipment?
- 6) Are performers on instruments that they've played before or are they learning new skills?
- 7) How many years have the program/instructional staff been established and consistent?
- 8) Has the unit performed at a WGI Regional competition or at WGI Championships?
- 9) Has the unit or staff seen a WGI Regional competition or WGI Championships?
- 10) (Scholastic units) How many seniors/juniors/sophomores/freshmen are in the ensemble?
- 11) (Scholastic marching units) Does the school's marching band have a defined visual program?
- 12) (Marching units) How much rehearsal time does the ensemble get in a facility that allows both moving and playing?

Use the answers from the previous questions to find the classification description below that best represents your unit-

## WORLD CLASS-

World Class units are the elite units of the activity. They set standards for performance and design on a national level. There are very few world class units in the country, and

these units predominately do not have more than one or two competitors in their local circuit. They are competing on a national level, and subsequently usually travel to at least one WGI Regional Competition and often compete at WGI Championships. These units have usually undergone a rational progression through the open class and have consistently maintained the highest degrees of quality in both design and performance. Sound quality throughout the battery and pit is professional. Use of electronics and/or amplification is expected. Floors/flats/uniforms/props are professional in appearance and an integral part of show design. Technique is clearly defined in every section. Moments of technical virtuosity are displayed in every section. Simultaneous responsibilities exist at a high level throughout the program. Unit members show individual confidence and have a strong presence. There is a strong sense of unit identity.

## OPEN CLASS

Open Class units are units that are very experienced in the indoor activity. They often compete at a WGI Regional Competition and may or may not compete at WGI Championships. They usually represent the upper echelon of units within the local competitive circuit, but have not reached a level of professionalism or consistency to allow them to be competitive with world class units. These units have often undergone a rational progression through the A class and have consistently displayed an attention to detail in regards to sound quality, both musical and visual training programs, and coordinated design. Clarity of intent of the written score is rarely problematic. Tuning scheme of the battery and mallet selection in the pit complement the musical program and are conducive to the indoor environment. Electronic amplification is often used for keyboard instruments. Floors/flats/uniforms/props are usually professional in appearance and an integral part of show design. Defined performance techniques are demonstrated in every section musically and throughout the battery visually. Simultaneous responsibilities exist in varying degrees throughout the program. Open class units attempt creative and compelling programs that show a thorough control of basic playing and visual techniques and some control of more advanced techniques. Most unit members have a strong individual presence. There is often a sense of unit identity.

## A CLASS

A Class units may or may not have some experience in the indoor activity. They may or may not compete at WGI Regional competitions and WGI Championships. Their primary competition throughout the season is within the local circuit. The designers for A class units have a wide variety of experience levels in the indoor activity. Shows may or may not have a certain degree of cohesiveness. Clarity of intent of the written score is sometimes an issue that A lines deal with. Some students in these ensembles may not have previously performed on the instruments that they play during the indoor season. Sound quality can be inconsistent at times. Some A lines still have trouble adapting to the indoor environment. Electronic instruments or amplification may or may not be present in the pit. Floors/flats/uniforms/props may be present and are sometimes integral to show design, but appearance often ranges from professional to homemade. Defined performance techniques used by the members musically and visually may be consistent

within certain segments, but are often not consistent throughout the entire ensemble. Some simultaneous responsibility is present in A class programs, but high degrees of velocity are not essential for unit success. Programs contain mostly basic skills that average high school age players can perform, and may contain limited exposure to more advanced techniques in certain segments. There are often obvious differences in the ability levels of various segments. Individual members are learning to have the confidence and presence necessary to effectively communicate in the indoor activity. Because of the inconsistent nature of A units, group identity is often undefined and fluctuates from year to year.

## REGIONAL A CLASS

Regional A class contains units that are less experienced in the indoor activity and/or have experienced a dramatic shift in staff and/or personnel. **THERE IS NO TIME COMPONENT THAT DETERMINES THIS CLASS** (i.e. the unit may have competed in previous years—it doesn't have to be a first year unit.) There is no rule or policy discouraging Regional A units from attending WGI regional competitions, however, the primary competition of Regional A units is within the local circuit. This class is only available as a scholastic class. Regional A class shows are often designed by unit instructional staff and/or people with a wide variety of (including little to no) indoor design experience. Show designs are limited in production value and range of effects, functioning primarily as training tools through which students experience the indoor activity and learn fundamental performance skills. The construction goals for regional A shows should maximize student achievement through logic and clarity of thought. Many students in these ensembles are often new to their instruments and/or percussion in general. Sound quality is representative of an ensemble that is in very early stages of development. Mallet selection and instrumentation, especially in the keyboard choir, are often limited. Amplification and/or electronic instruments are often not used. Floors/flats/uniforms/props may or may not be used, and often are either homemade in appearance and/or not directly related to the show design. Defined performance techniques may exist in certain segments, but may be inconsistent throughout the entire ensemble. Responsibilities are often not layered (i.e. playing and moving often do not occur at the same time from the battery.) Any simultaneous responsibilities are extremely limited in terms of vocabulary and velocity. Some common vocabulary for snares/tenors often includes, but is not limited to, simple one or two hand accent/tap patterns, eighth note hand motion doubles (16<sup>th</sup>'s), simple paradiddle patterns, or isolated flams. Portions of the show with greater exploration of basic vocabulary are usually done without visual contribution. Multiple mallet usage in the pit is rare and not necessary for success in this class. Individual members are being introduced to performance concepts necessary to communicate in the indoor environment, and consequently usually lack presence and confidence at the beginning of the season. The weights of the subcaptions on the Music and Visual sheets for Regional A are adjusted to reflect the intent of the class, emphasizing fundamental performance skills and simple logic in design. The Music caption is weighted 25% in composition and 75% in performance (7.5% and 22.5% of the total score). The Visual performance caption is also weighted 25% in

composition and 75% in performance quality (5% and 15% of the total score.) For more information about this class, see the PSRA class article.

Reclassification is a process that may be concerning to units. WGI provides the following guidance:

In the event that an ensemble displays skills that are determined to be skills used in the next higher class, the WGI administration will meet with the instructional staff to discuss possible reclassification. After a discussion with the staff, the group could be reclassified. If the ensemble is reclassified, it will occur immediately so the group can receive input based on their current skill set. Ensembles that display skills in the next higher class are forced to move to that class. If a group in a higher class displays skills in a lower class, they are not forced to reclassify to the lower class but are encouraged to.

AIA follows similar guidelines. Units that display skills that make them competitive in the next higher class are referred by a judging panel to the AIA Percussion Advisory Board for potential reclassification. Unit staffs provide a recent video to the Advisory Board, after which the Advisory Board members provide feedback to the percussion judging coordinator. After deliberation from the Advisory Board, the region percussion coordinator informs the unit staff of the Advisory Board's decision to reclassify or not reclassify the unit. **THERE IS NO CUTOFF DATE FOR PERCUSSION RECLASSIFICATION.** There is also no defined score that denotes reclassification. There will usually be significantly high (high box 4 or 5) scores present in the composition subcaptions for judges to make recommendations for Advisory Board referral. Consequently, significantly low scores (mid-low box 2) may act as catalysts for discussion between judges and staffs regarding a staff decision to reclassify their unit down to a class where the unit is better suited and more competitive.

For more information regarding reclassification, please see the Reclassification article.