

Unfortunately, I did not mention in my prelims review that there was a very touching tribute to George N. Parks. Dr. Tim had lots of nice things to say about him, and present were students or former students of his whose lives he touched. Mr. Parks, thank you for all you've done for the drum major and leadership community, and music in general. I did not know you, but you have certainly made POSITIVELY LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES for thousands, and no doubt helped pave the way for the excellence that is MFA/BOA. He will be sorely missed by the family, indeed.

I knew little of what to expect today except that most if not all of the performances would be great. I tried to erase all that I had seen the past few days so that I could start off with a "blank slate." It was like "Finals (Plus Some)" with sure finalists showcasing all they've got and vying for the top Class awards, and then "everyone else" who would LOVE to be rub shoulders with the best of the best--essentially being the best of the best. If there is anything I have learned here over the years it is that being a finalist IS winning...you are in a whole new world of competition. (The call it "World Class" in WGI. I call it "Out of this World.")

Here are my thoughts on SEMI-FINALS. I wrote down my thoughts on each group as they went on and performed, and then I assigned them a number based on G.E. "overall" (based on all the things I have learned over the year of the marching arts and BOA as performer, fan, and recently as visual staff.) As Dennis Miller would say, "Of course, that's just my opinion. I could be wrong..."

SEMI-FINALS

Adair County H.S.

Columbia, Kentucky

Repertoire: "The StoryPeople," inspired by works of Brian Andreas

Comments: You know, some shows you remember by how they began or how they progress or how they finish. This show was memorable by how it began...before it actually began. Pre-recorded music grabs your ears, as does a guard girl who seems to seduce the band onto the field wearing a unique spandex costume with typewriter "storybook" words on it. Only a few glitches hindered them, it seemed, as rotating lines were not straight enough and the sax section brought up their horns in a distorted way during their performance up front. The finish of their "story" was clean enough, and the scroll unveilings was a win. Excellent show.

My Score: 86.80

My Placement: 24th

Godwin Heights H.S.

Wyoming, Michigan

Repertoire: "Five Stages of Grief," Including: 1. "Denial," 2. "Anger," 3. "Depression," 4. "Bargaining," and 5. "Acceptance," original music by John Meehan and Tom Weidner

Comments: This scrappy group got down to business immediately, but their sound seemed sucked into No Man's Land. I could hear the feet in the horns real well. Bravo, guard, for the above average symmetry and asymmetry. Those blue and green poles have to be angled perfect, girls. All right, GREAT rifle toss that went from the sides and ended in the center, though the center rifle was caught upside down. This show was a hard one to sell, I think, because grieving is different for everyone, perhaps in more or less stages or a different order of stages. They did not finish their show strong. Gotta finish strong!

My Score: 74.20

My Placement: 34th

Brentwood H.S.

Brentwood, Tennessee

Repertoire: "In the Woods...LOST!" including: I. "In the Woods," II. "Lost" and III. "No Escape," featuring music by Javier Navarrete, Anouk and Hans Zimmer

Comments: The wind players rush the field from the tunnel to get into a slanted huddle with somber sounds. I can just hear a rogue trumpet in the first big musical spot. Near perfect toss of those eye-catching orange sabres. The very subtle, almost too subtle turn-around of the wind players to the flute melody is well done, as the feet go to third position. Trumpets, get those notes in tune! Great intrigue created as the robed woman is seemingly ostracized by the mob of winds around her. They have a clever ending, as the heroine is swallowed by the "evil tree." Semi-solid product!

My Score: 79.70

My Placement: 33rd

Morton H.S.

Morton, Illinois

Repertoire: "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," based on the World War II story of two boys on opposite sides of the fence music by Craig Fitzpatrick

Comments: Before I get into my review of this group, I'd like to share a cool story--while waiting to get into the stadium I met one of the band moms outside who told me they were NOT expecting to make semi-finals, and were just THRILLED to be there; that they had worked hard all season, and at one of their shows back home a jewish organization bussed a bunch of people to watch their show and were very touched. I love these types of stories! Now to the review...FANTASTIC poise by this ensemble, only moving by the DM's command. The drama here is weapped in the ugly history of the German holocaust, yet the show is allowed to build to that point with cheerful music, then music of innocence, then music of realization. Realization comes with the touches of this fine program, with above average drum and flag work and visual elements that contribute to the theme. Though I could hear the fatigue seep deep into them this did not stop them from telling this moving story, and I dare say that will be the thing that will put them over some of the groups in their class.

My Score: 80.10

My Placement: 32nd

Lafayette H.S.

Lafayette, Louisiana

Repertoire: "The Awakening," including: "Spring" from "Three Botticelli pictures," "The Pines of Rome" by Ottorino Respighi and "Aurora Awakes" by John Mackey

Comments: Magnificent obvious stage of orange, with huge orange silks that flow in all directions. I am not jolted by their first phrases, but I can see that what they are doing is pretty on target. Expert handling of expert book, trumpets. Musically, there are but slight flaws. Visually, I liked the blind pass-through drill and forms that mesh to create one form. The guard made sure the rifles were caught in time most of the time, but woe be to the catastrophe on side 1. There is that "worship circle" form that is more of a parenthesis, I felt, than that which goes back to the source.

My Score: 85.10

My Placement: 29th

Ben Davis H.S.

Indianapolis, Indiana

Repertoire: "The Maze"

Comments: The cinematic style of field entrance suited this band, I felt, and the mellophone solo was sloppy, but served its purpose. The body movement that went beyond upper body was a welcome sight, with hands and feet on the turf. The trumpets had handling issues, but the reeds were IT! The saxophone army mesmerized--I love this Philip Glass piece to pieces. Guard, great toss after toss and catch after catch of those rifles, but even better toss after toss (technique). I will let a lot of the note flubs pass 'cause this group DRIVES and creates interest.

My Score: 85.10

My Placement: 26th

Western H.S.

Russiaville, Indiana

Repertoire: "Amelia Earhart," music of Philip Glass, Samuel Barber and Damien Rice

Comments: The old time aircraft transmissions in the rage of windy skies haunts. The snow angel movement on the field emotes. Silky baritone solo, baritone soloist! The narrative is not intrusive, here...well done! Each form on the field glides and drifts with beauty, and I am so pleased that they go to extremes to make sure the forms lock and that the means to getting to these forms is just right with tall bodies, all counts taken, and pure guiding. Yum! I can go on and on about their sound but I'll just sum it up by saying they seem twice as big as they are. The disappearing act at the end is a must see, like Star Wars.

My Score: 87.50

My Placement: 21st

Northmont H.S.

Clayton, Ohio

Repertoire: "The Changing Leaves" featuring: "Autumn Leaves" by Joseph Kosma, "Winter" from Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi, "Rite of Spring" by Igor Stravinsky, original music by Andrew Markworth

Comments: The green linear forms border a tree prop's lawn, with the "roots" as the guard who pose appropriately. Yikes! A trumpet player halts outside the form obviously, but does well to sit still. Excellent (not moving after halting). I felt the plume change from green to yellow-and-orange was not sly enough, and jacked up the flow. Swell work with the snare drum stick height, as the field drums stay in synch and add, add, add to what's going on. Superb leg swivels, band...and then we zoom to the tree prop (that has been changing colors, too, mind you!) where a larger root structure--the total unit--spotlights a blooming flower prop.

My Score: 83.30

My Placement: 27th

Ayala H.S.

Chino Hills, California

Repertoire: "ICUCME," including: 1. "Don't Look At Me," 2. "Everybody's Watching Me...Gotta Be Perfect," 3. "Looking Within" and 4. "Seeing the Real Self"

Comments: My eyes are drawn to the guard in a clump in all black with white mask "hats." You get faked out by the winds who neglect to hit us with their sound because they don't want us to "look at them." Well done! I appreciate the originality of intentionally messing up the rifle toss, too, hahaha! "Gotta be perfect" is right, and they strive, strive, strive for it. (Way to draw you in to this story!) Some forms were clearly dirty, but timing and technique were locked in. Great eye form with the guard serving as the pupil in the center--shades of purple, and so awesome. The percussion feature rocked, just rocked! The eyeball props were great inventive "spotlights" that became an integral part of the stage in and of itself.

My Score: 89.40
My Placement: 16th

Carmel H.S.
Carmel, Indiana

Repertoire: "Stop and Smell the Roses," an original composition by Richard Saucedo and Michael McIntosh

Comments: "Running man" moves that spring up and down and deft rifle tosses to the tune of clicking and clacking gave me quite the ride. These kids were music marvels, and this was true for the brass especially, I felt. Expert full body swivels into the "running man" pose go back to what defines them. You would be hard pressed to find a fumble from this group, as each big moment gives way to another. The drawstring type moves on side 1 in the goal area that sway side-to-side to the swooning sounds of the accordion invigorates. C'est magnifique!

My Score: 94.60
My Placement: 6th

Stephen F. Austin H.S., TX
Sugar Land, Texas

Repertoire: "Miss Understood," including: "Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture" by Tchaikovsky, "Adagietto" from "Symphony No. 5" by Mahler and "Urban Dances" by Danielpour

Comments: Little details, like how the flutes hold their instruments behind their backs at a perfect angle and how the clarinets do the same in front is what makes me want to stand up and clap for this group. They shower you with just...gorgeous music. They are so good they seem mechanical. As much as I am in awe I am not on the edge of my seat like I was with Carmel. Give me more of that dancer goodness, yes! (The black ribbon patch moment was great.) Oh boy, the end of their show was on the money (and I felt it topped the first part of their show). These guys are giants.

My Score: 91.10
My Placement: 8th

Kennesaw Mountain H.S.
Kennesaw, Georgia

Repertoire: "Awakening Angels" I. "Awakening" II. "Rejoicing" III. "Protecting" IV. "Resurrection" and V. "Benediction"

Comments: The football field changes shape with a massive, curvey white tarp. There is some timing issues in the feet around the tubas and baris, but you wouldn't know it unless you searched madly. The white on white effect of guard on tarp was subdued, I think...not enough CONTRAST! The woodwind trio on the spiral stage spun soothing notes to the heartbeats of the pit, and then when you hear a clarinet squeak to kick off the "Adagio for Strings" segment, MAN! (That's like dropping an ounce of gasoline into a perfect glass of wine!) Good thing they finished mighty.

My Score: 90.50
My Placement: 12th

Walled Lake Central H.S.
Walled Lake, Michigan

Repertoire: "Phoenix Rising," featuring the music of Philip Glass, Mark Isham, John Mackey and Igor Stravinsky with original music by Nick Pourcho

Comments: The mellophone and trumpet soloists execute well, but I wish they were amplified. (Personal taste.) The shrouded figure violently tears away pieces of the sprite-like girl, and thus the tension--epic.

(The music reflects this.) Razor sharp trumpet notes, firm rifle skills, and elegant costume substitutions appeal, appeal, appeal. They nailed their show and are a shining example of "bringing it" when it counts the most. Now...is their show design WORTHY? We shall see.

My Score: 89.80

My Placement: 89.80

William Mason H.S.

Mason, Ohio

Repertoire: "Underworld!" including: 1. "Love Dance of Orpheus and Eurydice," 2. "Pursuit and Capture of Eurydice," 3. "Orpheus's Lament," 4. "Descent Into the Underworld," 5. "Orpheus Negotiates with Hades" and 6. "Lost Forever"

Comments: The fact the mic was not working for the concert horn soloist in their pre-show was cause for concern, but then he switched it out for a mellophone. That was a fine catch, guard, but not quite THERE. (Definition; definition, folks!) Hey, the concert horn is back and the wireless mic is now working! (Heavenly sounds.) The two pod forms with the horn player as the focal point in the winds and the white striped guard girl in the other was a fine moment.

My Score: 88.20

My Placement: 18th

Union H.S.

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Repertoire: "ReInvention"

Comments: It sounded like the synth in their pit was gone. What happened? Well, despite these adverse times the band did not stop PERFORMING, and that is what makes a good band great. Yikes, the woodwind soli was muffled, probably due to the technical difficulties and...sheesh, too band for the flute solo, too. The musicians of the field had a firm grip on their sound. I like what I am seeing out of the auxiliary. This is a really, really fine show. (I know because I saw them in prelims.) They just seemed a bit "off" in this run.

My Score: 89.50

My Placement: 15th

Lincoln-Way East H.S.

Frankfort, Illinois

Repertoire: "blue cathedral"

Comments: Outstanding flute and soprano sax randomness join as one, and then you get the parade of brass in your face. Sparse intonation issues interfered, as there are lots of long chords that leave them exposed. I appreciate the short, staccato musical diversity from both the trumpets and mellophones. Excellent purposeful clash of orange with black and blue. Ooh, one rifle drop. I like the smooth walk off the field, the leg capes giving them a regal sort of look. There is a lot going on in this show, and though the demand is high they don't quite hit all the marks.

My Score: 87.00

My Placement: 23rd

Kiski Area H.S.

Vandergrift, Pennsylvania

Repertoire: "Imaginarium"

Comments: The childish, joyful antics on the field dissolve into a serious tone in "one, two, three." Excellent rifle toss while on the knees in that maze outline, guard. I love that Gene Wilder "Willy Wonka"

sample, but ooh, saxes, bring those horns down in time. Great drill writing to have the winds enter the pink maze and then pick up the "walls" to bring forth another form. Colorful streamers are ejected smoothly, then another set of shiney string pops out with a synth hit. Fun show!

My Score: 89.00

My Placement: 17th

Cedar Park H.S.

Cedar Park, Texas

Repertoire: "GENIUS," music representing Gustav Mahler, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci. Featuring "Symphony No. 5" by Gustav Mahler, "Symphony No. 1" by Gustav Mahler, "Cloudburst" by Eric Whitacre, "Equus" by Eric Whitacre, "Rhapsody On A Theme of Paganini var. 18" by Sergei Rachmaninoff" and "Feste Romane" by Ottorino Respighi

Comments: The trumpet soloist that initiates this show is flawless! Lofty bell tones, brass! I love how their sound fits the visual package, as lunges have a role. When this group kicks into high gear watch out! You can't argue that these kids aren't exciting--they play well and they move very, very fast. Ha, some of those drill moves are a safety hazard. They let chords ring and ring. The guard does not seem to push boundaries, they are--at least--in the right place at the right time.

My Score: 90.80

My Placement: 11th

Center Grove H.S.

Greenwood, Indiana

Repertoire: "Something Wicked This Way Comes"

Comments: A hooded figure with a walking stick makes his way towards a tree prop, and then a guard girl whisks it away from him until he brings her back and dances with her 'til he is "stuck" on the tree and then tied to it as in some ritualistic maypole dance gone wrong. There are a lot of snare drums on the field, but they are controlled very, very well. Enter the drum feature--pulled off like a World Class WGI show. Their guard is amazing. Some of what they do may seem like smoke and mirrors, but that is the nature of the beast, and they do what they do with SUCH conviction.

My Score: 91.80

My Placement: 9th

Bourbon County H.S.

Paris, Kentucky

Repertoire: "R.E.M."

Comments: The wind players put oomph into their rear field music section, and soon enough they face front to rip your face off with a wall of sound. Oh, did I mention this was one of the SMALLEST bands of the afternoon? They took the reigns on volume control with intense drama. And speaking of drama, these guys go all out with props that seem to robotically move, tarps that fold over to create new landscapes (like heaven vs. hell), and a bed that rolls about. Some forms were rocky, and some of the sounds they made were OVERdone. Ah ha ha! Too good! The main character slams on the alarm clock as he wakes from his sleeping state. Was it all a dream? Nope. Involving show!

My Score: 87.30

My Placement: 22nd

Marian Catholic H.S.

Chicago Heights, Illinois

Repertoire: "On Being Hit On The Head," including: "Are You Experienced" by David Lang, "Symphony

No. 2 Mvt. 1 & 3" by Christopher Rouse; "Deus Ex Machina" by Michael Daugherty and "Blink" by Joel Puckett

Comments: Oh man...immediately I get goose bumps from the documentary, "come with me" style of this band. The narrative is cerebral, yet interesting, and MUSICAL, too! The way the green plumed member gets stuck in the middle of that "floating" tarp...thing...even as it moves, is pure art, and...I'm in awe! Odd time signatures or odd visual steps are just part of what makes this group so great--they carry themselves super well. Never mind the fact the music is absolutely gorgeous and the guard work is nothing short of spectacular. I love it when marching bands make marching band interesting, and yes, mysterious. Yes, you CAN do that on a football field.

My Score: 95.90

My Placement: 1st

Centerville H.S.

Centerville, Ohio

Repertoire: "Every Which Way," including: "Jubal Step" by Wynton Marsalis, "Adjustable Wrench" by Michael Torke, "Shadowplay" from Cirque du Soleil's "Ka" by Rene Dupere and "The Way Up" by Pat Metheny

Comments: A meaningful synthesizer feature sustains while the winds take to the field from the field entrance tunnel. The bouncy sax quartet means business! Love it or hate it, they execute very, very nicely. Hmm, the "lounge" jazz music does not have the bite I want it to have. When you put your band on cruise control for too long, no matter how great the execution, you will have effect issues. For example, at times I thought I was listening to the Centerville Jazz Band of the mid late 1990's which, although wouldn't be a bad thing BACK THEN does not seem have the same impact as, say, Kiski Area's jazz RIGHT NOW. I was looking for those "moments" that could make me say, "Remember when Centerville did [fill in blank]?" I actually liked Centerville's show...a lot. However, I don't think it was finalist material.

My Score: 88.00

My Placement: 19th

Plymouth-Canton Educational Park

Canton, Michigan

Repertoire: "The Source"

Comments: This group gets things set up JUST in time! The drab-grey-to-black stage is there for the winds' taking--more grey-to-black on the uniforms. The amped chorus behind the black curtains disturbs! What a neat, grandiose way to make bigger your guard soloist in the back--wear bright yellow with rays of yellow ribbons extending forth. I'm massaged by the beauty of the choral music and the drill. Okay, those diagonal forms left and right are not perfect, but CLOSE. The winds, clad in bright yellow now, look like they are on clouds when they march, as a HUGE tarp swallows the field.

My Score: 91.50

My Placement: 10th

Lafayette H.S.

Lexington, Kentucky

Repertoire: "CHIME," music from "Bells for Stokowski" by Michael Daugherty, "Tubular Bells" by Mike Oldfield and "Carol of the Bells"

Comments: In sluggish procession the winds take their spot on the field, bells ringing relentlessly. I can tell these kids will be precise by the way they prep. The transition to the saxophone quartet up front takes way too long. (Too much dead air.) This group has a nice, full "college band sound" and, ha ha, for

a sec there I thought I was listening to a half-time show! (No offense intended!) Auxiliary, what are you doing way back there? Your work is fantastic! Bring it up front for us to see up close. As for the rest of the show, sometimes too much of a good thing is not a good thing, d'ya know what I mean?

My Score: 85.80

My Placement: 25th

Broken Arrow H.S.

Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Repertoire: "ZO," inspired by "The Wizard of Oz"

Comments: The rainbow form with flags as the colors is a sight to behold...and hear! The whimsical pit adds so much flavor to this product that I feel like I am in another land. Also, I love that I am not necessarily in "OZ," but a loose take on "OZ"--"ZO"! How could you not get caught up in their story? I saw a member out of step making a quick fix. The bicycle choreography, especially for the sousaphones (yes, sousaphones on bicycles!), was second-to-none. There was some comic relief at the end of their show when one of the winged monkeys (looking uncannily VERY much like the real thing) tried to get in the way of a judge. After Broken Arrow's show and right before Tarpon Spring's show there seemed to be some activity on the field by Eric Martin, CEO of BOA, and a few others. There was a part in Broken Arrow's show where they poured buckets of water--albeit a small portion of it--on guard girls, and some of it may have gotten the turf wet, which would no doubt be a safety hazard for Tarpon Springs as they march an incredibly demanding show. This was but a minor break in the action, and the show went on!

My Score: 95.60

My Placement: 3rd

Tarpon Springs H.S.

Tarpon Springs, Florida

Repertoire: "Paranormal," including: 1. "I Know I Am Not Alone," 2. "Those We Don't Speak Of," 3. "This is No Ordinary Dream," 4. "Those We Can't See" and 5. "This Is The End, Let Her Go In Peace"

Comments: This show is spellbinding! Stairway tarps flood the field, as do backdrops with doors. A yelling and screaming girl in bright yellow hears voices, the voices played by an electronics specialist. One key part of the show has the "victim" in bed, sleeping, when all of a sudden she levitates, and...ha ha! Ridiculous! There are a lot of detractors (for example, one of the tarps seemed to hinder this group as it kept folding over, and at times the electronic drum set seemed off or too overpowering). Talk about an amazing show, though--the most exciting BY FAR.

My Score: 94.80

My Placement: 5th

Avon H.S., IN

Avon, Indiana

Repertoire: "Iconoclash," including: I. "Magnum Opus," II. "Everybody Hurts" and III. "Schadenfreude"

Comments: They mix the old with the new, repertoire-wise. I think I have yet to see a cleaner group. They go all out in sight and sound. How glorious that the mellophone soloist is essentially part of the guard routine, the arms the sabre holder. Ack! Frackety frack-frack, trumpet soloist! That's okay, they still have more in them...the show must go on! The superiority of the percussion and auxiliary is clear, CRYSTAL clear. Dynamite show!

My Score: 95.80

My Placement: 2nd

Lawrence Central H.S.

Indianapolis, Indiana

Repertoire: "Evolucion," featuring the music of Darmon Meader and Astor Piazzolla, including: "Baroque Samba," "Oblivion," "Aconcagua" and "Libertango"

Comments: Swirling paths red cover much of the field. The squat and extension up with the ankles rules, wind players! I am now a fan of their visual program. The music works, but...I hate to say it but they engage me as much as that one jazz band engaged me earlier. Nevertheless, this show has a lot of stellar moments with guard and musician interaction. All right! Some drumline work with stealthy block rotations--nice! Lawrence Central's excellence is defined by execution--smooth, precise, and likeable.

My Score: 92.30

My Placement: 7th

L.D. Bell H.S.

Hurst, Texas

Repertoire: "Honor: we will remember"

Comments: Dancing to patriotic music as good as any is this army green guard unit, and then the clear arc form of wind players breaks into jagged lines, and then out come the orange and yellow flags by the expert handlers. A helicopter sound effect lays low to the foreshadowing tune that gets darker and darker. When this group lays into you with their en masse sound they do not use the synth to beef up the bass (like Avon) and still sound gigantic. (I am not bagging on Avon...I simply think of this as a compelling artistic "choice.") The gravestone props are a layer of tact that expands as the show goes on.

My Score: 95.00

My Placement: 4th

Lake Central H.S.

St. John, Indiana

Repertoire: "Seven"

Comments: The shakos have these reflector things on them that are somewhat distracting (more so than "catching"). Woodwinds, I am impressed with your multi-talented roles as you play your horns while lying down. Excellent start!--very firm and clear roman numeral 7 form to finish the intro. Hmmm, lots of drops auxiliary-wise. The physically demanding moves that take place before the "calendar" set is impressive. Go color change, go, from blue to gold (sashes)! Ugh, THE big rifle moment--botched. This is a band I'd watch out for in the future. They put on a strong show with no reservations. More of this, please!

My Score: 90.00

My Placement: 13th

Winston Churchill H.S.

San Antonio, Texas

Repertoire: "Coliseum"

Comments: A pretty decent rifle catch was caught center stage, right as the winds fire off some big notes. I love the elementary yet appropriate drum patterns, giving you that sense of Ben Hur or Quo Vadis or anything roman decadence--you name it. The guard, in their pseudo-gladiator outfits, really heighten everything, and I'm not just talking about those high ramps, either. My favorite part of their show is when the winds get in two oval forms on top of each other and slowly march, toe-first, in opposing directions. The plain yet effective vocal melody works. I was pleased by this strong showing.

My Score: 87.90

My Placement: 20th

Dobyns-Bennett H.S.

Kingsport, Tennessee

Repertoire: "Into the Light," featuring: "Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night" by Elliot Del Borgo and "Aurora Awakes" by John Mackey

Comments: Trumpets facing backfield play an ominous musical phrase and soon enough the whole field is facing front. Okay, I get it: they play well and march well. Now...what else can they do to draw me in? The morbid covering of the "dead" guard girls with the white, lacey fabrics is quite strong. I see a lot of curvey drill forms out there with 8-to-5 step size, all up front. Their big "wow" factor, it seemed, was their spinning pyramid light reflector props...but really? REALLY? *sigh* Please give these kids a challenge. I think they are more than capable...

My Score: 81.30

My Placement: 31st

Lake Park H.S.

Roselle, Illinois

Repertoire: "Birds of a Feather"

Comments: A piano introduction has the wind players executing choreography in a circle slash pod form pretty well. Guard, those are great feather-like flags. Steady as she goes, winds (particularly trumpets). Ah! Nice peacock fans, guard, and what a great soloist prancing around with a long, flowing tail feather. Wow, fantastic work, auxiliary, yet AGAIN! They push themselves just far enough, and ACHIEVE. (I like that. They play to their strengths, and do not "overextend.") There may be a "tick" here and there in the rest of the program, but they proved to me right here and now that they belonged in semi-finals.

My Score: 83.00

My Placement: 28th

West Bloomfield H.S.

West Bloomfield, Michigan

Repertoire: "On the Edge," including "Raise the Roof" by Michael Daugherty, "Impetuosamente" from "Pampeana No. 3" by Alberto Ginastera and "Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor" by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Comments: They establish the mood from the get-go as the winds and auxiliary look as if they are going to fall off a ledge, and some of them are on high scaffolding, too! Come on now, trombones--project! Guard, so far so good with your technique, now tighten things up a bit with the sameness. Wonderful moment as the sabre girls toss while holding hands and facing different directions. I do not feel the cohesiveness from the wind players, as if tuning was overlooked or...just blend and balance as a whole overlooked. Now THERE'S a nice flourish from the 'bones. Wonderful! This show has its moments, and I applaud the originality.

My Score: 81.50

My Placement: 30th

END OF SEMI-FINALS

At the end of semi-finals competition here are my results. Please note the "*" (asterisk) indicates the bands that are my picks to be amongst the top 12 to advance to finals regardless of class.

*1. 95.90 Marian Catholic H.S., IL

*2. 95.80 Avon H.S., IN

*3. 95.60 Broken Arrow H.S., OK

- *4. 95.00 L.D. Bell H.S., TX
- *5. 94.80 Tarpon Springs H.S., FL
- *6. 94.60 Carmel H.S., IN
- *7. 92.30 Lawrence Central H.S., IN
- *8. 92.00 Stephen F. Austin H.S., TX
- *9. 91.80 Center Grove H.S., IN
- *10. 91.50 Plymouth-Canton Educational Park, MI
- *11. 90.80 Cedar Park H.S., TX
- *12. 90.50 Kennesaw Mountain H.S., GA
- 13. 90.00 Lake Central H.S., IN
- 14. 89.80 Walled Lake Central H.S., MI
- 15. 89.50 Union H.S., OK
- 16. 89.40 Ayala H.S., CA
- 17. 89.00 Kiski Area H.S., PA
- 18. 88.20 William Mason H.S., OH
- 19. 88.00 Centerville H.S., OH
- 20. 87.90 Winston Churchill H.S., TX
- 21. 87.50 Western H.S., IN
- 22. 87.30 Bourbon County H.S., KY
- 23. 87.00 Lincoln-Way East H.S., IL
- 24. 86.80 Adair County H.S., KY
- 25. 85.80 Lafayette H.S., KY
- 26. 85.10 Ben Davis H.S., IN
- 27. 88.30 Northmont H.S., OH
- 28. 83.00 Lake Park H.S., IL
- 29. 82.00 Lafayette H.S., LA
- 30. 81.50 West Bloomfield H.S., MI
- 31. 81.30 Dobyns-Bennett H.S., TN
- 32. 80.10 Morton H.S., IL
- 33. 79.70 Brentwood H.S., TN
- 34. 74.20 Godwin Heights H.S., MI

In Closing: Semi-finals was amazing! Every group that made it in should be proud. For the bands that had finals dreams yet did not achieve--who cares? Hey, I would LOVE to have seen PCEP in finals. Ayala, Mason, Kiski--they ALL would have made great finalists. Nevertheless, there can be ONLY 12, and that--I think--is what helps drive this competition--what will make programs want to say, "Hey, I want to be in finals NEXT YEAR." As for what I think? I wasn't surprised Union was a finalist, and secretly I was hoping they would be (because of what I saw in prelims). Really, I could see no other band in finals except PCEP. Once again, I think the judges were ON IT today. What can we expect for finals? Well, the interesting thing about the Class awards is that you don't know who is truly ahead. It could be Marian Catholic (AA), Tarpon Springs (AAA), or Avon (AAAA)...and with how close things were in AAA and AAAA any of the other bands had a chance, too! I've always thought that BOA GN finals were kinda baloney, though, in that the excellence of the top 12 is sooooo good that to give a band a score and a ranking would almost be a disservice to them. (I guess I can sort of see the reasoning behind why BOA did away with scores and rankings as an "experiment" years ago.) However, where one stands, DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING EXCELLENCE, IS important...I think that, again, goes back to what drives us to want to be better as human beings (individually and as part of a team). In the end, though, this is just one big showcase of killer shows. What a great year for marching band!