

“A chicken could not live on that field when we open up on it.”

~ Porter Alexander, Commander of Longstreet's Artillery battalion
at Fredericksburg, Virginia
December, 1862

-nor will there be any chicken on the field when we're done with it! At least, I don't foresee there being any chickens. Who knows??

As many of you may or may not know our show this year is entitled *“Blue and Gray.”* Many of you may or may not also know that this year marks the 150 anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War (hence, the show). We are extremely fortunate to live quite literally with this history in our back yards. I encourage all of you to take a few minutes and visit a few of the many Civil War sites around the area. Mr. B and I will be organizing several short day trips to a few sites in the area. It's difficult to go anywhere around town and not run into something related to the Civil War. Go find some!

As far as the show is concerned we've been extremely lucky to have become the proud owners of a set of Cooperman rope drums. The edition of these drums will add incredible effect to what we think is already a very powerful and moving show. Because of number of drums and the writing required for these drums the flow of the show will be a little different. There's going to be some switching between the regular line up of the Yamaha drums and our new “old” rope drums. Again, the effect created by the different sounds and the visual impact I think will be immense.

A few things to keep in mind as we lead up to camp:

- The success of our season depends directly on your (“who, me?”.....yes you!)) preparedness. Meaning, if you sit around all summer and don't practice it's going to take us that much longer to “blow the dust off” everyone's chops and get back into a routine.
- You don't need me or Mr. B there to rehearse as a group or section (except for the pit). Section heads can and should call bass, tenor and/or snare sectionals weekly. If I'm available I'll be more than happy to attend.
- Get outside! Go for a walk (how about around a Civil War battlefield?) and get used to the heat. Marching percussion is a very athletic activity and being outside in the 95 degree sun for the first time at camp isn't advisable. Don't be lazy.

Come prepared for camp. “But Matt...what should I bring? Good question. Here’s my answer.

1. An awesome attitude. When people get lost in the wilderness the first thing experts say helps them survive is a positive attitude. Everything else can be figured out.
2. Water...and lots of it.
3. Sunscreen. go buy a new tube.
4. Sensible clothing. Light colors work best.
5. Sunglasses.
6. Your notebook with drill and music
7. Pencils.....I change parts, a lot.
8. Athletic shoes. If you wear flip-flops to marching camp perhaps you should consider a different direction. Just a thought.
9. Lunch. No one is allowed off campus for lunch.

Some of the music for this year’s show is already available on the band web site. Some of it is in the process of being written as we speak. Check back regularly to get the latest scores and get this stuff learned and memorized. Coming into camp with the majority of the show down would give us a huge advantage. Do your best to make it happen.

In closing, I’m extremely excited about this season and you should be too. Between the group of musicians we have, the music and the instruments I think we’re in a great position to turn some heads. I’m looking forward to meeting all the new members and seeing all the returning members again.

Everyone enjoy your summer, break the sticks and pads out and let’s hit the ground running in August.

Thanks,
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