

HBCU Marching Bands-Historically Black College and University Marching Band Programs have a distinct and rich history that has contributed greatly to the current state of the marching arts. Having not marched at a HBCU university myself, I reached out to a cherished colleague and dear friend. Darryl Williams (Prairie View A&M University- the second oldest public institution in Texas, founded in 1876) is the Director of Bands at Manor High School, outside of Austin Texas. I have been the drill designer over the past 3 years for Darryl's program. Not only has he "attended" a HBCU and marched "show band" style as a member, but he runs a competitive "corps style" high school band program! His reality is the exact "truth" that we are looking for to highlight in regards to the universality of ANY style of marching bands and the education being taught across the board to prepare you for the task.

When approached with the subject matter of HBCU's versus competitive style marching bands, Darryl stated that first and foremost, clarification on the historical background of HBCU's must be shared. There are many misunderstandings of the value of HBCU Marching Bands and their institutions. In order to fully understand the contributions of HBCU marching band programs, there has to be a brief, but detailed description of the creation of HBCU institutions:

- **The History**-Historically Black Colleges and Universities were created to offer education and job-training to African American teachers, pastors, and other community members. Historical background information from The National Museum of African American Culture in Washington D.C. presents an accurate description as, "**Historically black colleges and universities**—commonly called "HBCUs"—are defined by the **Higher Education Act of 1965** as, *"...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education]"* Also, the detailed information includes that, "the first colleges for African Americans were established largely through the efforts of black churches with the support of the **American Missionary Association** and the **Freedmen's Bureau**. The **second Morrill Act of 1890** required states—especially former confederate states—to provide land-grants for institutions for black students if admission was not allowed elsewhere. As a result, many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded." In addition, the years of 1861 and 1900 saw the inception of more than 90 HBCUs. The collected history of institutions founded before the Civil War such as Wilberforce University (first African American Private University- 1856)-Wilberforce, Ohio, and Cheyney University (1837)- Cheyney, Pennsylvania. The first HBCU in the south, **Shaw University** (1865), which was founded in Raleigh, North Carolina after the Civil War. Other institutions were founded shortly thereafter, **Hampton University**, **Talladega College**, **Howard University**, and **Morehouse College**.
- Darryl stated that in his search for information, the rich traditions of the HBCU Marching revealed were absolutely astounding, even attending an HBCU himself. He stated that there were "profound" discoveries! For example, an article titled, "History of African American Bands" -Birmingham Times- Birmingham, Alabama presented the following;

- *“Sterling Stuckey, University of California, Riverside, Professor Emeritus, and other historians connect black college band showmanship to influences from 13th-century West Africa and the Egun masqueraders of the Yoruba tribe, who would play musical instruments and dance during funeral processions. Other historians point to black drill sergeants, who introduced both melody and foot-stomping syncopation into their cadence counting, permanently altering the standard, Western marching call.”*

Another influence on the development of the HBCU Marching Band history includes those African-Americans who served in the military during the Civil War and performed and marched in the brass military bands. After the Civil War, World Wars I and II, many African-Americans performed in the military bands and moved to public performances in civilian/ community groups. Many of these skilled musicians would become instructors in the early HBCU music departments; and thus, responsible for the creation of the early HBCU Marching Band Programs! The probable very first HBCU Marching Band was founded at Tuskegee University (The Marching Pipers). As football games at HBCU's evolved, the marching band was usually comprised of members of the R.O.T.C (Reserved Officers' Training Corps), performing military drills demonstrations to music.

The HBCU marching program that had the most influence on the development of present-day marching programs is the Florida A&M University “Marching 100.” In 1946 under the directorship of Dr. William P. Foster, “The 100” performed to “Alexander’s Ragtime Band, and this routine included a dance routine. As time progressed, many other HBCU band programs performed spectacular drills and many adopted the use of dance routines. HBCU programs such as; Grambling State University, Southern University, and Tennessee State University are known for their dance-based performances as well. This is a condensed list as there are several other dynamic HBCU programs. The culture of the HBCU Marching Band Programs has grown into one of the premier organizations on the campuses of these valuable institutions.

- Show Band Style-The term “Show Band” is somewhat eschewed. In regards to the HBCU Marching Band, this terminology is applicable to the distinctive marching style for halftime performances and parades. The marching style is a paradigm shift from corps style, whereas there are the following brief descriptors;
 - High Knee Lift - 90-degree knee lift used in the marching style for performances
 - Toes are pointed at the apex of the knee lift
 - The balls of the feet are driven into the ground (acts as an absorber to not affect tone quality)

-The upper body movement is distinctively varied for each HBCU program- flashy and extremely uniform

-Horn carriage and movement during marching can be somewhat varied- uniformity is mandatory

-Step-size is the inherited 22 ½ inch step - “8 to 5”

-Halftime show music is usually popular music (adaptable to a given audience) - the music of “artistic merit” (traditional marches/fanfares/ special arrangements) can be relegated to bleacher performances or special halftime show features.

-Halftime Dancers/Auxiliaries Features: HBCU bands perform specially arranged music selection for talented and highly-skilled female dance teams or flag teams. Sometimes the dancers serve in multiple roles- flags, twirlers, and dancers.

-“Showtime” occurs through the entirety of a football game- “Stadium Entrance,” “Zero-Quarter,” “Stand-Jams,” “Sectional Battles,” and “Fifth Quarter.” These segmented performances are a “rite of passage” of sorts to determine which band is the best band. A kind of “musical battle”, by “musical-soldiers”, representing their HBCU institution.

- Cross-Cultural Implications/Myths in Teaching- “Music is music!” The tuners do not magically change, articulation is still articulation, and a dotted quarter note is STILL a dotted quarter note. For decades music educators have “labeled” themselves in a multitude of ways, even going as far as to stating that their respective form of expertise in music education is more important than other’s respective form of music. The recent adoption of styles in music is even more cross-cultural in today’s music education society. Stylistic elements are shared, so the term “music of artistic merit” can easily be misconstrued. It is a matter of judgement and limits understanding as to what “art” truly is.