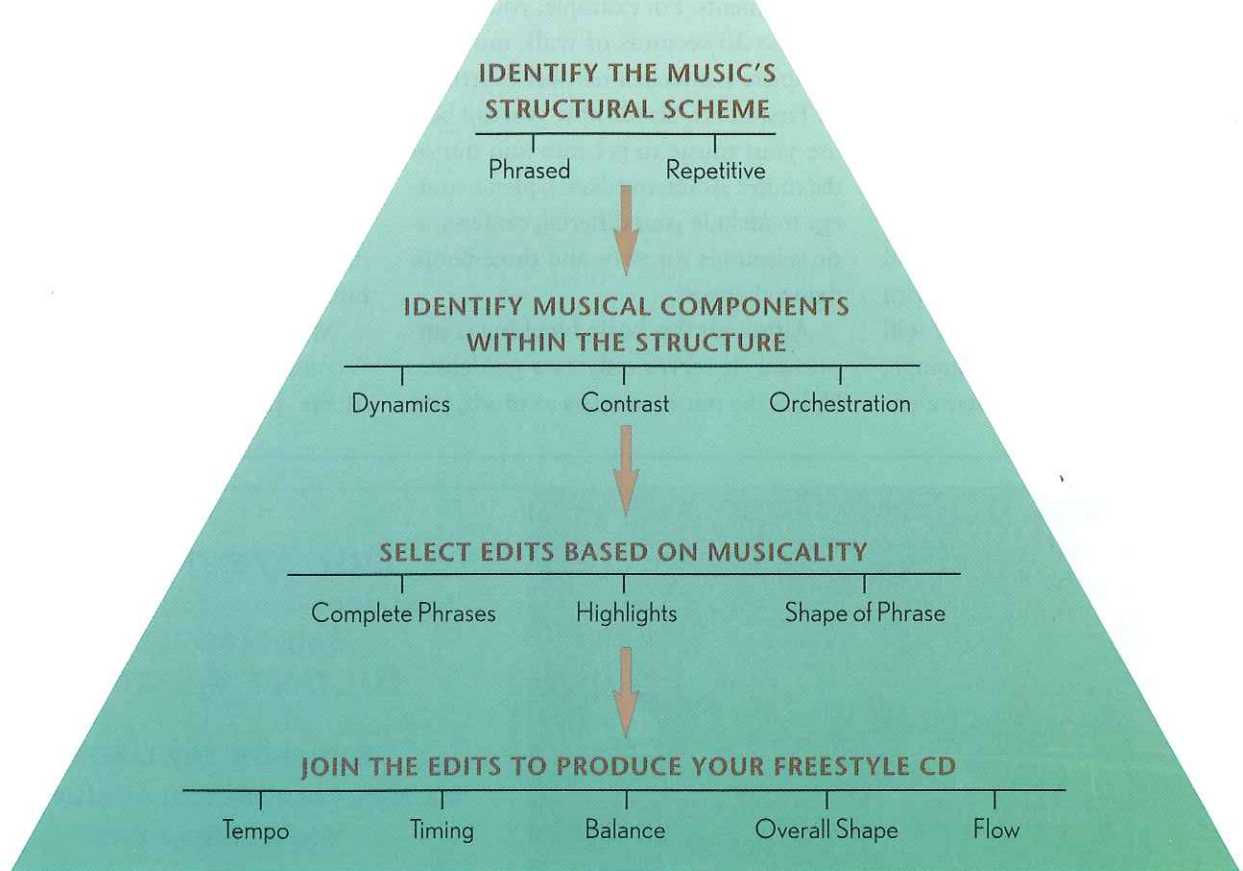


To Turn a Phrase

THE ART OF MUSIC EDITING. THIRD IN A SERIES ON CREATING A MUSICAL FREESTYLE

BY BETH WHEELER HALL



THE MUSIC TREE FOR FREESTYLE EDITORS

The Music Tree classifies the artistic decisions required for music editing. It begins at the top of the tree with a basic analysis of musical structure and branches into identification of musical components, recognition of these components in edit selection, and the final joining of edits to produce the finished freestyle CD.

A WELL-PRODUCED MUSICAL-FREESTYLE CD IS A miniature work of art. Good editing can transform disparate musical segments into a seamless medley, packed with highlights.

The best freestyle CDs make for enjoyable listening, exclusive of the integrated choreography. The next time you watch a freestyle figure-skating routine, close your eyes and just listen. You'll find that you can still appreciate the per-

formance because the edited music is artistic in its own right. Likewise, when you listen to your dressage freestyle CD, the music should make sense and have a certain artistic merit of its own. If not, the fault probably lies in the editing.

Previously in this series, I explained how to determine your horse's tempos (October) and how to find suitable music (November); This month, I'll explore the craft of editing your music selections into a pleasing whole. ➤

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA CARTER

The Challenge

The dressage-music editor faces one problem that isn't a factor for the figure skater or the gymnast: The music's tempo needs to closely match the horse's footfalls, necessitating a change of music to coincide with every transition to a new gait. Unfortunately, this requirement can result in a freestyle CD that is nothing more than a disjointed series of musical fragments. The challenge to the freestyle-music editor is to meet the technical needs of horse and rider while preserving the music's expressive qualities.

Choreographic Considerations

The music-editing process begins with some practical decisions: the first and last impressions you wish to leave with the judge, the order of gaits that will show your horse to his best advantage, the placement of potentially score-en-

hancing movements, and the studied placement of movements (generally in an interior section) that aren't your horse's strong suit.

Start by blocking your choreography in very broad strokes in order to determine which sections of music, carved from the larger whole, best fulfill your needs. Plan the desired length of each musical segment according to your horse's strengths and the mandated time requirements. For example, you'll need at least 30 seconds of walk music to complete a sufficient number of strides. At First Level, decide how you can best use your music to get into and out of the canter. At Intermediate I, plan a strategy to include your differing canter-music selections for two- and three-tempo flying changes.

Although this basic blocking is important, it serves only as a guideline. Unless the music suggests as much, you

may not be able to insist on starting or ending with a particular movement.

As you block the choreography, decide on the number of musical segments, or edits, you wish to include in your freestyle. First Level through Intermediate I freestyles generally work well with three to five pieces of music, excluding the entry music. Grand Prix freestyles might contain four to seven pieces. In some freestyles, a different selection is used for each major edit; in others, each gait section features a section from the same piece of music.

Phrasing Explained

A good music editor starts by listening objectively to the phrasing of the music and allows the phrasing to dictate the editing.

Music can be compared to language. A complete phrase of music has many of the qualities found in a complete

2004 USDF ANNUAL CONVENTION
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY
NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 5



Photos courtesy of Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau, and James Archambeault

DONATE TO THE

2004 USDF YOUTH EXECUTIVE BOARD
**3RD ANNUAL
SILENT AUCTION**

**BENEFITS THE USDF
CONVENTION SCHOLARSHIP FOR
YOUTH MEMBERS**

LAST YEAR THIS PROGRAM RAISED
MORE THAN \$3,500 AND WAS RESPON-
SIBLE FOR SENDING THREE USDF
YOUTH MEMBERS TO CONVENTION.

THESE YOUTH MEMBERS ARE OUR
FUTURE SO DONATE THOSE LIGHTLY
USED OR NEW SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT,
ART, ETC..... AND MAKE OUR FUTURE
BRIGHTER!

CONTACT SHEILA FORBES AT USDF
(858) 271-7879, SFORBES@USDF.ORG

sentence. It is a complete thought. An incomplete musical phrase sounds like a run-on sentence or an unfinished idea. Take our national anthem as an example. The notes that accompany the words "Oh say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave" form a short, incomplete phrase. Add the music with the words "O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave" and you complete the musical phrase.

A musical phrase can also be identified by its "shape." A complete phrase of music swells in the center, like a cresting wave, and falls gently at the end. In our national anthem, the phrase swells with "O'er the land of the free" and then ebbs with "and the home of the brave."

The components of music that contribute to shaping a phrase are the same ones that enhance your choreography. For our purposes, the most essential components are dynamics, contrast, and orchestration.

Dynamics. Dynamics refers to the relative loudness or softness of music. Dynamics can remain constant, change gradually, or change suddenly. Changes in dynamics create highlights in music and therefore in your freestyle choreography. For instance, you could begin an extension with a building dynamic; it would be equally effective to extend to music that suddenly becomes louder.

The use of soft dynamics can be effective as well. You could place extra emphasis on an extension by following a building dynamic with music that is suddenly softer, for example. Softer dynamics also work well for long segments of lateral work.

Contrast. Alternating loud and soft dynamics create contrast. Constantly loud music is not a highlight. You would feel frantic as you rode, as though you needed to extend all the time.

Orchestration. Orchestration is the use of different instruments to create a desired effect. Orchestration contributes to dynamic levels, to contrast, and to "color." In classical music, for example, string instruments add a deep resonance to an orchestra's sound. Other instruments, such as the high-pitched piccolo, are used briefly to add tone color. Brass instruments are frequently employed to create a "wall of sound" as music peaks.

By listening carefully to your music's orchestration, you can select edits featuring instruments that help you color your freestyle with highlights that suit your horse's personality and way of going: resounding and noble, light and sparkling, bold and brassy, striking and rhythmic.

The Fine Points of Music Editing

The number of edits needed in a given freestyle depends in part on the music itself. Use short, complete pieces of music whenever possible. Doing so simplifies the editing process and keeps the musical phrasing intact. Each musical segment should have a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Your edits shouldn't sound as if you pressed the scan button on your car radio.

Using lengthier cuts allows the listener more time to absorb the music and adds cohesion to the overall structure. Too many edits and the freestyle starts to seem like a test superimposed over background music. You will probably discover that many potential segments have a good beginning—an easy place to start the edit—but lack a conclusive phrase ending. An example is Cirque du Soleil, which is repetitive and has indistinct phrasing. Such music forces the editor to resort to fading in and out, which is less satisfying to the listener. However, this technique is easier for the novice than editing a clean

MEET THE EXPERT

Beth Wheeler Hall is a graduate of the USDF "L" Education Program for Judge Training. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in music and is a faculty member at the University of Mobile (AL). She owns and operates Woodwind Studios (www.woodwindstudios.com), a business specializing in the production of music for dressage freestyles.



Beth Wheeler Hall and Cadenza

COURTESY OF BETH WHEELER HALL

cut with distinctive phrasing. If you choose to fade in and out, do so quickly. Keeping an audible beat going for as long as possible within each edit will make the music easier to ride to.

The easiest music to edit has distinct breaks, during which all of the instruments quit playing. Some music features overlapped phrasing; some instruments stop while others continue into the next phrase. Such music is difficult to edit cleanly.

The genre of music that you select affects the complexity of the editing process. Rock and ethnic music tend to

use simple phrasing and are generally easy to edit. The composition of Broadway show tunes is slightly more intricate, but the phrasing can still be short and manageable to edit. Classical and classically composed film music is often very complex, with long phrasing, but offers great emotional range and interest and can be well worth the extra effort to edit.

Test potential edits by playing your music on a stereo and using the pause button where you wish to edit. This technique will give you an idea of how the short, complete edit will sound. You can then record several potential edits, all adjusted for tempo if needed, and listen to how they sound out of context of the original pieces.

Freestyle entry music is generally easy to record because many riders like to insert a period of silence for the halt and salute. Sometimes, however, the entry is connected to a longer segment

that is used as the first piece in the freestyle. If you choose this approach, then it makes better musical sense to leave the phrasing intact. You might also find that the music has more dramatic impact without those seconds of silence, or with only a brief silence. If

Entry music can have more dramatic impact without silence for the halt and salute.

you do use a break in the music for the halt, three seconds is usually sufficient.

Most dressage freestyles conclude with a big finish—a building dynamic with a strong exclamation point at the end. However, don't overlook the possibilities inherent in a finale that comes to rest softly in your final halt. Quieter

music leaves the judge and spectators holding their collective breath. One caveat: If you plan to use soft sections of music, keep real-life horse-show conditions in mind so that the sound is not lost in windy weather or muffled if played over a poor sound system.

Balance Is Key

Balance is perhaps the most important consideration in editing music for freestyles. The music has to be balanced for phrasing, timing of segments, and musicality—that is, to show a pleasing blend of dynamics, contrast, and orchestration. The music should also complement your choreography. The music shouldn't fade into the background, but neither should it overwhelm your horse or the movements. Striking a perfect balance between the artistic and the technical sides of the score sheet forms the basis for a great freestyle. ▲

Go for Baroque!



Exaustivo
(Xuopo x Que Fada)

*First time
offered in the US
for Breeding*

Fresh, cooled semen

Imported High School trained Lusitano stallion from the Portuguese Royal Stables "Alter Real"
USDF/FEI competitor consistently scores 8's on extended gaits

Shangrila Farm

Citra, Florida

Carolyn & Robert Crum - Owners (352)591-6088

Danielle Akin - Manager/Trainer (352)552-6883

1.800.690.PADS

seamsright.com

SEAMS RIGHT SADDLE PADS
P.O. Box 550 Jefferson, MD 21755
1.800.690.7237 1.301.473.4477