

LotPatrol.com

Jason Trigg

Cofounder of I-2 Indoor
Percussion Ensemble

1st Place finish in 1990 DCI
I&E with **The Cavaliers**

I2, founded by yourself and Jim Bailey, what lead to the creation of the organization?

Jim and I saw that there was a huge talent base of students and staff here in Indianapolis. We also had contacts at equipment manufacturers that believed in the potential for an independent ensemble in our area and in our ability to build a successful program here. Also, we had worked together designing shows at New Palestine for several years and felt this was a great opportunity to spread our wings creatively at a higher level.

I2, what does it stand for?

I-2 stands for "Indianapolis Independent" Percussion Ensemble, founded in 2005, the first Independent Percussion Ensemble based in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In your first year how were you sure you would have members? How do you convince people to come to your organization over driving to Columbus? Was this something that was looked at prior to the groups inception or was it hoping for the idea of 'if we build it they will come?'

We had no idea how many members we would have. We figured that the kids from our "home" programs would be on board (New Palestine, Pike, Ben Davis, etc), but we wondered if the kids we didn't know would be attracted to the opportunity to extend their indoor experience post-high school by joining I-2. As it turned out, the results were mixed. We got lots of people from outside of Indianapolis including people from Kentucky and Illinois, but not a lot of people from our home city. We had a guy from Northern Illinois University marching next to a guy from the University of Kentucky. We were glad to have them because they were great guys, but it seemed silly that with all of the marching arts talent in Indianapolis that so many of our people came from so far away. Where were the Avon and Center Grove and Carmel and Lawrence Central and Franklin Central kids??? We had a few of them, but we found out that kids from programs like that

need the promise of a great experience to feel like they are not ending their indoor careers on a down note by joining some new, strange ensemble. I think it just took a year of competition to prove we can provide a great experience for those graduating from great Indianapolis high school programs.

In 2005 I2 finished with an 84.00, did this meet your expectations; were you pleased with the results?

To be honest, you could be lying to me about what we scored and I wouldn't know it. After finals in 2005, the battles we fought and won were all I could remember. Starting an independent organization from the ground floor and making it successful in its first year while laying a firm groundwork for the success of future ensembles is an incredible task. You are taking a group of instructors who has never worked together before, a group of kids who, for the most part, have never marched indoor before, using a bunch of equipment that just arrived, rehearsing in a building that has never hosted an independent group, and doing all this with no independent experience from anyone running the group from the directors to the techs.

That's not to say we didn't have competitive goals at the beginning of the season. Coming out in Open Class, our competitive goal was to master our show such that we would have success in that class. We finished half the season in Open Class with great success until we got moved to World Class. At that point we felt great pride that this newborn organization had met its two or three year goal of becoming a World Class line, and we did it in its first season. Of course we went on to make World Class Finals, but simply being considered a strong enough program to achieve World Class status in our first year was the payoff of our season.

Being a new ensemble how did you ensure the staff and members would be able to jump right into World class and survive? It seems that when other groups have tried this in the past they are not quite as fortunate or don't attempt such a strong class in their early years.

Prior to the season we had done our homework and saw that World Class was quite a lofty goal, especially for a new organization. Nonetheless, we didn't want to write under or over our Members' abilities simply to justify a particular class of competition. We analyzed our talent and wrote accordingly, ultimately designing a show that bordered Open/World Class and entered the season in Open Class. We honestly thought that being promoted at the Dayton Regional was a real possibility. When it didn't happen, we said "Okay then, I guess WGI considers us an Open Class ensemble" and we strove to be the best Open Class ensemble we could be. We were undefeated in Open Class in a young season when we were promoted to World Class at the Indy Regional. It kind of blindsided us since no one even hinted at the move prior to that. Still, we saw it as the end of a long road (creating this organization and bringing it to World Class status)

and the beginning of an even longer one (the journey up the ranks of World Class ensembles).

What are your goals for this season? What can we expect to see?

Last season had many goals. We are very focused on the long term, so most of our goals were organizational goals, not ensemble goals. We knew that in order for I-2 to survive and grow, we needed to build an organization to support that growth. So it was a give-and-take between being competitive now and being competitive down the road. For example, we knew that the rock and roll show wasn't the most competitive vehicle, but we knew that the volume and colors and excitement of that kind of show would attract the attention of the community and potential members. We knew fielding 9 snares, 5 tenors, 6 basses, and 5 cymbals probably wasn't the most competitive approach to our indoor aspirations, but we knew it would fuel the imaginations of all the local guys who were unsure whether they wanted to be a part of this new ensemble. We took all kinds of risks trying to balance our competitive complexion with an excitement for the future of the ensemble. In the end, we made World Class finals and we generated a great vibe for the organization. I think we balanced it perfectly.

This season look for a much different group. We are shedding the excess pounds in favor of a leaner, tighter ensemble. We are designing a show not to be flashy, but to be competitive. Our 2006 concept, **cHaOs ThEoRy**, is one that really fits the mold of an explosive World Class show. It is nice knowing your talent level and your competitive class before actually writing the show! The organization is more mature now, so we feel we can implement creative and structural ideas as we see fit instead of just trying to survive. This is good timing because PIW this year is going to be absolutely off the hook.

Our goals for this season are still organizationally based. We want to find the base of members that will be a part of this organization for years to come. We want to be less of a hodge-podge group and more of an ensemble that represents the fantastic talent base that Indiana offers. And we want to continue to develop our identity as an ensemble.

WGI having less rehearsal time than a drum corps, does this affect the type of person you chose for your membership?

Good people are good people. You may say that people that need more "work" may have less of a shot at a winter line because of the timetable, but all in all we have the confidence in our organization and our staff to be able to take talent and conform it to our schedule.

Are there other aspects that are greatly affected by the schedule?

There seems to be more of a sense of urgency to the indoor activity, especially in an independent group. In the summer/fall, you play a show, get your tapes, and implement a game plan a couple days later at rehearsal. In indoor, depending on your schedule, you get tapes, devise a plan, wait until Friday night, and you have that evening and a short rehearsal on Saturday to implement your changes before you have to load up and go to the next show. In that aspect, indoor is a completely different game than outdoor.

At what point do you change or cut a piece of music that just isn't working? Would the time from the music is introduced to when it is changed be greater if the season were longer or more rehearsal time was feasible?

For us, changes happen from the time the music is written until we feel that the audio product is what it needs to for us to be successful. That could be, and has been, up until the week of WGI Championships. A longer season would absolutely allow more time to assess and reassess the performance of the audio or visual product, but I am happy with the length of the season as it is.

There are a lot of big name guys who marched right around 89-93, 94 or 95, (yourself, Jeff Queen, Mike McIntosh, J.J. Pipitone, Nick Angelis, Lee Rudnicki). From your experience is there anything different with drum corps during those years from drum corps now that created this 'Elite Class?'

Sure, drum corps changes constantly. I think the changes are much more subtle nowadays as opposed to back in those days. Take Cavaliers 1980 vs. 1990, then take Cavaliers 1990 vs. 2000. Changes are obvious in both comparisons, but the activity really transformed itself in the first example, while the second example shows more of a *refinement* of the activity in general. As far as an "Elite Class," what you are seeing is the maturation of the guys who marched back in the day, guys who decided to stick with marching percussion as educators and designers, guys who were smart enough and driven enough and creative enough to make a name for themselves. Young guys today look to us as we once looked to Scott Johnson, Tom Float, Ralph Hardimon, Leif Marwede, Brad Halls, and all those other guys who were big in the 60's, 70's and early 80's, many of whom are still big names in the activity. I know that today it seems that drum corps isn't spawning the creative talent that it did in that period, but ten years from now the list will change to the names of guys who marched in 2000 and 2005 and they will be the big players in the activity. Jim Bailey will be designing championship drum corps shows and some kid will take his place as a top 12 caption head. Jeff Queen will go on to produce some fantastic ensembles and some new kid will come to be known as the "greatest snare player of all time." It will all come back around.

In 1990 you performed the winning quad solo with the Cavaliers (97.00, beating Murray Gusseck...and of course others:) was this the only year you performed a solo?

In 1987 and 1988 I marched a division two corps (termed A-90 back then) called Northern Aurora. Since the 90's that group dissolved and reformed as a fantastic indoor ensemble called Northcoast Academy. I was 17 years old in my second year with that group and I had some segments of licks that I wanted to piece together into a solo. I didn't really understand how to compose an entertaining and readable piece of music, so I just kind of went out there and played. I performed at, like, seven in the morning and I believe most of my notes ended up on the rims. I don't remember what I placed, but it wasn't high. But it was a fun experience and I learned a lot by watching all the other soloists and how their performances were crafted. It helped me prepare my solo when I was in Cavaliers.

Why not a solo in 89?

I wasn't really interested in doing a solo in 89. I wanted to make sure I was handling my business with the Cavaliers, so I kept focused on that show.

Were you expecting to do so well with the solo?

I wasn't expecting to win in 1990. I didn't believe I had the best hands, so I thought that I might place at best. When I saw that two guys from my line, Pat McGowan (the famous Bunco) and Marc Churchill, were third and tied for first with Murray, I thought that I might not make top 3. That was fine with me. I was 19 years old, a little bit cocky, and I just wanted to go out and really perform the snot out of my solo. When I won, it was kind of the end of a journey because in the same week I had become a true Cavalier (it was my second season in Green), won individuals, and performed the show of my life at DCI finals that Saturday with 127 of my brothers. I was very lucky and still feel humbled by the experience.

What should be included in a winning solo? Is it all about the 'rammishness' of drumming or is it a balance of musicality and difficulty?

I want to see a balance. I have seen a thousand solos that are all ram and no finesse. Rare is the opposite. This is all subjective of course, but I want to see skills displayed in a way that is fun to watch and entertaining from top to bottom. Pacing is really key. For example, I hate movies that are all gunfire and car chases and kung-fu fights from front to back. I would rather see the movie "Heat" with Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino where the plot and character development lead you to a tense moment in the middle of the city where the crooks try to rob the bank and the most awesome gunfight occurs. You don't write a serious movie or even a drum corps show that is all "ram," why would you write a solo that way?

Is there a difference in what wins I&E today vs. when you marched?

It depends on the adjudicator of course, but there were so many innovations from when I marched to now (playing with bats or rakes, introducing storyline, alternative implements, different timbres, etc) I really think that it is more difficult to come up with a twist. I'm not from the "it's all been done before" crowd, but I feel that there are so many solos out there that sound the same, the one that finds a different groove or introduces a new concept is the one that is going to catch my attention.

Will WGI ever be on ESPN2?

Sure it will. If Dodgeball can be on the "Ocho," why not? I think the indoor activity is much more accessible than the outdoor activity, especially for that kind of audience. Indoor is cool because it is a more intimate setting, the performers are more visible, and it is all percussion so it is easy to get into.

With WGI's announcement that finals will be held in Dayton until 2009 I2 won't have far to travel. Do you feel this is fair to other ensembles that have to travel great distances (or who don't go to finals because of the travel)?

I don't think it is fair, but you also have to understand why WGI decided to pursue this. The ensembles that attended WGI San Diego in 2004 were not treated very well. The venue itself left a lot to be desired. As an activity, indoor is fighting for respect and WGI is aware that Dayton loves to host us. While the facilities in Dayton aren't perfect (no indoor warm-up in case of rain, for example), the performance area is great, the hotels and surrounding schools love to have us, and it is close to WGI headquarters. Remember that WGI is a business and they have to make business decisions. I respect that they farmed out Nationals to Milwaukee and San Diego over the past few years, but I understand why they have to limit those excursions.

Travel aside, is it fair to host finals in one city repeatedly?

Fair, no. Best for the activity for the time being, it may well be.