



MSU SPARTAN MARCHING BAND

The Art of the March: Cues from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War"

By Mary Platt

Get ready for a halftime show that's completely different from any that have gone before it. Today, in an unprecedented collaboration between music, athletics and art, the Spartan Marching Band will perform its largest, most complex halftime show ever – in a presentation that's really more akin to an Olympics stadium spectacular. In part that's because today's multi-media show was designed by Jennifer Wen Ma, the New York- and Beijing-based artist who led the creative team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening and closing ceremonies.

The show features more than 600 performers, including the 300 Spartan Band members, as well as smoke effects, a dragon and many Chinese instruments. In addition, 1,500 audience members on the east side of Spartan Stadium will be cued for card stunts, forming "paintings" by Ma that will also be shown on the jumbotron. Ma's inspiration for this show was the ancient Chinese treatise "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu – its military focus "aligns with the life of a Spartan," Ma says.

The music, rhythm and movements on the field are all derived from Chinese folk and classical scores, in five segments, including composer Tan Dun's acclaimed music from the movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon."

All musical selections were arranged for the Spartan Band by Robert W. Smith, director of bands at Troy University. The percussion arrangements are by Jon Weber and Steve Wulff, and the drill design is by Spartan Band Director John T. Madden. Color guard design is by Peter Eichler. The cello soloist is Suren Bagratuni, the flute solo is by Richard Sherman, and the choral conductor is David Rayl.

MSU's Cultural Engagement Council is sponsoring this performance in celebration of MSU's 18-month focus on "The China Experience: An MSU Exploration of Arts and Culture," which has been marked throughout the university in various distinctive ways. In addition, 2015 is the 10th anniversary of MSU's China Initiative, aimed at expanding the university's academic and research presence and programs in China.

The Spartan Marching Band is proud to participate and perform in this massive, unique alliance that will surely set a precedent in the world of collegiate marching bands.

Partners in this project are the Alumni Association, Asian Studies Center, Athletics, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Arts and Letters, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Music, College of Natural Sciences, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Eli Broad College of Business, Office for International Students and Scholars, and Residential and Hospitality Services.

You can follow the Spartan Marching Band's season and adventures on website, SpartanBand.net, at www.facebook.com/spartanmarchingband, on Twitter @MSUMarchingBand, and on their YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/SpartanMarchingBand.

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