

Precision Marching Bands

There's a common puzzle variant called "Marching Bands," which I've employed in the past. In order to change things up, I've decided to make this one a precision marching band puzzle.

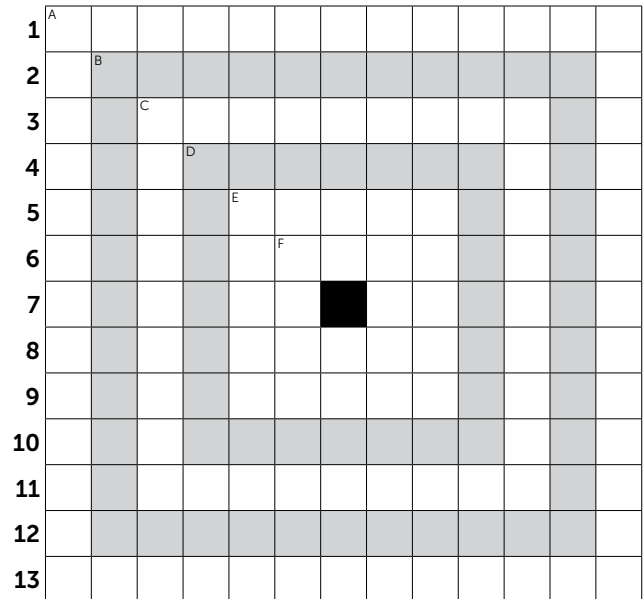
The only band I know of that uses "precision" in its name is the Yale Precision Marching Band. You might conjure up visions of the YPMB as a well-organized, clockwork-like group, reminiscent of the Rockettes or those incredible displays at the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games. And you would be wrong. According to Wikipedia, the YPMB is a "scatter band" or a "scramble band ... as distinct from university marching bands that emphasize precise movements and geometric field formations." The name scramble band "comes from the way in which the band moves between formations—members run to each form without using a prescribed path."

Why would a group that runs without using a "prescribed" path use "precision" in its name? Ah, I'm not sure, but I think it has to do with irony, saying one thing and meaning another. Cryptic puzzles are all about saying one thing and meaning another, so a "Precision Marching Band" puzzle works on a whole lot of levels.

As in a regular marching band puzzle, the words march around the grid in two ways. Each Row contains two words (one has three because of a two-word answer, see below), the lengths of which you must determine. Row 7 has a blank space, which dictates how its two words split. The Bands are alternately shaded and unshaded, and they will be filled in clockwise, starting from the lettered squares. You will also have to determine the beginnings and endings of these words.

In a precision marching band puzzle (or in this one, at least), some of the entries—approximately half—read in reverse. Some of the Row answers will go from right to left; some of the Band answers will read counterclockwise (aka, widdershins).

For example, Band A will consist of eight words (a through h) starting in square A and marching around, sometimes backwards, the perimeter of the grid.



All clues are given in order. When the puzzle is completed, each square in the grid will have been used twice, once for a row word and once for a band word.

The diagram answers are straightforward. There are two proper nouns, one foreign word, one slang word, one archaic word, and one (or maybe two) unusual words. Everything else is playable in Scrabble. Ignore punctuation, which is designed to confuse.

Thanks to Eric Klis, Bob Fink, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.

Rows

- 1. a. Forget Econ, Don—it's dismal
- b. Held by Iran: some money for the release of hostages
- 2. a. Vulcan pediatrician
- b. Hysterical, anti-male smear
- 3. a. Foaming at the mouth starts to recur after bodily injury develops
- b. Principles of warped steelmen
- 4. a. Witness many parts of France on the way back
- b. Ah, rancid liquid breeds daddy longlegs, maybe

- 5. a. Probiotic inoculation carrying infectious agent
- b. Most ancient nobleman and one excellent second tenor
- 6. a. Donuts I found at the decorative gateway of a Shinto temple
- b. The first and second person to be true to almond liqueur
- 7. a. Uttered in an earlier period!
- b. Utensil versatility featuring spoons, forks, and knives
- 8. a. Mafia boss in California turned on a tip
- b. Vamoose—Marc's coming back

- 9. a. Increase cheer picking up a little burst of energy
- b. Do butts potentially lead to uncertainties?
- 10. a. Boston plot!
- b. Crook dangles somewhat
- 11. a. Show contempt for the subway at times with a stiletto, maybe (*two words*)
- b. Ordering lumbermen some beer
- 12. a. Reactionary circle in the UK—yes
- b. Asked for in advance long ago by cook taking up clairvoyance

13. a. Work unit has contributed to merger
 b. Engineer getting some color on Long Island and swimming, ultimately, at complex

Band A

- a. Hairstyle worn by prison unit?
 b. Word to the wise: rewind Nemo
 c. Sled ran amok and got messy
 d. One who gets blitzed in second overtime
 e. Promotions for athletic directors
 f. Dialing error offers delay
 g. Ignatius embraces Midge
 h. Re-edited Glee encore with famed soul singer
 i. Customers at a greasy spoon rinsed off

Band B

- a. Purloin Pocohontas's casket heartlessly
 b. Revolutionary militias can become crude
 c. Primarily, a keen model is a numbers game
 d. Collapse finally with a Nook
 e. Brainier but hardly more correct
 f. Breakfast with tea crackers
 g. I to a drunk: just a little

Band C

- a. No stuffing in chicken and turkey tenders
 b. A couple of Tennessee and Nebraska men initially take house in the slums
 c. After Ludmilla's debut, wig returned by boy in transition
 d. Lassie on trail going the wrong way
 e. Assassin's niche

- f. Scion said headroom is afforded in the wild blue yonder

Band D

- a. Peter was a great one for shooting rats
 b. Renovating a vile beach is not so crazy
 c. Ma's as upset as Simon Legree
 d. Peak force as an alternative

Band E

- a. Nacre but somehow paler
 b. Roentgen's group connected with man on the moon
 c. In order to avoid infinitesimally losing anything at first
 d. A tuft of hair coming from wayward teat

Band F

- a. Look for gold or a male adult's overview

Previous Issue's Puzzle—12534 or 15234

Across

1. SINGULAR—Reversal of RANIS ("some princesses") around LUG ("tote")
 8. PARE—Homophone of PAIR ("a couple")
 9. ILEUM—Anagram of "milieu" removing I
 10. FERNANDO—FE ("iron") + RN ("Nurse") + AND ("Also") + O ("head of orthopedics")
 12. TILT—TIT ("Little bird") around L ("large")
 14. EASE—Homophone of E's, from "Effort's," as in "E for effort"
 15. READAPTS—READ ("to evaluate") + APTS ("short-term rental units")
 17. ASPIC—Inside "Was Picasso"
 18. MALE—Homophone of MAIL ("packages")
 19. ERECTION—Anagram of "into Cree")

Down

1. STIFLE—reversal of EL ("The man in Havana") + FITS ("works")
 2. IDLE—Homophone of IDOL ("heartthrob")

3. GRUNGE—RUN ("Large numbers of fish in motion") inside EGG ("roe on the way up")
 4. LAGNIAPPE—Anagram of "appealing"
 5. ARIDLY—A + RID ("purge") + L ("left") + Y ("Nancy ultimately")
 6. REDO—Anagram of "or Ed"
 7. PERUSABLE—Anagram of "superb ale"
 11. CAESAR—CAR ("Buggy") around SEA ("huge amount") reversed
 12. TEA SET—TEASE ("Siren") + T ("blast at the conclusion")
 13. TUSCAN—T ("True") + US ("we objectively") + CAN
 15. ROME—Anagram of "More"
 16. TITO—Inside "Antitoxin's")

Fives from fours

ROMEO—First letters of "reminisce over many erotic opportunities"
 CREDO—Anagram of "décor"
 PARSE—Anagram of "pears"
 MAPLE—ELM ("tree") around PA ("Dad") reversed
 ERASE—Inside "Drummer as egomaniac"

The five letters needed for the final step are O from ROMEO/ROME, C from CREDO/REDO, S from PARSE/PARSE, P from MAPLE/MALE, and R from ERASE/EASE. Putting these letters in the right order yields CROPS (12534) and CORPS (15234).

S	I	N	G	U	L	A	R
T	D	P	R	P	A	R	E
I	L	E	U	M	G	I	D
F	E	R	N	A	N	D	O
L	C	U	G	T	I	L	T
E	A	S	E	E	A	Y	U
R	E	A	D	A	P	T	S
O	S	B	A	S	P	I	C
M	A	L	E	E	E	T	A
E	R	E	C	T	I	O	N

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