

TITLE: What's the Range of a Viola?

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AUTHOR: Hilton Kean Jones

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WHAT'S THE RANGE OF A VIOLA?

I was the video producer¹ filming the Boston Pops for the Super Bowl XXXVI Pregame Show in New Orleans². The video crew knew nothing about music, and I knew nothing about football. We definitely had a problem.

This problem was compounded: for the first 20 minutes of the Boston Pops' appearance there was to be no rehearsal, no opportunity for planning shots, there were no lyrics to associate shots to (it was instrumental music), and none of the camera crew had even heard the tracks.

¹ All titles in this article, such as producer, line-producer, director, and production supervisor, are from a sports video perspective; other disciplines may have different terms and definitions.

² For the past ten years, Hilton Jones (<http://home1.gte.net/hkjones/>) has worked, primarily as music director, for Bob Best, President of Best Productions, executive producer of the Super Bowl Pregame Show since Super Bowl XVIII. This past year, video production was added to Mr. Jones' pregame responsibilities. CDs of his compositions and performances are available at <http://www.bacchanalbay.com>.

Please understand, all the camera crew are expert sports people. They are people who can predict the parabolic curve of a thrown ball and the erratic maneuvers of its intended receiver and magically appear at the right point in space and time to cover the intersection of trajectories--player and pigskin. But, amid the forest of the 90 musicians comprising the Boston Pops, even if one had plenty of rehearsal time and the crew consisted entirely of seasoned fine arts program specialists, it would still be tough to find the right musical soloist at just the right moment with split second timing. The screen cannot show a flutist sitting idle while the ear hears a trumpet. We needed a solution and we needed it quick.

Fortunately, our brilliant young line producer, Jamey Landry³, had just the answer. Jamey admitted freely that he and his crew knew nothing about music, but he had a plan.

At our first camera crew rehearsal, Jamey huddled his group together and said, "Now, we're going to cover this just like we were covering a zone defense." The crew was quick to respond to his concept. One cameraman, who'd been

³ Jamey was assigned to work with me by Louisiana Superdome production supervisor, Stephen Fink. A commercial, produced by Jamey, aired at the Super Bowl to rave reviews; check it out at <http://www.jameylandry.com>.

assigned the zone containing the conductor, Keith Lockhart, said, "So...he's sort of like the quarterback?"

Not knowing "zone defense" from "man-on-man" coverage, I needed to clarify for myself that, in zone defense, each cameraman is assigned a region of the field to cover, regardless of what players enter or leave that zone, regardless of where the main "action" is on the field. It is the application of this sports concept to an artistic event that allowed us to have good shots for the program most of the time.

As I described what the various orchestral sections were, where these sections were seated, and what the instruments looked like within that section, they developed the "zones" they would cover: strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. These were apportioned over two studio cameras and three handheld cameras. One of the studio cameras was at a wonderfully oblique angle, up about 45 degrees from the intersection of the end zone and the press box sideline; the other was halfway up the stands at the 50-yard line. The three hand-held cameras were left, center, and right of the stage front.

Since one camera covered the brass, conductor and full orchestra (the diagonal shot), another the percussion, woodwinds and strings (high mid-field shot), another the conductor and strings (stage right), another the cellos and woodwinds (center stage), and the last the basses, brass and percussion (stage left), someone always was covering the action! Because zones overlapped, we often had a choice of angles for that action. The overlap in zone coverage is used in football for secondary instant replay options similar to what we did for the Boston Pops shoot.

Our responsibility was to create the program for the Superdome's Mitsubishi Diamondvision video board⁴, simultaneously recording on "iso" tapes (individual tapes of each camera's continuous coverage) the footage I use in post-production to make the Pregame Show documentary video. Our same camera crew continued on shooting the football game and the postgame show. All total, this talented crew, which also covers the Saints and other dome events such as Monster Trucks and Supercross, was on line continuously from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Super Bowl Sunday.

At the performance (and what limited rehearsals there were for other selections in the show) I read from the full

⁴ Paul Kalil, of BSN Productions, is video board operation & production producer for the Super Bowl

orchestral scores, cueing Jamey about four measures (approximately 8 seconds) in advance of the shots he in turn called to the director, Brad Grundmeyer.

I limited my cues to just the basic "zones" that Jamey's crew had learned to identify, with the exception of a couple key solo instruments: the timpani, the trumpet, and the piccolos. Yes, plural: piccolos. The Boston Pops did Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever," with three piccolos standing, playing the famous obbligato in unison⁵.

On Super Bowl Sunday, February 3, 2002, New Orleans, we proved countless preachers, teachers, and politicians correct: sports metaphors do work!

By the way...the range of a viola is 30 yards, if you kick it real hard.

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⁵ Our complete shoot of the Super Bowl XXXVI Pregame Show, "Freedom," included--in addition to the 20 minute Boston Pops concert--Barry Manilow's song Let Freedom Ring, with Barry joined by Yolanda Adams, James Ingram, Patti LaBelle and Wynonna, plus 500 dancers and chorus members; Paul McCartney and his band performing his song Freedom; Aaron Copland's Lincoln Portrait, performed by the Boston Pops under the baton of conductor, Keith Lockhart, filmed by NFL films, and narrated by America's living former Presidents and former First Lady Nancy Reagan; America the Beautiful, with Mary J. Blige, Marc Anthony, and the Boston Pops, and The Star Spangled Banner, featuring Mariah Carey and the Boston Pops.

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