

A Conducting Flow Chart: Creating Meaningful and Efficient Gesture

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Gesture vs. Pattern

Pattern is scaffolding which is able to communicate “when” (and sometimes “what”); gesture goes further to show us “how.”

It is always your fault

Accepting that everything that happens (both good and bad) in a rehearsal is your fault, is humbling, empowering, and necessary.

What is now possible?

Rather than considering what is “wrong,” ask yourself “What is now possible?”

Beyond Inner Hearing

Inner hearing is the ability to hear music for which none is present. Audiation goes beyond this and implies technique; it activates motor neurons.

Posture is a bad word

Consider “posture” as a physical preparation for the sound we want to make. This is akin to the “ready position” in sports. While some body alignments may be more efficient for certain sounds, they are also not required or even desirable for all performances.

Proprioception

Proprioception is the ability to sense the position and movement of one’s own body, and is how we understand our physical place in the world.

Motor Resonance

We are able to understand the actions and intentions of others through motor resonance. When we observe others in action, neurons in our brains produce similar activity to what would be observed if we completed the actions ourselves.

Connecting Sound and Sensation

Creating physical gesture that matches the sounds we are making allows singers to connect sound and sensation, aiding in proprioceptive awareness and enhancing empathy and motor resonance.

Words are Inefficient

While language and metaphor can both be useful tools, words are largely inefficient in communicating musical ideas because they leave far too much to individual interpretation.

Score Study

Score study requires that a conductor knows what they want, and how to achieve it. Score study is about creating a roadmap of techniques and skills required for success in a given piece of music.

Sound Ideal

Your sound ideal is informed by a variety of things: choirs you listen to, performance practice for a given piece, the age and experience of your choir, etc. It will likely change over time as you develop skills as a listener and as a conductor.

Audiation

Audiation goes beyond inner hearing to suggest technique. It is informed by score study and your sound ideal. Audiation is communicated to the choir through gesture. It is mediated by empathy.

Pattern

Conducting pattern is an agreed upon structure for displaying the rhythmic organization in a piece. Alone, it is good at communicating **when** things happen, but is only truly effective when it is able to communicate **how**.

Gesture

Gesture is the physical manifestation of audiation combined with pattern. It communicates not just **when** things happen, or **what** to do, but also suggests technique. Gesture is strengthened through mirroring and motor resonance. It is achieved through proprioception and the ability to link sound and sensation. Conductors should regularly ask singers to "Conduct with Me".

Face

Gesture (and singing/playing) begins with Face. This includes facial expression and also implies posture.

Space

Different sounds require different space. This may include vowels, resonating space, etc.

Breath

One must breathe for the sound they want to make. Not all pitches or all styles require the same type of breath.

Sound

Sound is a result of everything that comes before it - everything in music is preparatory. If you do not get the sound you want, this is only a symptom, the problem lies not in the sound, but somewhere earlier in the process.

"Posture"

Posture is not a fixed set of rules, rather it is a physical preparation which allows for efficiency in achieving the sound ideal. It is fluid and flexible related to style and setting.

Conduct With Me