

YOUR GUIDE TO BASIC CONDUCTING

Frank K. Hukporti

 Noyam

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Security Service Bands in Ghana, namely Police Band, Prisons Band, Fire Band, Immigration Band, Customs Band, Air Force Band, Navy Band, Army Band and Brigade Bands.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No successful accomplishment can be a result of an individual's effort since many people have played significant roles in my efforts to complete this project, which has been dormant for the past eight years. My thanks go to:

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Thanks to my students at the Music Department of the University of Ghana, Legon, for their continuous desire for me to teach them basic conducting skills as part of my extracurricular activities and a contribution to the department. I am very grateful to Dr. Benjamin Amakye-Boateng, a Senior lecturer at the music department at Legon, who proof read the entire book and gave out his suggestions. My dear wife Mrs. Bernice Mensah-Hukporti made several calls to check the progress of this work.

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FOREWORD

The art of conducting is mostly perceived as an instinctive phenomenon that requires little or no training. To most people, having dreams of holding a baton, mounting a podium and illustrating the music with the drama of his or her gestures is enough to make a good conductor. The question therefore is, should conducting be taught? As a matter of fact, there are numerous conductors but there is a great deal of shortage of good conductors.

The writer of this book has impressively approached the problems and apprehensions of conducting in a very lucid and inventive manner. Several concepts are stated in the book which espouses the internationally accepted general principles of conducting. The book, from the beginning to the end, provides very profound insights into conductorial nuances. I believe that this book will be very useful to both choral directors and conductors of instrumentalists. Beginners and professionals, schools, universities, churches and concert musicians can also benefit tremendously.

In conclusion, conducting technique is the most laborious field in music and must be studied and practised during the entire career of the conductor and this book has a lot to offer in that direction.

John Doe Afornorpe

(Dir. of Music, Gra Customs Div.)

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PREFACE

This work on Basic Conducting Skills is an innovative, practical and pioneering textbook that provides basic approach procedures and material for the conducting class of beginners. It is gratifying to note that students, colleague bandmasters and band instructors and lecturers (a corpus of an experienced team of choral conductors) have unreservedly responded positively to the coming out of this book, and with its clearly stated objectives coupled with its user-friendly, and performance assessments approach, I recommend you grab a copy for yourself or a friend.

This book considers major aspects of musical conducting including practical and on-the-job advice on how to conduct different ensembles i.e. (brass, choral, pop, and orchestra), and a little history of conducting. In all, it is designed for the lay student who wants an overview knowledge about the world of conducting and for potential students as well. It is sensed that the beginner, with some form of help from a friend or his or her teacher, can start his training with this as a textbook, whilst the mature musician will re-examine his or her thinking and possibly revise his conducting skills.

Musical conducting is an art that is made through body language in the form of gestures. Curtis and Kuehn (1992) maintain that it is an art that gives directions to a musical performance. However, a conductor brings performers together by way of tempo and beat. He or she articulates rhythmic structures and also pays critical attention to the sound that is produced (p.18).

The Conductor, the leader of an ensemble (group of musicians), represents both responsibility and authority. His “instruments” are the band, orchestra and choir, which he brings together to translate a piece of music to form a meaningful idea. However, most of the conductor’s work is done during rehearsal, where technical issues are worked out to achieve perfection. A conductor must be able to detect mistakes when instruments or voices sound together (Kamien, 1992, p.78).

To emphasise this fact, however, *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* maintains that fact by saying:

Conducting combines at least three functions: (1). the conductor beats time with his or her hands or with a baton in performance; (2). the conductor makes interpretive decisions about musical works and implements these decisions in rehearsal and performance; and (3). the conductor participates in the administration of the musical ensemble. The word conducting acquired its present meaning in the 19th century, as the practice developed in its modern form. Conducting is largely limited to the tradition of Western art music, although other traditions have adopted the practice (e.g. Turkish art music, big band jazz) (Sadie & Tyrrell 2001, p.261).

In Ghana, every music student must learn how to play the piano, which the author finds appropriate. However, the art of conducting music is largely a matter of discretion to the student, as he or she has to seek this path (acquire this knowledge) on his or her own. Due to this, students graduate from music schools without having the fundamental training in conducting. Looking at the rate at which chorale ensembles have developed in churches, civil society and private groups, the writer supports the assertion that conducting lessons should be made either compulsory or one of the core subjects in music institutions. It is against this background that this book has been authored to help develop these skills (Hukporti 2014, p.274).

It is required of every conductor, be it advanced or intermediate level, to at least have a background in music theory, history of music, music appreciation and the understanding of gestures. This book provides students with simplified explanations of the concepts of conducting, with a step-by-step approach to baton technique, timing, cueing, tempo, etc... and could be used as preparatory material for a career in professional conducting.

Based on my training and on-the-job experience as a Bandmaster and Choirmaster, I attest that this book looks at various forms of conducting techniques, including Military Band (Regimental Band), Choral and Orchestral, with a user-friendly approach; suitable for wind, string, percussion and choral students taking conducting lessons. As I have already referred, based on a step-by-step approach to conducting, (this book) **YOUR GUIDE TO BASIC CONDUCTING**

deals with a clear analysis of conducting techniques, which is of great importance to students taking conducting as a venture.

Obviously, music plays a central role in worship, especially in the Christian denomination, where people are inspired to compose in various forms. As a Choir/Band Director, It is quite certain that many composers, upon making use of this book, would also get this inspiration and be filled with the desire to conduct. To start with, one needs to build self-confidence to enable him or her to improve on new skills. Conducting is more of an individual performance skill than a mere knowledge acquired academically (e.g. music theory or history), and it is more effectively learned through personal (one-on-one) coaching and tutoring. However, the most successful conductors in history began as performers, scarcely with prior training in the technique.

As stated earlier, since conducting requires a little background in Music Theory and History, this book provides a detailed explanation to students with more comprehensive explanations of what to do as a conductor. It further emphasises the fact that for one to ensure the understanding of conducting as a gesture, a technical approach should be complemented with musical insight. These carefully written guidelines cover baton timing techniques and show the relationship between time, speed and motion. It is also designed for the layman, who wants to take up conducting as a venture as well as for potential music students. Having studied these notes, the student should be able to apply these embedded principles, methods and suggestions to solve future challenges which may not actually be spelt out in this book.

Frank Kwashie Hukporti
University of Bayreuth
8th July, 2014

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces student conductors to a brief history of conducting whilst they identify the role and duty of a conductor. The student would also be introduced to the tension and motion that conductors experience, including expressive elements, and analysis. The feeling that goes with conducting is also discussed. Students would learn about the Baton and its techniques and application, and how to boldly face an ensemble.

1.1 Brief History of Conducting

The use of hand gestures to indicate the shape in melodic structure was the early form of conducting during the Middle Ages. This practice began in the Christian church where the person giving these signals used a staff to signify his role, and since music became more involving in terms of rhythm, the staff revolved around indicating time and beat, which later developed into the baton being used nowadays.

It is worth indicating that during the seventeenth century, other devices including rolled-up sheets of paper in the form of a scroll and smaller sticks were used. It is believed that the staff was responsible for the death of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), who stabbed his foot whilst conducting "Te Deum" (Thee, O God, we praise) a Gregorian Chant for King Louis XIV.

Factually, during the Baroque period, string instrumentalists in the orchestra acted as the conductors by using their bowHs as a baton, or a lutist, would move the neck of his instrument to serve as the baton. After the Baroque period, it became the norm to have a committed conductor who did not also play an instrument during the performance. This style which led to the expansion of the orchestra and the common use of the baton developed around the 19th century.

Legend has it that, 1794 was the year in which the first conductor to ever utilise a baton, was Guillaume-Alexis Paris (1740-1850), a Belgian composer. He was reported to have used it whilst conducting an

opera in Hamburg, Germany.¹ Since then, conducting with the baton and of course, the hand has come to stay.

Conducting is about body language, it can be fun when properly practised and is more than waving your arms in front of an ensemble. To further explain this, the principles of conducting and its related norms including how to use the baton, what is expected of you when facing your ensemble/orchestra, your command and control, your starting position or gesture, eye contact with instrumentalists, the importance of dynamics, thus, crescendo, diminuendo etc.... and the use of the left and right hands shall as well be looked at in this chapter.

Though it is considered an art of gesture, the conductor is to unify the performers and besides this, he or she has six principal responsibilities to perform:

1. To start the ensemble
2. To establish a clear, constant tempo
3. To maintain the tempo throughout the performance
4. To help maintain the quality of the piece: articulation, expression, dynamics, cueing, etc.
5. To listen critically and shape the sound of the ensemble
6. And the ability to communicate effectively with an ensemble

Though there are many different formal rules on conducting styles and techniques, of which some are subjective depending upon the background (training) of the conductor, this version is cautiously made to assist young conductors. It is good to note that a distinction is sometimes made between band/orchestral conducting and choral conducting. Band and orchestral conductors resort to the use of a baton more frequently than choral conductors (though not always: this is left to the discretion of the conductor), but it is advisable that a baton is primarily used (especially for beginners) and after the art has been perfected, the rest could be discretionary.²

¹Conducting Music.. New World Encyclopedia.

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Conducting_\(music\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Conducting_(music)). Retrieved on the 19th November, 2017.

² <http://method-behind-the-music.com/aboutus> retrieved on the 15th November, 2011.

Every conductor, however, should be able to fashion out his techniques, and no one can teach him or her how to apply this form of personalisation for the control of his or her ensemble. Ideally, the technique of the conductor has its structures and components - visible and invisible. The former consists of hand and body movements, whereas the latter goes with countenance and presence. In fact, these issues possess equal importance, are always inseparable, and only when put together do we see who a complete conductor is (Krueger, 2012, p. 26-27).

1.2 The Role and Duty of a Conductor

The role and duty of a conductor are similar to the leader of any organisation or group. Besides bringing a unified vision to the music, normally, they lead rehearsals and performances of a group of musicians, either instrumental or choral ensembles. A conductor serves as a teacher, role model and director during rehearsals of his or her group, or any ensemble. He portrays the music to musicians, gives them feedback on their performance, and provides the way forward to the next level. In fact, he has a great influence and is behind the advancement of music in any group or ensemble he leads.

Additionally, conductors assume a major responsibility for the group's choice of music and performance. The concert and live performance of their group rest on their shoulders. The way they convey their feelings about the music promotes and steers the mood of any performance. Without distracting the performance, conductors control their group's attitude, mood and so on. They are the advocates and promoters between the music, musicians, and listeners during a live performance to make good music that entangles the emotions ³

1.3 Tension and Motion

Each conductor needs to be worried about the significance of the music being performed. The conductor being the interpreter, the re-creative musicians, should integrate the work of the composer and present it through the performing musicians to the hearing audience. As stated by Bruno Walter, and quoted by (Labuta, 2018, p.49), the conductor is

³ (phamoxmusic.com/music-conducting/ retrieved on the 14th of February 2023).

obliged “to communicate the music strongly and convincingly in a meaningful and feelingful performance” Even though the mechanical and technical elements of conducting are completely blanked in this textual context, we now need to center our attention on expression which is to be scrutinised to derive general concepts of interpretation relevant to conducting.

1.4 Expressive Elements

The conductor needs to be aware that any component of music that adds to its tension and motion must be considered expressive. The conductor must highlight these elements in his/her interpretation. To be accurate, musical constancy defines the pattern, style, or mood of a composition. This consists of a stable dynamic level, steady tempo, unchanging tonality and mode, or expected harmonic progression. However, the conductor needs to deal with the fluctuations and nuances discovered within the general framework of the composition (Labuta, 2018, p.50).

1.5 Expressive Analysis

At this point, score analysis is required, since structure is the key to an effective interpretation, and knowledge of music theory is fully utilised. The conductor needs to search for cadences to familiarise him or herself with phrases, analyse and examine them to determine appropriate phrase movements, identify points of emphasis and climaxes, recognise the dynamic format of the work, identify areas to shade or highlight, and also examine the kinds of harmonic progression and the use of dissonances.

As a conductor, you would definitely come across many dynamic terminologies which you should respond to, be it *piano*, *forte* etc. which have been discussed on page 12 under dynamics. However, a few of them affect tempo markings such as *Rollentando*, *Ritardando* etc. As a conductor, part of your responsibility is to try and go through your score and keep these terms at your fingertips in order to articulate them properly. *Rollentando* simply means the music should start to progressively play at a slower pace, or a gradual slowdown in tempo often abbreviated as “rall” on the score (Labuta, 2018, p.51).

Most of the time, this term is found at the tail end of a piece indicating the end of the music. *Ritardando* in most cases, is used to

create tension in the music, but can also be used in place of *Rollentando* gradually decelerating the tempo of the piece of music especially at the end of the piece. For those conversant with the Ghana National Anthem, *Rollentando* is applied at the end of the piece.

1.6 Conducting and feeling

With conducting, everything has to do with the sensation the conductor develops from the score, the expression implied in the notes. The conductor is anticipated to conduct, whilst conveying meaningfully with feeling not mechanically and this, however, has little to do, with the way he or she personally feels. The reply must be to the expressive factors and structure, the feeling is felt in the music itself or to be more specific, in the musical score as it is read or remembered, if it has been memorised. The conductor also “feels with” the music whilst conducting (Ibid).

1.7 The Baton

The baton is a stick that is used by conductors principally to enhance the bodily movements associated with directing a musical ensemble. Contemporary batons are generally made of a lightweight wood, which is shaped to a comfortable grip called a "bulb" which is usually made of cork, rosewood, or occasionally silver and gold coated and that may be tailored to a conductor's needs. Professional conductors often have personal specifications for a baton based on their own physical demands and the nature of the performance (Newman, 2010, p.279).

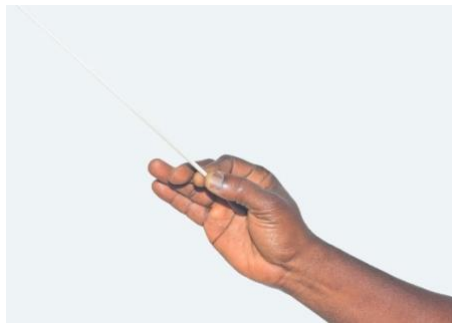


Figure 1.1 The standard Baton
[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 6th of July 2023]

Batons have normally varied in length from about 10 to 24 inches (250 to 610 mm) though a range of between 12 and 26 inches (300 and 660 mm) is more commonly used in contemporary times. Conductors view their gestures as the principal means to communicate musical ideas to their ensembles, whether or not they choose to use batons. One famous American conductor, Leonard Bernstein has his personal opinion on conducting and has this to say:

If a conductor uses a baton, the baton itself must be a living thing, charged with a kind of electricity, which makes it an instrument of meaning in its tiniest movement (Bernstein, 1960, p.150).

As demonstrated in the illustration below, the student conductor should hold the baton the usual way, that is by holding the baton in between the thumb and the index and the middle fingers and then, lean the butt or handle against the palm. It is usually held in the right hand though some left-handed conductors hold it in the left. Young left-handed conductors are, however, sometimes encouraged to learn right-handed conducting. However, some conductors decide not to hold a baton, preferring to conduct only with their hands. Mostly, choral conductors and smaller groups usually conduct with their hands (Bowen, 2003, p.104).



*Figure 1.2 It's held between the first two fingers with the butt in the palm
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]*

As already mentioned, the handiest kind of baton should be fairly light in weight, and should not be so thin. Whether the baton is with or without a handle depends on the individual. The twisting of the baton depends on the wrist, and the conductor must be able to control the baton completely, and perfectly and also feel at ease. This indicates the position of a good grip illustrated below:



Figure 1.3 The position of a good grip
[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 6th of July 2023]

Conducting is almost universally a right-hand practice, (though left-hand users are gradually accepted) with the right hand often extended with a baton as mentioned previously. It is used to illustrate time, whilst the gestures of the left hand are used to suggest line and intensity. This is done to cue entries and release, to illustrate crescendos and decrescendos; and to also shape the totality of the music.

The baton serves to clarify and magnify the gestures of the hand. Its use is entirely optional and largely traditional. Mostly, batons have a cork to absorb sweat, and because of that, some conductors work without a baton, considering it a disturbing object. Dimitri Mitropoulos, a Greek conductor who also worked without a baton commented at saying:

I believe that there is some kind of communication through the expression of the hands of what you feel ... I think I can express myself better with my hands ... I make an appeal, I mean, when I try to reach, to the soul of my musicians who play the solo, let us say, at the moment, and it's just a kind of gesture that I couldn't do with my baton and naturally I could use my left hand just, but I have two hands to use and I feel happier that I can reach for somebody's soul.

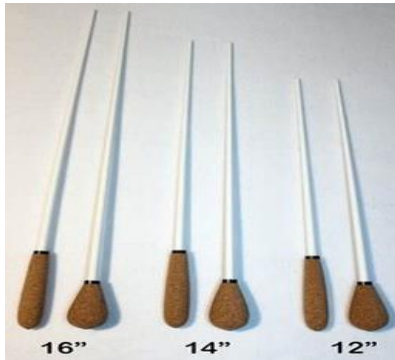


Figure 1.4 Various Batons

[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 6th of July 2023]

However, even though conductors use the baton for the effective display of their hands as well as for showmanship, most conductors prefer to use a podium since contemporary podiums are usually between 15 to 30 centimetres in height (Sadie, 2001, p.272).

1.8 Facing Your Ensemble/Orchestra

This requires some level of imagination on the part of the student conductor. A young actor would not only memorise his or her part, acquaint him or herself with the poetic values of the play but would also prepare him or herself by imagining what to do on stage. Self-training of this kind is very useful for the student conductor. Whilst practising on your own by applying the baton technique to the study of scores, you should presume that you are facing your ensemble.

As a matter of fact, you must therefore have a conceptual picture of the seating arrangement or plan of the ensemble in mind. It is always good to cite the traditional arrangement and positions of the instruments, i.e. having the solo/melodic instruments on the left and so on. The bottom line is that you should have a certain seating arrangement in mind whilst you practice. This can add to your confidence building and also increase your flexibility if you have in mind a particular seating plan or arrangement (Rudolf, 1994, p.66).



*Figure 1.5 An example of a seating arrangement
[Ghana police band archives, March 2022]*

CHAPTER II COMMAND AND CONTROL

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, student conductors are introduced to how a conductor should use the baton with authority, and what to do before commencing conducting. Conductors are taken through the importance and use of dynamics, be it crescendo or diminuendo. How to use the left and right hands are also discussed, including the facial expression, and communication (eye contact) skills with the ensemble.

Complete control and physical movements are important tools for everyone who appears on a public platform, and this is equally important for the artist too. This is because his composure and ease of movement not only impress the public but also affect his performance. How the conductor picks his stick/baton must be authoritative, and comic gestures should be avoided. Because his work is communicatory by way of musical expression and gestures, the conductor needs freedom of movement coupled with motion than any other person in the ensemble. However, it is not the best practice, of course, for a conductor to rigorously dance whilst conducting an ensemble. He or she must find a happy medium between tension and relaxation, and this should be exhibited in the gentleness of his/her gestures.

Besides, they must have a sensitive ear to be able to detect wrong notes; the ability as a pianist/instrumentalist and or an intelligent command of the singing voice; sensitivity to music, a command of all movements in a clear, precise direction, good sense of imagination, have a good rapport with performers, a sense of humour: poise, based on solid knowledge and musical ability, ability to make oneself understood, enthusiasm, and above all, be patient. (Iacono, 1975, p.5).

As a conductor, you have authority over the ensemble, knowing what you want musically, and the confidence that you will build in your techniques will enable you to gradually overcome personal bad habits such as stamping the feet, and unnecessary body movements. Some conductors would want to be seen by the audience, which of course, could be a personal taste, but it is best to avoid self-aggrandizement and exhibitionism. Notwithstanding the concentration, desire and feeling for

the music, a conductor must not be carried away by emotions. His command over the entire ensemble lies in his ability to control the baton (Rudolf, 1994, p.240).

2.2 Starting Position

The first step in conducting is the starting position which is very important because it does not only set where the heels of your hands rest in the starting position. Now your upper arms should not touch or be away from your body and should move slightly to the front. In case you are using a conducting stick or baton, your left palm should show a little bit and your fingers should be straight up for your performers to see. If you are not using a baton, then your both palms should be like the left hand.



*Figure 2.1 Your Starting Position
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]*

Make sure you put into mind the time signature first, which will help you to identify the number of beats per measure for any piece at the beginning of the music. The time signature is made up of two figures, one above the other. As it is in fractions, the top one is considered the numerator which shows the number of beats per measure whilst the bottom one is the denominator which shows the kind of note that is the fundamental beat for each measure. Look out for the following figures at the start of your piece.

For instance:

2	3	4	5	6	12
4	4	4	4	8	8

The number of beats patterns per bar/measure and the time signature are usually maintained from the beginning of a piece to the end, likewise the tempo. It is only in a few cases that the time signature and perhaps tempo changes. It is equally advisable to know the key signature as well as the key of the piece with which you are working. Tempo markings are also important factors to consider before you begin to conduct, as part of the six principal responsibilities of a conductor indicated on page 2, tempo markings are treated in chapter five.

It has been established that in spite of the above-named beat patterns, the four most commonly used beat patterns in conducting are the two-beat $2/4$ pattern, the three-beat $3/4$ pattern, the four-beat $4/4$ pattern, the six-beat $6/8$ pattern, and the twelve-beat pattern $12/8$ (p.18). Before you begin conducting a piece, it is highly recommended that you take a long breath to build the confidence that is required of you especially, for beginners who are practising for the first time. In one experiment, a hug keeps tension away, and embracing someone special can lower blood pressure, according to researchers, so you can also adopt this to help you beat down the stress of public appearance (Grewen 2003).

Take a look at the ensemble you are about to conduct and make sure that all the instrumentalists are ready and alert even if it is a choir. Your focus should be on the players before the playing begins i.e. don't look at the score, which means that you should have the first four bars memorized. Remember that, to establish a clear and constant tempo, your two hands must first come down before any other thing. It is a bad practice to use one hand to begin with conducting especially, your very first note on the score. Both hands must be applied. Your left hand should be reserved to assist the right hand, and should not be used repeatedly. The use of the left hand is treated on page 17.

It is always good to conduct a piece that interests you, but as a beginner, a simple tune is appropriate, and you should learn about its resources. The right hand is the major focus when it comes to conducting, and the left hand is there to assist the right one. As you begin to conduct, you need to set your right hand in a fixed position. This position is known as the *Focal Point* or *Beating Area*. As you bring your hands down, remember not to bring your hands below your waist. It should rally around your tummy button and that is where your hands

especially your right hand will be pivoting and that should be your focal point. For those using a music stand, set the stand to your waist level to achieve maximum support to properly establish your focal point. As you drop your right hand, it must bounce around the focal point to make room for the next beat.

See the suggested Focal Point in the illustration on the next page with the music stand-in from:



*Figure 2.2 This position should give you the idea of a Focal Point
[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 7th of July 2023]*

Additionally, you need to efficiently use your rehearsal time; you need to have a plan. Look at the performance of your ensemble and decide which pieces you need to rehearse. List the titles and page numbers of the pieces and how much time you will spend rehearsing them. Sometimes some pieces will need more time than you planned for; be flexible enough to let rehearsals meet the needs of the ensemble. Notes on a rehearsal are fully discussed on page 44.

It is recommendable for one to develop his or her style of conducting as you get more experience on the job. Some conductors are hasty and precise, staying within their conducting area throughout the entirety of the performance. Other conductors are emotional and use varied dramatic movements to really energise their ensemble. It is

always nice to watch different conductors and take note of their style of conducting, and by so doing, you try to develop yours out of the lot.

2.3 Importance of Dynamics

An important factor in the expressive rendition of music is what is known as *dynamics*, i.e., the relative loudness, softness, and silence of tone, and in a clear terms, how a volume of music is adjusted. Normally, composers are supposed to provide a fair in this phase of expression and modern music it is always indicated in the score for conductors to interpret. The *crescendo* is one of the most powerful means of expression that the composer has at his disposal. Some amateur conductors and performers tend to misunderstand the term by saying that *crescendo* means *forte or loud*.

Dynamics are an important way of conveying the mood of a piece of music, and a conductor's use of dynamics is an identifiable element of his/her ethics of performance. Quite often, dynamics are used by composers to affect the frame of mind of the listening audience. However, it is very important as a conductor to point this out to your performers during rehearsal or any training that a *crescendo* usually implies a soft beginning. The language of Dynamics is derived from Italian words in the 16th century when Italy became the clear centre of the musical world. As a conductor, generally, you will see dynamic markings in every score that comes your way and are mostly marked in abbreviations (VanderGraff, 2022).

According to Modest Altschuler (1873-1963) who was a Cellist, orchestra conductor and composer, "There is no artificial code of signals needed between the conductor and his ensemble; what the conductor needs is a clear conception of the composition." We are fully in accord with this sentiment, but for the benefit of the beginner it may be well to note again that, in general, a quickening of tempo is indicated by a shorter, more vigorous stroke of the baton, whereas a slowing down in the rate of speed, especially when accompanied by a letting more flowing movement, with more back stroke.

The louder tone is often indicated by the clenched fist, the *fortissimo* effect at the climacteric point often involving a strong muscular contraction in the entire body; whilst the softer tone is


frequently called for by holding the left hand out with the palm down, by loosening the grip upon the baton, and by a generally relaxed condition of the entire body. Dynamic changes are also indicated to a certain extent by the amplitude of the beat and by the position of the hands. In calling for a pianissimo effect, the conductor usually gives short beats with the hands close together (if the left hand is also used), but in demanding *fortissimo* the beat is usually of much greater fullness, and the hands, therefore, widely separated“ (Slatkin, 2012, p.32).

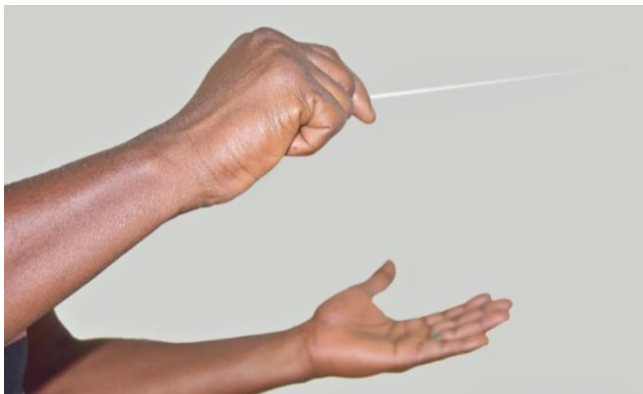
To emphasise the above statement, when performing the *Hallelujah Chorus* by *G. F. Handel*, most conductors retire the tempo at the piano section, which to me is a misinterpretation of that section. Conductors should note this and make appropriate corrections since pianissimo does not affect tempo.

Here are a few of the dynamic markings a conductor is expected to come across in the course of his schedule:

NO	NAME	ABBR.	MEANING
1	Forte	<i>F</i>	Strong
2	Mezzo	<i>M</i>	Medium
3	Piano	<i>P</i>	Soft
4	Mezzo piano	<i>Mp</i>	Medium-soft
5	Fortissimo	<i>Ff</i>	Very loud
6	Pianissimo	<i>Pp</i>	Very soft

2.4 Crescendo


It is appropriate to use your left hand to indicate instructions to the ensemble whilst your right hand maintains the beat and tempo. Changes in the dynamics may be applied with the left hand which is not being used to indicate the beat and tempo. The left hand is indicated by an upward motion and gradually lifting the left hand (usually palm-up) with increasing tension in the forearm, which indicates a crescendo. The crescendo mark signifies a gradual increase in volume or loudness of tone abbreviated as (*cresc.* or ) being the symbol representing crescendo.

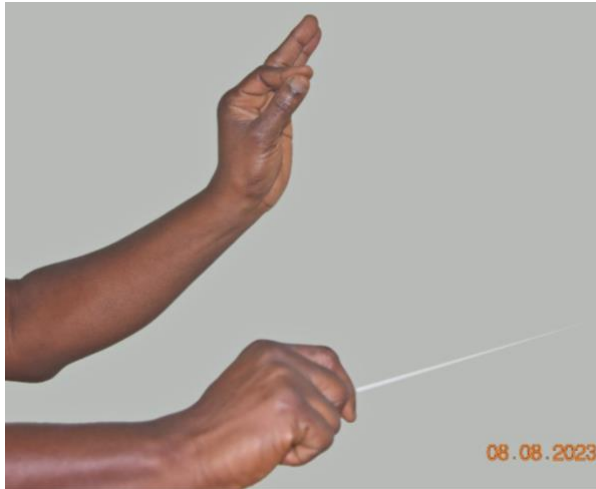


*Figure 2.3 The left hand indicating crescendo
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]*

Whilst you do the crescendo, you must simultaneously increase the size and strength of the right-hand beat pattern to attain maximum effect. When the composer wishes to build up a really tremendous climax by the intensity of the emotional excitement generated, he frequently indicates an increase in the amount of tone, coupled with a very gradual acceleration in tempo, all proceeding by slow degrees, and perhaps accompanied by a rise from a low pitch register to higher ones. As a conductor, one should keep in mind that these principles and applications apply to left-handed persons as well.

2.5 Diminuendo

In contrast to a crescendo, a diminuendo or decrescendo means to gradually reduce in volume or loudness with a downward motion (usually palm-down) also abbreviated as (*decresc.* or ) as its symbol. Now gradually turn your palm over to face the performers and lower it slowly till you hit your focal point. Dynamics can be adjustable by using various gestures. In the situation where the conductor shows his left palm in a descending manner to the performers, they should demonstrate a decrease in volume, which is an indication of decrescendo or diminuendo.



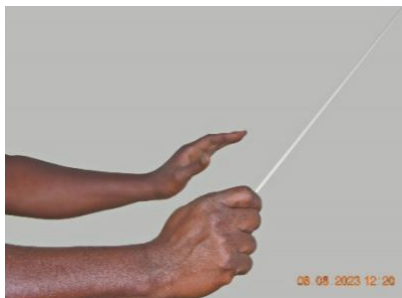
*Figure 2.4 The left hand indicating decrescendo or diminuendo
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]*

2.6 The Left Hand

The left hand is a very important tool in conducting and using your left hand efficiently improves your communication with the ensemble. Note: Don't overuse it. According to Rudolf (1994), the conductor must be able to beat steadily with the right hand and feel no muscular tension in the left. Use your left hand to clarify the style, mood, or phrasing, which sums up to dynamics; and dynamics are indicated in various ways. The dynamic may be communicated by the size of the conducting movements, larger shapes representing louder sounds. Sometimes one or more parts do something different from what the rest of the ensemble is doing (p. 242).

In the case where the conductor is beating and a solo is expected perhaps on the right side of the ensemble, the conductor is expected to turn to the position of the instrument and call him with his left hand. This applies if it is on the left side. It is also good practice to turn a page of the score with the left hand, whilst the right hand keeps the tempo because turning the page can sometimes be interrupting. To adjust the overall balance of the various instruments or voices, these signals can be

combined or directed toward a particular instrumental section or performer using the left hand. A conductor should note that these principles and applications apply to left-handed persons as well, where the right hand is treated as the left hand.



*Figure 2.5 Conductor expressing piano with the left hand
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]*

On the whole, the right hand aids as a technician whilst the left hand operates as an interpreter. The left-hand stretches phrasing, dynamics, accentuation, *subito* (sudden) changes, and anything required to strengthen and clarify the movements of the right hand in the artistic capacity. However, when the left hand is not static, it can be placed near the waist in front of your body, in a position for quick action, otherwise, your left hand might linger loosely relaxing at your side (Labuta, 2018, p. 200).

2.7 The Right Hand

Labuta (1995), maintains that the right hand works as a specialist whereas the left hand functions as an interpreter. Generally, the use of the right hand defines certain patterns, which the conductor must be aware of. These patterns appear differently in the piece of music, and it is incumbent on the right hand to perform appropriately. However, some of these patterns are tailored toward musical expressions, like, maintaining the tempo throughout the performance, and if there is a change in time, and to also communicate them effectively to the ensemble. The movement of the baton also lies on the right hand, with

the hand beating; down, left, right, up and other features. See the illustration below in 4/4 time:

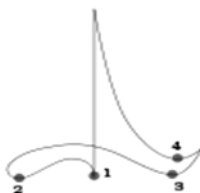


Figure 2.6 4/4 time

The above illustration indicates the up-down line and the left-right line that is applied in conducting both choruses and ensembles. As a rule, the general application of the hand around or above your music stand is referred to as the focal point (this is mentioned in the preceding pages) or area of beating, and the illustrated lines are the swivel of the field, and the centre around which the right hand rotates. However, the size of the focal point/field of beating may vary from one conductor to another due to stature or perhaps situation (Rudolf, 1994, p.5).

For the sake of perfection, it is recommended to practice the down-left and the right-up motions using the wrist instead of the entire arm. Practice it slowly at first, then as you go on you increase the speed. Be sure to avoid tension in the wrist so that you can make a large gesture if possible. Also, bear in mind that the point of the baton travels further than the hand and for that matter, think of the baton as an extension of the arm. Use the left hand to hold the right arm above the elbow whilst you practice. Additionally, the student should adopt the use of warming up exercises that are similar to pianists and violinists, that is, freely shaking the hands lifting the arms and letting them drop suddenly will make good practice.

2.8 Eye Contact

Before you commence conducting, give an optimistic and encouraging look (high morale) to the ensemble because the eyes are an invaluable means of establishing personal contact between the

conductor and the performers. Facial expression and eye contact are your two most essential tools which in this direction should be used as much as possible. You need to constantly use them and to achieve this. You must know the music well enough so that you can occasionally but repeatedly look at the performers. This skill can be achieved through constant practice and always reading the score ahead of the performers. Therefore you do not have to bury your focus on the score. When conducting a choir, you may use your eyes and face to tell the choir the kind of expression you want them to put in the music (Rudolf, 1994, p.242).

It is a bad practice for a conductor to show in his facial expression or gesture that an instrumentalist has played a wrong note during a performance. Your focus on the performer could make him nervous, and this could result in different issues. In some dire instances, some conductors end up leaving (the Podium) their area of jurisdiction so the audience or congregation gets to know that something has gone wrong This is unprofessional and unacceptable. Correction and rectification are best done during the rehearsal period, and it is always good to show an expression of appreciation and approval after every performance before you leave the stage.

However, do not get involved in a postproduction exercise immediately after the performance. Use your next rehearsal period for that. As stated in the previous page, take a short and simple four-part melody for you and try your hands on it. It could be your National Hymn or Anthem, or any piece that you know very well, but do not forget that the look and expressions on the conductor's face could play a vital role in achieving goals.

2.9 Looking Up

The importance of training the performers to frequently look at the conductor has been mentioned in the previous pages. Meanwhile, the conductor, on his part, should not bury his focus too much in the score, but rather continually look at the performers as well. Therefore, from the earliest stages of using a score he or she must train himself or herself to look up at an imaginary orchestra, band, or chorus every few seconds. This is one of the special techniques which a conductor must learn to achieve his or her goals. According to Mcelheran (2004, p.61), it is much

worse as a conductor to lose your rapport with the group than to lose your place.



CHAPTER III THE BEAT PATTERNS

3.1 Introduction

Students will learn basic conducting patterns for each meter in this chapter. As a result, practice the downbeat as well as the two-beats pattern, and the three-beats, whilst the preparatory beat is in force, listening to the suggested pieces in the four-beats pattern is also mentioned. However, six-beat and twelve-beat patterns being compound duple meters are also covered. Anacrusis, the pickup, and upbeat patterns are not left out. Though songs are introduced in the chapter, students are encouraged to practice and play on their own, recordings of orchestral works.

One of the fundamental steps in learning to conduct is to become thoroughly conversant with beat patterns. These are universally used by orchestral and many other ensemble conductors. The conducting beat patterns are the method of establishing the tempo or beat structure of the music. The beat pattern is the space and the basic way the conductor uses to convey how the notes of the musical piece are structured. The beat pattern used in conducting the pattern varies in relation to the time signature of the piece. However, the 2 beats, 3 beats, and 4 beats per measure are very common measures and they are the pattern used mostly.

The basic movement of the conducting stick or baton is vertical and horizontal; where there are only one beat or two beats to the measure it is vertical only. They are elaborated in the figures shown in the various pages as generally accepted directions of the beat. Calligraphers have often made attempts to put them on paper, but are not particularly convincing enough. One of the underlining principles is that the stick does not move in a series of jerks, but in a fluid continuous manner, which should bounce at each point in the illustrations. The method by which this is done varies according to whether the piece of music you are working with is slow or fast (Sadie, 2001, p.273).

3.2. The Downbeat

As you take the stick or baton, the grip of the baton varies from one conductor to another. Despite a wide variety of styles, several standard resolutions have been made. Take for instance this beat pattern in the next two pages in $2/4$ time. It could also be in $2/2$, or $6/8$ time, but in order not to confuse you, let us maintain it as $2/4$ time. Take a critical look at the figures, your right hand must follow the position of the figure from the top. As you come down from No. 1, there should be a bounce before you take No. 2. However, bear in mind that, the bouncing effect should be made using the right wrist. Usually, the beat of the music is indicated with the conductor's right hand, either with or without a baton. The hand should trace the shape of the beat in the air in every bar or measure depending on the time signature, indicating each beat from downward to upward motion (Dogantan, 2007).

The downbeat, also known as the strong beat, begins with a strong downward arm motion. This occurs on the first beat of every measure, irrespective of the time signature as long as the music begins on a strong beat that is the downbeat. However, the upbeat is the last beat in the previous bar which immediately precedes, and hence anticipates, the downbeat, and that is the preparatory beat, which is discussed further on page 27. Don't misunderstand this terminology with anacrusis, which is also the first note at the beginning of a measure, but in an uncompleted measure. Do not forget that the very first beat in the first measure of a piece of music is interpreted with two hands falling or dropping down to signify an attack. In $4/4$ time, the conductor counts **1 2 3 4**. Now, 1 is the downbeat 2, swings across to the left, 3, to the right, and 4 goes up hence the name downbeat. The notes below with the asterisks are known as the downbeat or the strong beat, though it is in a $4/4$ time:



Figure 3.1 Downbeat or the strong beat

The illustration on the next page indicates a 2/4 beat which is numbered 1, and the upbeat indicates the last beat of the bar numbered 2. The bouncing effect should occur between Figure 1 and figure 2 where the dots are. Normally, 2/4 beat patterns are used for marches counting on the left and right feet. Listen to a march then, you can get the feel of a 2/4 beat pattern. In effect, 2/4, can also be used in 2/2 meters, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, and or fast 6/8 times, which would be discussed further.

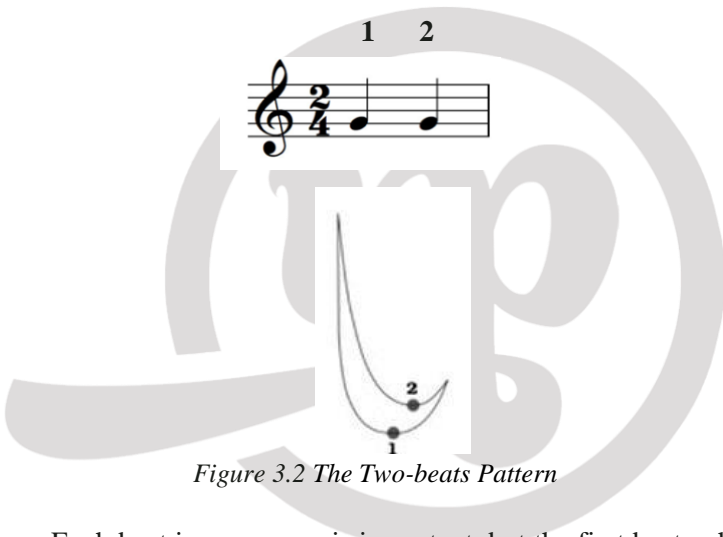


Figure 3.2 The Two-beats Pattern

Each beat in a measure is important, but the first beat, which is the downbeat, is the strongest. Although it is felt more strongly, it is not usually played loudly. Each beat pattern begins with a strong downward arm motion, and it must occur on the first beat of every bar or measure, regardless of the time signature. To practice the downbeat, stand with your feet slightly apart, stretch both arms forward towards the top of your music stand, and bend your elbow. Keep your hands relaxed and turn your left palm facing down as shown in the following illustration;



Figure 3.3 Preparatory position for the downbeat
[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 11th of July 2023]

Make a strong movement downward, ending in a little bounce at about waist level (around your focal point), there, you achieve your downbeat pattern. However, always bear in mind that your first beat in every piece of music must begin with both hands and after the first strong beat, you rest your left hand thus, if your right hand is dominant. Remember, the left is always there to assist the right in cueing performers and interpreting dynamics. You need to consider what is called a Preparatory Beat at the start of your conducting.

AKPE

(Thanks Giving)

Tempo de Marcia

By Frank K. Hukporti

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "AKPE (Thanks Giving)" by Frank K. Hukporti. The score is written for piano and bass, in a 2/4 time signature and a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The tempo is marked "Tempo de Marcia". The score is divided into four systems, with measures 6, 11, and 16 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The first system includes dynamic markings of *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The notation consists of a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a harmonic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth system.

Figure 3.4 A March in 2/4 time

Usually, for 2 beats in a measure, the conductor uses just a down and upbeat that results in two strokes. This 2 beat pattern is done by bringing the arm down for the downbeat which is the first beat and then

bringing it back up to complete the upbeat and that is the second beat. Take a look at the march suggested above.

3.3 The Alla breve

Alla breve, also known as cut time, is a musical meter notated with a time signature symbol as C which serves as the equivalent of $2/2$. It is an Italian word for "on the breve", originally indicating that the beat was counted on the breve. The word can have different meanings depending on the context. Between 1600 and 1900 medieval, the meaning varied by way of tempo. For that matter, it cannot always be taken to mean a quick tempo. In modern usage, the word suggests an equally fast tempo which is frequently used for martial music in military bands. As a conductor, the use of *alla breve* helps the musician read notes of short length more cleanly (Randel, 2003). Alla breve, also known as cut time or cut common time is illustrated below:



Figure 3.5 Alla breve beat pattern

As mentioned in the previous page, *alla breve* is commonly used in martial music of military bands which is conducted in $2/4$ as normal as a piece of music in $2/4$ time. In this context, the note value that represents one beat is the minim where there are two of these per bar, so the time signature $2/2$ may be interpreted as "two minim beats per bar". On the other hand, this is read as two beats per measure, where the half note gets the beat. As a conductor, the possibility of misinterpreting this is high, so just keep it in mind that you are conducting in the time of $2/4$, though it appears to be in $4/4$, but follow the notes as you conduct. This

means that minim now becomes a crochet and a crochet becomes a quaver in that order, and that makes it run faster than usual hence, the fast tempo (Sadie, 2001). An extract from a popular British military march (Colonel Bogey) in alla breve time is referenced below.

COLONEL BOGEY
MARCH

KENNETH J. ALFORD
(F. J. RICKETS)

PIANO

The image shows a piano arrangement of the march 'Colonel Bogey'. It is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) and is marked 'PIANO'. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The music is divided into five systems. The first system begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The third system is marked mezzo-forte (mf). The fourth system is also marked mezzo-forte (mf). The fifth system concludes with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 3.6 Colonel Bogey March sheet music - Bing images
[Retrieved on the 30th of March 2023]

3.4 The Three-beats Pattern

For songs that have three beats per measure, use the three-beat pattern 3/4. Bring your arm down for the first beat, move your arm to the right for the second beat, and bring it back up to where you started for the third beat. Emphasise the little bounce on beat one and the dips on beats two and three. Each bounce and dip, as shown on page 58 Fig. 5.6, is called an **Ictus**. The ictus shows clearly where the beat is and emphasising it makes your conducting easy to follow. Practice the three-beat pattern a few times, making your movements smooth and even. Keep your shoulder and wrist still (the wrist bends only slightly to emphasize the beats) and let all the movement come from your elbow and forearm.

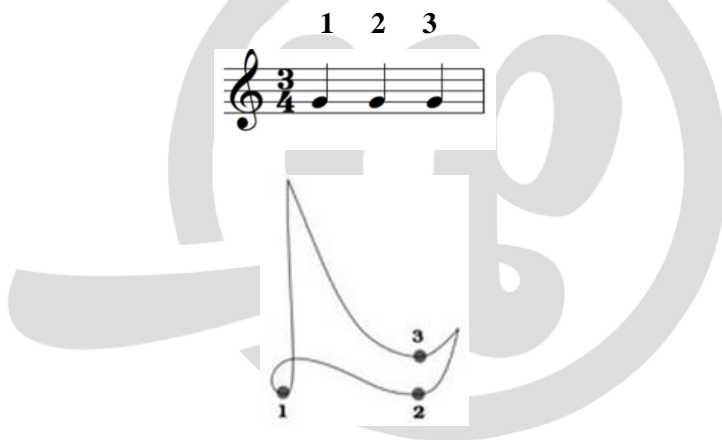


Figure 3.7 The Three-beats Pattern Conducting - Bing images
[Retrieved on the 5th of March 2023]

The instant at which the beat occurs is called the *ictus* (plural: *ictus* or *ictuses*), and it is usually indicated by a sudden (though not necessarily large) movement of the wrist or change in baton direction. It is used to denote the specific point in a visible pattern of beat points that articulates the pulse of the music to the ensemble. In some instances, "ictus" is also used to refer to a horizontal plane in which all the ictuses are physically located, such as the top of a music stand where a baton is

tapped at each ictus. In simple terms, Ictus can be said to be the beat that the person can feel when someone is conducting. The gesture leading up to the ictus is called the "preparation", and the continuous flow of steady beats is called the "takt". From a German word meaning beat of pulse in music. ⁴

3.5 The Preparatory Beat

It is a general rule for the conductor to give one extra beat before the start of the music. This beat prepares the instrumentalist to take a breath (for wind players and chorus), and for the string player to lift his bow in preparation to begin playing. The preparatory beat is a slight arm motion which occurs just before the first beat of a piece of music. It prompts the performers to be alert and that the music is about to begin. However, the preparatory beat is not the regular beat that is normally conducted, for it also invites performers to begin performing. It is recommended for the conductor to take great care not to bring the musicians in prematurely.⁵

For instance, in the time of 3/4, *beat one* is the first beat of the music, and as you count *two*, then *beat three* is your preparatory beat. The conductor must be careful not to make any extra baton motions because, this method secures the tempo and also reduces the possibility of false starts (Labuta, 1995, p.27). See the illustration below.

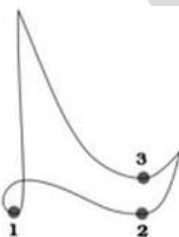


Figure 3.8 3/4 time

⁴ Dictionary.onmusic.org retrieved on the 5th March 2022.

⁵ (www.churchofjesuschrist.org, 1992, p.22).

To practice the preparatory beat, stand in the ready position. Bring your arms up and start counting **1, 2**, as you say **3**, and then before the count of **1**. That is your preparatory beat. Practice this pattern and count it in your mind. Others prefer counting it out loud which is not good for a band or an orchestra, but with choirs, though it can be applied. Some compositions begin with rests. For the sake of clarity, always beat out the crotchet rests using small gestures whilst doing the counting. Do it repeatedly until you are comfortable doing the preparatory beat, then, you stop the counting. The continuous counting may well confuse you and by so doing, you would end up losing your attentiveness on the score. Let this beat reflect your intentions for tempo, dynamics, and emotion. If the music is slow and solemn, the preparatory beat should be slow and give a feeling of solemnity. If the music is joyful or bold, the preparatory beat should show these moods. See illustrated below.

The Lord Is My Shepherd

(Sample Hymn)

Moderato Jessie Irvine

5

10

Figure 3.9 A piece in 3/4 time [notation by Frank Hukporti]

The music illustrated above is a popular hymn, The Lord is My Shepherd is conducted in three, so take the score and begin to conduct using the above-mentioned method. However, I would like to emphasize the fact that this music is not selected based on the assumption that this book is Christian oriented, but rather selected at random due to its popularity, simplicity and user-friendliness.

3.6 The Four-beats pattern

In conducting, a four-beats pattern is normally employed for a musical piece that has a 4/4 time signature. Again, 4/4 implies that we have four beats in a measure, for that matter, the conducting movements are in four directions. These movements are down, left, right, and back to up to complete the beat circle. To put this beat pattern into conducting, move your arm downward for the downbeat which is the first beat. Then move your hand to the left for the second beat, then to the right for the third beat. End up your arm movement back to the top for the upbeat which is the fourth beat.

As you move your arm around for the beat, keep it in mind to observe the bouncing effect on the downbeat. Additionally, don't forget to identify the rise and fall on the second, third, and fourth beat so that your gestures can be easily followed. Follow the illustration below:

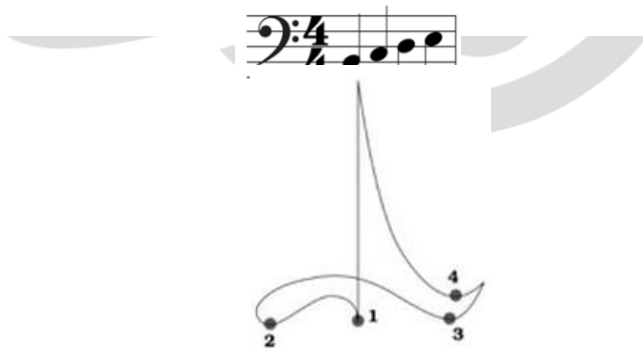


Figure 3.10 The Four-beats Pattern conducting patterns - Bing images
[Retrieved on the 5th of March 2023]

It is recommended that you make time to master these beat patterns through the act of practising, and that is when you can work on the pattern at a constant tempo even with interruption. For that matter, practise them to a good extent and let them be part of you, in your muscle memory, and at your fingertips, as well as your brain.

APASU (Scissors)

Moderato Frank K. Hukporti

5

Figure 3.10 A Four-beat piece [notation by Frank Hukporti]

Above all, your gestures should be authentically clear to the musicians or performers to achieve the clarity of the beat pattern as the core value of every conducting activity, which every conductor must tolerate.⁶

3.7 The Five-beats pattern

Also known as Quintuple meter or quintuple time, the Five-beats pattern, as with other art or classical music, is a musical meter composed of five beats in a measure, which makes the meter unusual due to its odd nature. It is an irregular time signature that is more of a complex meter as compared to others like the typical 4/4 or 3/4 time signatures. Though it is not common, it is key for you to learn and know it even if you would not use it in other to get an appreciation for what it offers generally in music as a student conductor.

⁶ (phamoxmusic.com/music-conducting/retried on the 14th February 2023).

As in the other time signatures, in the meter of 5/4, there are 5 crochets in a measure and each crochet note takes one beat. As you count in this time signature, take it as if you are doing it in the time of 4/4, but with an additional beat. You may end up counting 1-2-3-4-5 - 1-2-3-4-5. However, some conductors would want to break it down into two different sections such as three counts, and then two counts, perhaps (1-2-3) and (1-2), (1-2-3) and (1-2). As you beat or count this way, there is the possibility of noticing an emphasis between the two groupings. As I have mentioned above, this type of pattern may feel odd at first, but after you practice it regularly, and smoothly, it will become part of you.

As you did in the 4/4 time, just add one beat to it. As usual, the first beat should come down, left, and left again, then right, and back up to complete the beat circle. Now, to make it clearer, move your arm downward for the downbeat, which is the first beat. Then move your hand to the left for the second beat, add one beat further to the second beat, then beat four would then move across to the right. End up your arm movement back to the top for the upbeat which would serve as the fifth beat.

But in another development, the same pattern can be taken in this order, where the conductor will conduct without the extension of the second beat, but rather the third beat across to the right followed by the fourth then finally, the fifth which is the upbeat. So, instead of (1-2-3) and (1-2), it will now read; (1-2) and then (1-2-3) as shown in the pattern below: With the previously illustrated patterns discussed and practiced, this should not pose any problem since you are now versatile when it comes to conducting patterns.

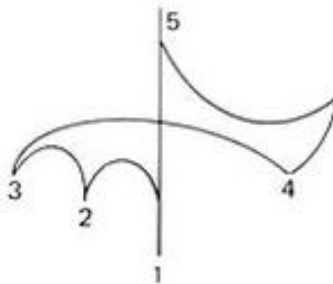


Figure 3.12 The Five-beats pattern

Here is a piece of music written in 5/4 time:

Take Five

The image shows a musical score for 'Take Five' in 5/4 time. It consists of three staves labeled I, II, and III. Staff I contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a quarter note, with fingerings 3, 2, 1, 2, 3. Staff II contains a bass line with chords and a triplet of eighth notes. Staff III contains a bass line with eighth notes. Below the staves is a section labeled 'B' with guitar chords: Am7, Em7, Am7, Em7, Am7, Em7, Am7, Em7. This section includes a melodic line with fingerings 3, 2, 1, 2, 3 and a bass line with chords and a triplet of eighth notes. The section is numbered 4 and 8.

Figure 3.13 A Five-beat piece

Whilst I looked for information in connection with a five-beat pattern, I came across different views that were expressed on this subject related to the performing arts, including conducting in $5/4$ time. Gardener and Guest QcCowboy are of the view that:

Mostly, it depends whether it's $2+3$, or $3+2$. In general, it's quite similar to a $3/4$, with additional subdivisions. Since in both cases of $2+3$ or $3+2$ you have a secondary stress either on three or four, you show that stress by the typical left-to-right movement (like the two in a $3/4$ or the three in a $4/4$). So in a $(2+3)/4$, you'd first go down and slightly to the left like in a $3/4$ (one), then make another beat at pretty much the same place (two), then show the secondary stress by moving right, as in the three of a $3/4$ (three), then again a little beat at the same place (four), and back to the top (five). With a $3+2$ you'd just do one more little beat before doing the left-to-right motion, and leave out the little additional beat on the right instead.

Of course, there are more possibilities of doing it, but in general, the important part is just the secondary stress either on three or four, by going left-right. In a fast tempo, a $5/4$ (respectively $5/8$) is usually executed as a " $2/4$ " with either the downstroke or the upstroke one fourth (or eighth) longer than the other (depending on whether it's $2+3$ or $3+2$ again).

Finally, there's also the possibility of completely dividing a $5/4$ in one $3/4$ and one $2/4$ and conducting it as such, which some conductors do. This can help precision as you are making relatively large, clear movements, but it may disturb the "flow" of the music by splitting it up too much. Plus, it may make it harder for people to count long rests. (Think of the poor trombones who have to count their 126 empty bars until they may play a note again!). It could also be argued that if a composer had intended it as $3/4$ and $2/4$ bars in succession, she or he would have written it as such.

Guest QcCowboy

When the music has no clear 3+2 / 2+3 division (a "smooth" 5) I liked to use a 4 with an additional stop in the middle... in other words, center, left, center, right, up-beat. You can also do it as a straight 4 where you double the center stop (1st beat). I actually find this one clearest to understand and the easiest NOT to get screwed up halfway through a measure. The repeated first beat position is easily understood. If the 5/4 is very fast, I'd just divide it into 2: one short, and one longer. Whilst conducting, I found that most of the time I didn't rely on the "standard" patterns. Everything became a sort of "rolling" motion, with emphasis on a clearly defined 1, and then a clear final up-beat. I find this gave me the most leeway for expressiveness, too. The only time I used really clear patterns was when the music was highly rhythmic (i.e.: a march, or something with a very strong "beat", or very aggressive).⁷

3.8 The Six-beat pattern

The conducting pattern for 6/8 time is divided into two segments, slow, and fast. The slow therefore looks like this from (the previous exercise) conducting point of view: Down -> Left -> Flick -> Right -> Flick -> Up, indicated below in figures, which is known as the German style, whereas the fast 6/8 ended up getting conducted like 2/4 time, except with the "upstrokes" of 2/4 time being transferred to beats 3 and 6 of 6/8 time, also known as the Italian style 6/8 is referred to as "compound" because there are two groups of three eighth notes in a measure such as:



See the example below: (Rudolf, 1994, P.607).

⁷ www.youngcomposers.com/t13295/54-time-conducting/ retrieved on the 7th of March 2023

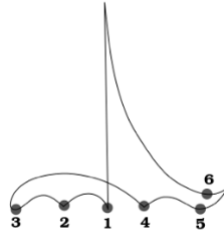


Figure 3.14 The Six-beat pattern

However, in 6/8, a quarter note gets the value of two beats, i.e. whilst a dotted quarter note gets the value of three beats, such as: Illustrated in the piece below: It is a very of used time signature, which requires you to count the beats as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. This question comes to mind each time it is the turn of 6/8. One wonders why it cannot be converted or just reduced from 6/8 to 3/4. After all, they add up to the same volume.

To put the above illustration into practice, bring your hand down on the first beat, then you go halfway across your body on beat two, then the rest of the way across on beat three, back across your body on beat four, farther to the right on beat five, and then up to achieve beat six. The Italian 6/8 conducting pattern is commonly practised as compared to that of German. This is because, beating the time 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and so on, can be very frustrating and confusing.

So, what is usually done is, you divide the measure into two, one set of the three notes taking the place of a strong or downbeat in 2/4 time, and the other three doing the same for the upbeat to complete a 2/4 beat pattern then, you are done with your six-beat pattern of conducting. It would sound odd at the very beginning, but as you continue to practice, it becomes part of you. Use the piece below.

MIKOTADZI

(Lift up your heads)

(Psalm 24:9)

Moderato By Frank K. Hukporti

Figure 3.15 A suggested piece in six-beat pattern

3.9 The Twelve-beat pattern

The twelve-beats pattern as shown below is used when a conductor indicates the twelve-beats in a measure. There are many occasions when 12/8, for example, is actually conducted as a four-beat pattern 4/4. The twelve-beats pattern is a modified four-beat pattern with two smaller gestures after the principal beats like this below:

Figure 3.16 The Twelve-beats pattern

The illustration on the next page with a 12/8 time, is an extension of the 6/8 pattern and it is not often used though there are few compositions in 12/8 patterns. As illustrated in the previous page using a 6/8 pattern, it has four groups of quaver notes and for that matter, you divide the measure into four depending on the context, one set of the three notes taking the place of a strong or downbeat as if you are in 6/8. But, because of the lengthy nature of the notes in the bar, we presume they are in 4/4 time. Each three-note grouping would take the place of a beat, which is a dotted crochet and since they are four, the other three would do the same thus: **1-down, 2-left, 3-right, and 4-up** to complete the 4/4 beat pattern.

Try playing a song that is in a 12/8 beat pattern and try conducting it to see how it would go. Take for instance **‘God Bless Our Homeland Ghana’** thus, Ghana’s National Anthem though, it is in a 12/8 beat pattern, but conducted as a 4/4 beat pattern. It is one of the examples found in illustrious works in Ghana, composed by Philip Gbeho. See an excerpt on the below.

God Bless Our Homland Ghana

Con spirito Philip Gbeho

The image shows a musical score for the Ghana National Anthem. It is written in 12/8 time and is marked 'Con spirito'. The score is for piano, with a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music consists of four measures. The first measure has a treble staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes, and a bass staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes. The second measure has a treble staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes, and a bass staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes. The third measure has a treble staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes, and a bass staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes. The fourth measure has a treble staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes, and a bass staff with a dotted quarter note followed by three eighth notes.

Figure 3.17 Ghana National Anthem in 12/8 beat pattern

As stated on the previous page, the 12/8 beat pattern is conducted as a 4/4 beat pattern because, throwing your hands to beat the 12/8 pattern could be a little problematic and besides, the arm could also be tired very quickly. Since the pattern imitates 4/4, you can clearly see it in the third measure of the above piece: ‘God Bless Our Homeland

Ghana' indicating that one beat, thus, dotted crochet is taking the place of a crochet, and since they are four in the bar/measure, conduct it as 4/4 beat pattern. This means the dotted crochet represents three quaver notes as shown in the illustration below: The figures on the notes are pointing at the beat patterns 4/4 time. So, as you beat each figure, you are in fact, beating three quavers in the place of one crochet, which I hope is well understood with the stokes clearly demonstrated here below:



Figure 3.18 1-down, 2-left, 3-right, and 4-up

3.10 Anacrusis or Pickup Beats

The Anacrusis or the Pickup note sometimes called the Upbeat, is an unstressed pickup or leading note or group of notes that precede the first accented note of a phrase. The accented note of the phrase is found in the first (downbeat) complete measure of the music. The hymn in the illustration below begins with a pickup note, i.e. the Lord is my shepherd. The word 'The' appears before the first strong beat of the measure (making it the anacrusis), and the word 'Lord' lands on the strong beat, which is the downbeat. One should not be confused with the terminologies.

Student conductors should be aware that a pickup is not the same as a preparatory beat. To make it clearer, however, study the piece below. Remember the time signature is 3/4, yet there are two crotchet rests before the anacrusis note. As a beginner, beat the two crotchet rests in your mind and take the pickup note on the third beat. Now, be informed that since it is the first note in the bar or measure, you should use two hands to pick it up and drop both hands on the strong beat or downbeat in the next bar. In the piece below, the downbeat is seen in the next measure where the asterisk is placed. As soon as you drop both

hands on the strong beat, leave the left hand to rest and continue with the right hand.



Figure 3.19 A typical 3/4 piece with an anacrusis (pickup)

Since the left hand is there to support the right hand, do not use the left hand continuously. Use it when needed, especially when beginning a phrase, or when you are prompting a cue. As soon as you drop your left hand on the strong beat, leave it at your side waiting for another turn. Additionally, use your left hand to clarify the style, mood, or phrasing, which sums up to dynamics, which is applied in various forms. Also, be mindful that the example above is just for this instruction.

In a typical and professional score, the two eighth rests would not be displayed for that matter, at a point in your practice, you would have to practice assuming that there are no eighth rests as shown in the extract from *The Lord is My Shepherd* on page 28. Normally, in such a situation, conductors count the two-beat rest in their minds before they take the pickup note. You could also do the same, counting the rest in your mind. It is not advisable to do the counting visually otherwise an instrumentalist in your ensemble could sound a note in preparation for the attack. Always do the counting in your mind without using the hand gesticulations. Usually, it is an unstressed note that is found at the beginning of a piece of music.

CHAPTER IV CUEING

4.1 Introduction

Discussing some of the elements in the area of conducting, the chapter explores cueing an ensemble as a conductor, using both the baton, the left hand and the head. Aside from that, score reading is mentioned coupled with the marking of a score. Strategies to adopt during rehearsals and how to attack a piece as a conductor are also tackled. Where entries are indicated for a performer or a section to begin playing (perhaps after a long period of rest), it is referred to as “cueing”. To be effective, cues must be prepared. As a conductor, your cue preparation should indicate or signal “ready or start” in the approaching passage. Cueing is another important aspect of conducting in cases where a performer or section has not been playing for a long period. It also assures entering players and achieves unity of entrance. In the case of a pedal point especially with string players, cueing is also helpful when a section has been playing the pedal point for a lengthy period; a cue indicates when they should change to a new note (Labuta, 1995, p.44).

The questing of when to cue in performers whether you give a cue or not, one should be aware of the entries. The understanding of this is that the conductor must know the score so well that he or she knows what each instrument is doing at all times. This is achieved by "engaging" the performers before their entry points (by looking at them) and executing a clear preparation gesture, often directed toward the specific stand or performers. In many instances, simple eye contact or a look in the general direction of the performers may be appropriate, since more than one section of the ensemble might enter at the same time.

There are three principal ways of giving a cue: the baton, the left hand and the head, but in some cases, conductors would want to use the eye as illustrated in the aforementioned paragraph. Besides, some conductors prefer to display their superior knowledge of the score by showing the left hand in the direction of the entering instruments as the first note of the entry is played. This should be done in advance of the entry. In some cases however, an inhalation, which may or may not be

noticeable, "sniff" from the conductor, is frequently used and it is a common element in the cueing technique of many conductors. If you should forget to cue, please allow the performance to continue, since it can sometimes be confusing and may also throw the performers off. In addition, conductors should avoid using their feet to indicate time since it could send contradictory gestures. Instead, just direct the ensemble with your hand cues (Rudolf, 1994, p.67).

Rudolf (1994) maintains that cues are given for three purposes, but it is not every cue the conductor should indicate, and in fact, there are cases where cueing can be quite destructive. When the instrumentalists are aware of a particular music very well, and you give an unnecessary cue with emphasis on your gesture, it may be interpreted differently to mean *forte* or *fortissimo*. As a conductor, do not let your gestures create confusion, but try and maintain a strict posture by keeping your tempo (p. 248).

The first purpose for which one commences a cue is simply to remind performers to enter after resting several times. This depends partly on the reliability of the individual players, but certain entrances are so difficult in such a way that musicians need to be prompted in any case. Moreover, some cues are expected as a matter of habit, and omitting them could cause problems.

The second purpose for which one commences a cue is a cue may be given to inspire precision of attack. A cue may be at the discretion of the conductor where he or she would want to cue at the exact point of entry. The conductor should prompt the player perhaps a measure before the point of cueing, which serves as an inspiration and a reliable communication tool between performers and the conductor. Meanwhile, there are cases where there is a danger of delayed entrance. For instance, heavy brass entrances in fast tempos. As a matter of fact, this can be avoided by beating the preceding count slightly ahead of time as already mentioned.

The third purpose for which one commences a cue is that quite often, the conductor wants to lead an entry in a certain way: loud or soft, expressive or emphatic. His or her purpose is not just to give a cue, but to convey to the orchestra his or her detailed intentions concerning the interpretation of the music. This can sometimes affect the body language of the conductor if the piece is emotionally centred (p. 249-250).

4.2 Cue with Left-hand

To exercise the left-hand cue, Labuta (2018), maintains that you should give a signal to the entering instruments by pointing at them using the left index finger. Merely pointing at performers at the time of entry makes it an ineffective gesture. To achieve that, you must establish eye contact (as on page 19) with the performers in preparation for the cue, which should go with some indication of the attack level of dynamic and some expression that you desire. Pointing of the index finger when overused, could sometimes be monotonous, and for that matter, it is advisable to employ variations of the left hand. In the case where the conductor is expected to cue a performer on perhaps the left side of the ensemble, the conductor is expected to turn to the position or direction of that instrument (e.g. right side) and call them with his/her left hand. Some conductors prefer to use the index finger for maximum results as in the illustration below. As a general rule, the left hand should be reserved for entries, especially for performers that are located at the extreme left of the conductor (p.44).

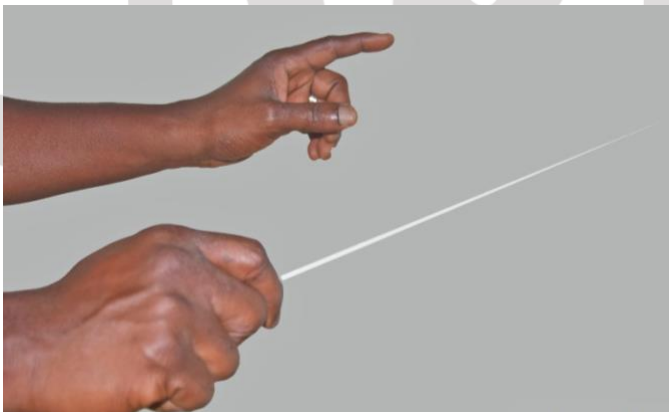


Figure 4.1 Cueing with Left-hand
[Photo from Frank Hukporti]

4.3 Cue with Baton

As a conductor, it is advisable that, to give a baton cue, you face and look at the entering players and point the baton towards their direction as you beat your regular conducting pattern. The beat pattern should be kept intact while you advance the baton in the direction of the performers you are about to cue. In most situations, this cue is very effective and I would advise student conductors to take it seriously. Except for performers on your extreme left, which require the use of the left hand, conductors should use it frequently for all entries.

4.4 Cue with Head

To effect a head cue, it is advisable to look at the performers and give eye contact, and also breathe a well-timed nod of the head toward the incoming performers. This is one of the most intelligent methods for solo and small section entrances. Using the head is another good method when bringing the whole ensemble together, that is *tutti*. This is more effective with straight (Western) hair (Labuta, 1995 p.45).

In the case where the conductor prefers using the eye, he or she turns and looks at the players in anticipation, which informs the players of the intention of the conductor. Rudolf (1994) maintains that using the eyes is best for the following two reasons. Firstly, you should not use more motion than you need whilst conducting; secondly, the expression of your eyes and your general facial expression can actually tell the performers about your intentions than vigorous hand-waving (p.67).

As I continued to scout around for information regarding cueing, I came across strands of interesting views that were expressed in connection with this subject on a platform set to discuss issues related to the performing arts including conducting: Conductor and violinist Ronald Mutchnik, founder of both the Orchestra of St. John's and the Howard County Concert Orchestra (HCCO), graduated from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he studied with Robert Gerle, with *summa cum laude*. He is of the view that:

As a conductor, be sure to breathe before you give a cue. It's very hard to feel the flow of the music if the beat or cue comes out of nowhere. We shouldn't prevent ourselves from breathing as violinists either the breathing will likely encourage an appropriate preparatory movement in the body

and encourage everyone in the orchestra to breathe together with you and feel the upcoming entrance.

Catherine B. who is a violinist in this group expresses that:

As I've been working on reading scores and executing conducting patterns correctly, I've been thinking about what makes a good conductor, well, good. I've read (both on the discussion boards here and on other websites) that one of the key things to make conducting well is giving good cues. From your perspective - as musicians - what is the best way to cue the different sections of an orchestra? How obvious should a cue be to the musicians, as well as the audience? Are there situations where a conductor shouldn't give cues to the orchestra? (It is reported that, the Vienna Philharmonic finds it a bit offensive to receive cues from the conductor.)

Sara Richards who doubles as a violinist, a music teacher, and a middle school-level string orchestra conductor recounts her experience by saying:

I'll bite... While I won't say this is the best, this is what I do... At the moment I have a middle school-level string orchestra, and I use the whole shebang. I point at them because they hardly notice unless it's a big motion. For my bass, I just look at him, because he pays attention. For my cello who's the newest player, I point, nod, and shout out "cellos!". :) In an actual concert I try to just nod and maybe a hand cue for the big ones.

Graeme Norris began studying clarinet at age nine and was a member of the Queensland Youth Orchestra Wind Ensemble from 1979 to 1981. He commenced saxophone at age 17 and completed an Associate Diploma in Jazz Studies from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 1987, graduating with merit. He is currently a Woodwind Specialist at the Promise Academy in Harlem and joined the Pre-college faculty at the Manhattan School of Music in 2014. According to Graeme Norris:

If you're in front of a good professional orchestra, the cues don't have to be major. For the most part, the players are

just looking for confirmation that they've counted the rests correctly so sometimes even just some eye contact will do. Also, the most useful cues don't just tell us when to come in but also how to play our entry.

Andrew Victor, who has played violin and cello in school orchestras and community orchestras since 1948, was music director in his community orchestra for 20 years. He taught violin and cello from his late 20s. "I gave violin lessons to my older granddaughter for 10 years until she was 16, and am now a retired musician." He has this to say:

In my experience of orchestra playing over the past 60 years, good and great conducting is a body language gesture. Some people have it, some don't - and never will. Some can learn the motions and get by with what they learn, some can study under the same conditions and never become convincing. The most important thing is consistency. Whatever you do to cue a section or player, always do it just that way. A conductor can be ordinary in his or her overall conducting technique, but if the players can count on consistency and a rock-solid leader in the concert(s) the battle is more than half won. For inexperienced youth orchestras, a very big and bold approach is sometimes required.⁸

4.5 Score Reading

In score reading, the first thing a conductor must do when he selects a piece of music or when a piece is handed over to him or her, the best thing to do is to play through on the piano. This is done for the conductor to familiarise him or herself with the piece, taking notice of changes in metres, modulatory passages, rhythmic associations, themes, etc. Mostly, this is done with large orchestra works, and the conductor should be able to apply sight reading techniques, and also identify differences in clefs, and to also transpose instruments of different keys to achieve maximum perfection. In the situation where complex notes occur, making it difficult or impossible to play on the piano, then the discretion of the conductor is applied and special attention is paid to the

⁸ <http://www.violinist.com/discussion/archive/17198/> Retrieved on the 18th November, 2017.

main line whenever it occurs in the piece. However, being able to readily recognise rhythmic and scale patterns makes it much easier for the conductor to facilitate his or her work (Iacono, 1975, p.1).

Once the familiarity with the piece is established, serious analysis should then be given to important aspects involved in the music. For instance, harmonic language, melodic construction, and important rhythms, thorough serious analysis of these elements inform the conductor of a clear understanding of the composer's style of composition, ideas, and intentions for writing the piece. Once the conductor's understanding of the music is mastered, he or she may then continue further to study the music and look out for dynamic markings mentioned previously, including articulation or important themes, patterns and motives, important entrances, cut-offs and phrasings (Green, 1963, p.8).

To emphasise the issue of score reading, (Sadie 2001) reiterates that “a conductor may study the score through harmonic and rhythmic analysis, possibly on the keyboard as mentioned already. A conductor must make informed choices about blend and balance, line and part writing, bowing and articulation, dynamic, shade and colour. These choices will derive from personal judgment after close score study, will be marked and entered in the players' part and will inevitably, be adjusted in the process of rehearsal, especially if they come into conflict with orchestral traditions” (p.272).

4.6 Score Marking

In some cases, beginners feel that there is something unprofessional about conductors or sometimes performers marking their scores with highlighters. This is because a score is made up of symbols (musical notes), and quite often the most significant of them are somewhat small. When the conductor is looking up and down frequently which is normal, it is easy to miss an important symbol, for instance, missing the repeat sign, hence the marking of the score with a highlighter (Mcelheran, 2004, p 61).

It is recommendable to beat through the score to locate possible trouble spots whilst conducting. This is because of how complex the full score may be and the need for clarity. It is good to mark areas you deem important to have a smooth conducting space as mentioned earlier. As

you progress in your conducting skills, you will develop your system of marking scores. Some conductors use a system of colouring, using different highlighters for dynamics and cues, including fermatas, style, accents, pick-up notes, phrasing, important lines, doubled parts, and at times, definitions of musical terms. Choose your markings carefully, because over-making the score may confuse rather than clarify (Labuta, 2018, p. 65).

4.7 Rehearsal Strategies

Score study in advance is vital for an effective interpretation, efficient rehearsing and especially for inexperienced conductors developing effective manual techniques. Always obtain an aural notion of the piece through study before the rehearsal; do not endeavour to study music with performers during rehearsals. However, the professional conductor is increasingly defined by the efficient use of rehearsal. Rehearsal strategy is widely varied. Many conductors would play from the beginning to the end and then return to correct errors, whereas others would correct errors whilst rehearsing.

So, as an enterprising conductor, you can also create or adopt your style or approach to rehearsal techniques. The following question should reflect on you as you approach rehearsal. What are the needs of the composer? What is the historical period and how does it influence the musical style? How can a valid expressive performance be attained? How should the music sound? In what manner should the music move? Where is it moving to? By what means should it get there? What precisely should be accomplished in practice? (Sadie, 2001, p.272).

According to Labuta (2018), good teaching is good teaching; similarly, good rehearsing is good rehearsing. You may work with choral or instrument ensembles, but the tasks, procedures, and strategies are the same. The similarity consists of the overall rehearsal structure, the importance of score preparation for the detection of mistakes, the use of effective teaching strategies such as modelling, delivery skills and feedback and differences in rehearsal methods that occur because of instrumentation. Effective conductors, attempt to bring out the best in their performance, irrespective of their personal background.

The objective is to musically inspire performance based on the collective growth of the ensemble, which is a natural result of effective practice processes. It is highly advisable to practice problematic sections until it is performed correctly and steadily. To achieve this, conductors should rehearse difficult areas out of context, for instance, at a reduced tempo. When performers perform the section correctly to your satisfaction, put it back into context, i.e. rehearse again using the correct tempo (p. 94-95).

It is always the best practice for rehearsals to be planned ahead of time, considering the amount of time available for rehearsals to be accomplished before a performance. In rehearsal, every little time is valuable, especially for performers who are being paid. The conductor has to completely know the piece of music he or she is working on so that he or she can have total control over the music and know if the ensemble is going in the right direction or not (Bamberger, 1965, p. 6).

In the course of the first rehearsal, it is good for the ensemble to read through the entire piece in order to be familiar with the work which also serves as a good exercise in sight reading, but for a choral group, warm-up exercises are important for attaining good balance, listening to pitch and producing overall good tone. For an orchestra/band, a good thing to start off with is to play the scale of the particular key in which the piece is written. By so doing, the ensemble can fine-tune and also check synchronisation. It could be a routine that during rehearsal, the ensemble could read through the entire piece to familiarise itself with the work, which could also serve as a good sight reading exercise. For the choral ensemble, warm-up exercises are important for attaining good balance, and for the orchestra/band, a good thing to start off with is playing the scale in which a particular piece is written (Davison, 1950, p 12).

Corrections can be made after the conductor has done the initial run-through of notes and/or rhythms to inform himself or herself of what is ahead. From the start, it is good practice for the conductor to insist on accurate intonation and skilful articulation from the ensemble/group. He/she should indicate clear, logical musical phrasing, correct mistakes in breathing as well as bowing (for orchestra), and besides, should strive to attain good balance. Sometimes, separating individual or sectional rehearsal from the main rehearsals is necessary for particularly difficult

sections and will aid a certain segment of the group to learn their section without losing time for the other players (Iacono 1975, p. 5).

4.8 When rehearsing your Choir

You may find this proposition useful in case you do not have an accompanist and will be rehearsing your choir from the keyboard. Frequent eye contact should be made to observe attitude and encourage students, therefore visibility is important for you and your singers. Learn to cue with one hand and or a nod of your head. Decide which entrances necessitate a visual cue and rehearse accordingly, when learning the accompaniment. Slant the piano in a way to uphold eye contact (communication) with as many singers as possible. Practicing the piano whilst standing might be useful.

Carefully, omit more challenging components, such as extended runs, awkward leaps, or changes of hand position, if you have trouble playing the accompaniment with its tempo marking, adjust it to accommodate your skills and the choir's needs (Labuta, 2018, p. 100)

4.9 Holds or the Fermata

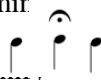
The Harvard Dictionary of Music, (p.310) defines fermata as, (to stay or stop, also known as a hold, or a pause when placed on a note or a rest). It is a symbol of musical notation indicating that the note should be prolonged beyond the normal duration its note value would indicate. Exactly how much longer it is held is up to the discretion of the performer or conductor, but twice as long is common.

However, Labuta (1995) reiterates that the fermata is usually defined as a temporary interruption in the regular flow of rhythm. Composers have synonymously used the term to underscore the effect of concluding chords or in sections. The fermata requires the performer to prolong a note to an unspecified amount of time to create stress or tension. It serves as an expressive device and also an interruption (p.36). Going further, many pieces have a fermata either on the last notes or somewhere in the middle of the piece. This is one of the most difficult sections that confronts student conductors. Irrespective of the note value, it is recommended for the conductor to beat only one count and sustain it as long as your musical instinct takes you. But, when done a little longer than required, it becomes monotonously unbearable. The end of

a fermata is always indicated by a cut-off, which resolves into either a strong beat or, a pick-up, which should serve as a preparation for the next count. However, due to the indefinite length of the fermata/hold, the cut-off must be decisive to alert performers to respond appropriately. It would interest you to note that, the hold can appear 3 to 4 times in a bar or the piece in general (Rudolf 1950, p. 166).

On the other hand, John Doe Afororpe (a renowned Ghanaian military music composer) is of the view that fermata could appear so many times in a piece, but it is the discretion of the conductor to appropriately respond to them. African pieces especially traditional Ewe songs for that matter require holds/fermatas repeatedly to be able to flow well especially, during contour introductions. See the Illustration on the next page.

Ideally, you should think of the hold/fermata as an expression in terms of its function, and it is considered a climatic, prolonged, and highly tensional focal point in a piece of music. These factors determine the appropriate method of implementation. If the tone to be prolonged forms the end of a phrase or section, the baton is brought down to signify the end of a piece; but if the hold occurs at the end of a phrase which doesn't signify a decided closing point, or if it occurs amid the phrase itself, the cut-off is not nearly so pronounced, and the conductor must exercise care to move his baton in such a direction as to ensure it is being ready to give a clear signal for the attack of the tone following the hold. This is usually done using the left hand. This movement then serving also as a preliminary for the fourth beat to follow.



KINATA MARCH

(Theme from Kinka Dance)

Allegro Aforonpe John Doe

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with 12 staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Sax., Tenor Sax., Horn in F, Trumpet in Bb, Cornet, Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba. The time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The score shows a dynamic shift from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*ff*) with a 'subito *f*' marking. The Flute and Oboe parts have a fermata over the final note. The Clarinet in Bb part has a slur over the first four measures. The Horn in F part has a slur over the first two measures. The Trumpet in Bb part has a slur over the first two measures. The Trombone part has a slur over the first two measures. The Euphonium and Tuba parts have a slur over the first two measures.

Figure 4.2 Theme from Kinka Dance

4.10 Attack

The term attack refers to how a note is performed by the musician, or the conductor's approach to the first note of a piece, whether decisive and quick or smooth and slow. More often, however, the word *attack* is used to refer to the initial part of the sound. An attack can be slow, meaning the initiation of the sounding of the note takes place slowly, starting softly at first, and then coming to the full volume of the note. An attack may also be fast, reaching full volume very quickly or at the moment the note is sounded (The Harvard Dictionary of Music 2003).

As a conductor, it should always be at the back of your mind that, the fermata/hold begins at the point of beat. This requires you to directly move the baton to the position whilst maintaining the appropriate tempo. You should do this to sound as if the expression fermata does not exist at that moment. Labuta (2017) advises that the conductor should not fail to provide an ictus (flick of the wrist) during the attack (p.37).

CHAPTER V

TEMPO MARKINGS

5.1 Introduction

Student conductors are strongly advised to train their ears for effective delivery. For that matter, this chapter looks at the musicianship of the conductor, his or her approach to dynamic changes and articulation, whilst looking at tempo as well, how to rehearse with the piano or keyboard (if it is a choir), and how to make a clear ictus whilst conducting.

In the terminology of music, tempo is an Italian word for 'time', plural *tempos*. What are tempo markings? Tempo markings are written above the staff at the beginning of a piece of music. The tempo markings explain the pace at which the music is playing. However, the actual speed of each tempo marking is open to interpretation. In classical music, for instance, the tempo is typically indicated with an instruction at the start of a piece as mentioned above often using conventional Italian, German, and French terms.

To establish a tempo, you need a device called a metronome which clicks at different intervals to help you stay in time. In the olden days, metronomes were designed as a clicking pendulum, but due to the rise in technology, pendulums are now made as an app on Android phones, which is usually measured in "beats per minute", and abbreviated as (BPM).

A list of the most common Italian terms for tempo markings that you will see in a piece of music is illustrated below on the next page, along with their meaning in English and the estimated tempo or (BPM).⁹

⁹ dynamicmusicroom.com/what-are-the-dynamics-in-music

List of Italian Tempo Terms

S/NO	ITALIAN TERMS	ENGLISH MEANING	BPM/TEMPO
1	Grave	Very slow, solemnly	25–45
2	Largo	Broadly	40–60
3	Lento	Slowly	45–60
4	Adagio	Slowly, with great expression	66–76
5	Andante	At a walking pace	76–108
6	Moderato	At a moderate speed	98–112
7	Allegro	Fast, quickly, and bright	120–156
8	Vivace	Lively and fast	156–176
9	Presto	Very, very fast	168–200

However, you might also see words in either French or German whilst conducting, and you have to get working information on them to ease your workload as a conductor. The use of different words and their interpretations may slightly differ but generally, they all suggest the same thing. Here is a list of the most commonly used German terms you might see as a tempo marking when working as a conductor.

List of German Tempo Terms

S/NO	GERMAN	ENGLISH MEANING
1	Kräftig	Vigorous or Powerful
2	Langsam	Slowly
3	Lebhaft	Lively (mood)
4	Mäßig	Moderately
5	Rasch	Quickly
6	Schnell	Fast
7	Bewegt	Animated, with Motion

As indicated above, the use of French most commonly used terms is listed in the table below as tempo markings for the student conductor.

List of French Tempo Terms

S/NO	FRENCH TERMS	ENGLISH MEANING
1	Grave	slowly and solemnly
2	Lent	Slowly
3	Modéré	at a moderate tempo
4	Rapide	Fast
5	Vif	Lively
6	Vite	Fast

5.2 Changing Tempo

As a conductor, it is advisable to note that, the tempo of a piece of music is not usually a fixed object, and for that matter, it could change whilst the music is being played. This mostly occurs in classical music where the tempo can be reduced or fastened and back to its original pace before the music comes to an end. Art and Contemporary musicians have also adopted this style and are incorporating it into their compositions. A table of such list is illustrated below:

S/NO	TEMPO	MEANING
1	Accelerando (accel.)	Speeding up
2	Allargando	Decreasing tempo, near end of a piece
3	Doppio più mosso	Double-speed
4	Doppio più lento	Half-speed
5	Lentando	Gradually slowing and softer
6	Meno mosso	Less movement; slower
7	Meno moto	Less motion
8	Più mosso	More movement; faster
9	Rallentando (rall.)	A gradual slowing down
10	Ritardando (rit.)	Slowing down gradually
11	Rubato	Free adjustment of tempo
12	Tempo Primo	Resume the original tempo
13	A tempo	Resume previous tempo

5.3 Ear Training

As a conductor, as much as possible you must develop your ear by listening to pieces of interest. The natural hearing ability will not help that much although of course there are individual differences. Traditional ear training courses are of little help, which others refer to as musicianship. However, one of the most useful types of training is to detect wrong notes when an orchestra is playing. As a student conductor, try and detect wrong notes when the piano is being played. Another way to do a thorough exercise is to play the piece either from audio or video and read along from a score. The student conductor must of course also learn the various timbres of different instruments and voices. By so doing, you are developing your aural imagination. Coaching any small ensemble would be equally beneficial (Brock, 2004, p 92).

5.4 Ictus

As a conductor, you need to be mindful of how you conduct to realise your ictus. The term ictus is used in conducting to signify the specific point in your conducting patterns that expresses the rhythm of the music to the ensemble (the indication of a musical event) whilst prompting the entry of a section of the ensemble.

5.7 The Cut-off

Cut-off is a gesture that is performed by a conductor to indicate the stop or an end when performing a musical piece. This is normally done at the end of a composition, a movement, or a section, sometimes at the end of a fermata. For the conductor to perform a cut-off, you are to move your baton or hands in a straight, horizontal line, by making a circle with your hands and closing your left palm. Whilst conducting, if there is a part of the song where a section of the ensemble needs to stop playing instantly, you can cut off that section by applying the cut-off technique. Practice the cut-off by itself several times. The cut-off gesture needs to be big enough so that others will be able to distinguish it from the conducting pattern.

As discussed on a marching band platform, the conductor's gesture to cut-off, or end the performance, should be one of his or her

largest movements. You want to make sure that the entire ensemble sees that the music is coming to a close¹⁰

5.8 Conducting Military/Regimental Band

The conducting of a Military/Regimental Band is based on the same principle as the general conducting pattern, but besides, there are other forms of gestures one needs to observe whilst conducting. The terms “Parade” and “Concert” are prominently used in this context meaning that, when performing whilst seated is referred to as performing in a concert, whereas performing on the field whilst standing is known as a parade or field performance. As a general rule, a military band conductor also known as Bandmaster is supposed to have a good and strong musical background in the theory of music. This is so because you would be leading different sections of instruments throughout your entire musical career.

Your focal point this time is not limited between your chest and waist level, but rather, a little above your height. On parade, the conductor principally serves as a metronome to keep a strict time for the band. Your role will be to keep everyone on time during play and to make sure that you can averagely see every instrumentalist from the point in which you are conducting from. More so, be informed that your beat patterns must be staccato enough if you are conducting a march. This is so because you are to set the tempo to 120 beats per minute (bpm) depicting how the troops are marching and this brings tension, especially to the right hand. Conductors should note that the 120 (bpm) varies from country to country.

¹⁰ (www.wikiHow.com/conduct-a-marching-band 5th March 2023).



Figure 1.5 Suggested focal point whilst on parade
[www.bing.com/images/search? Retrieved on the 11th of July 2023]

Notwithstanding the kind of time signature you are conducting, keep your arms at about a 45-degree angle as mentioned before and with your palms raised at the same angle. Do not forget that your new focal point (above your height) should serve as the basis for your conducting patterns. Meanwhile, you are to serve in a larger sense, as a leader because, attention and all focus would be on you as you conduct either during rehearsal or at any other performance.¹¹

Sometimes, activities about parade conducting can be difficult to explain in writing since it is most times advisable to learn it on the job. In the case where the conductor should change a piece, especially a march, the conductor would have to give a signal to the bass drummer for him or her to play as we usually refer to as a ‘double tap’ to alert performers on the next change either the piece is about to be changed or an action is about to take place. In most cases, this action normally takes place during either quick time or slow time.

¹¹ (www.wikiHow.com/conduct-a-marching-band 5th March 2023).

However, when you are about to change the piece, be informed that the cutting of the piece if in quick time, must be on the left foot so that you rest on the next beat thus the right foot before starting the next piece on the left foot. This is so because, when the beat falls on the right foot the probability of messing up the music and the troops marching on the parade ground is high. This same technique goes to when marching is slow time but with a slight alteration. In the case of a slow march tempo, the conductor signals a ‘double tap’ as usual to alert performers, but the cutting of the song would now fall on the right foot to allow the next song to commence on the left foot. Bandmasters and conductors are strongly advised to study the cutting and the introduction of new songs seriously in order not to be looked down upon by their subordinate performers since they serve as their leaders.

5.9 Some Helpful Tips

Your musicians will greatly rely on you to help coordinate practices and performances. As in all conducting rules, conductors should avoid tapping and marking time with their feet since this could send mixed signals. Instead, just direct the band with your hand, and do not forget that since it is not in a concert, you would have to memorise all the pieces you are performing on parade.

It is highly recommended that every bandmaster/conductor must play several wind instruments to realise the effectiveness of the instrumentalists since they can play wrong notes to outwit you the conductor. It is also prudent for the bandmaster to grow from an amateur band into a professional bandmaster. This helps you to achieve maximum cooperation from your ensemble. Your confidence level must also be very high in order that your musicians will not question your commands or musical integrity. Instead, they should acknowledge your musical experience and leadership abilities.

There are situations where the bandmaster would have to work with a senior member known as the Director. It is always good to liaise with the director, but directors vary in terms of how directly involved they are with their band. It is your job as the bandmaster to discuss the day-to-day running of the band with the director. You will need to work with the musicians to meet the goals set out by the director. The director

must respect you and your concerns. Likewise, you should also respect the director's decisions. Since it is a leadership drive, things will not be that easy and as an artist, you would have to make room to handle criticism, both from the director and from your performers.

However, it is your responsibility to also be comfortable with discussing problems or concerns with fellow musicians. Since it is an issue of leadership, you should be seen as a role model. You should be able to win the attention of your musicians whilst inspiring them to perform at their best. This requires you to display some amount of confidence and be there to encourage them. Whilst encouraging them, you should also show signs of your excitement and enjoyment of the music and performances they put up, and this will send a signal indicating that you appreciate what they do. It is said that “the left hand helps the right hand and vice-versa”. Your performers would also be happy to invest time and energy into the band if they know that you appreciate their efforts.

Whilst motivating the band musically and as you serve as their role model, your clothing turnout and general appearance should be unquestionable. Your personal hygiene should also be good, well shaved for men and hair well-kept for women. Presenting a well-kept image tells the musicians that you take your job seriously and expect them to do the same thing. You would also need to be physically fit since parade conducting is physically demanding. (Sadie S, 2001)

CHAPTER VI SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conclusion on the analysis of how music being an art is conducted. Musical conducting is an art that is made through body language in the form of gestures, which give directions to a musical performance. As a conductor be it a beginner or a professional, it is recommended to study how the art came about, that is a brief history of conducting, which is introduced in the first chapter. Besides, a conductor should be aware of the roles he or she is to play and the duties to perform, taking into consideration the six principles to observe.

The conductor is considered the leader of an organisation or group. He or she is therefore expected to lead rehearsals and performances of a group of musicians, either instrumental or choral ensembles. The conductor is to serve as a teacher, role model and director during rehearsals of his or her group, or any ensemble. The conductor portrays the music to his or her musicians, gives them feedback on their performance, and provides the way forward to the next level.

However, it is required of every conductor, be it advanced or intermediate level, to at least have a background in music theory, history of music (as mentioned above), music appreciation and the understanding of gestures. This is said because people see conducting as just a matter of throwing hands in the air and not knowing that it goes with regulations. Conducting in itself is communicatory in character since both the conductor and the performers have to synchronise by way of eye contact in order to achieve a result.

As a public speaker is trained to speak with confidence, the conductor also requires a similar technique to be able to conduct without tension and stage fright. That is why a conductor is required to have a command over the ensemble/orchestra, and control of the baton, which allows him or her to apply dynamics to the music been conducted. Dynamics is also another means by which a conductor is accessed as good or bad.

Conducting is generally considered a right hand practice, but with time left handed people are gradually been inculcated into the

discipline. For the right handed person, the left hand is a very important tool in conducting and using your left hand efficiently improves your communication with the ensemble. It is advisable not to overuse the left hand in order for the conductor to beat steadily with the right hand and feel no muscular tension in the left arm.

Beat patterns are considered another essential elements when it comes to conducting. A conductor must be able to identify beat patterns be it 2/2, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/8, 12/8 etc. This is where the knowledge of music theory comes into force, and a conductor without any basic music theory would not have better appreciation of the discipline. Besides, these beat patterns are sometimes divided into subsets making it difficult for a conductor to interpret, not to mention preparatory beat and anacrusis or pickup beats.

To initiate a cue, also depends on the conductor in consultation with the performer on a particular instrument in the ensemble. Cueings are done with the confidence that is bestowed in the conductor, and this is done in various forms. It is generally done with the left hand, (that's when one is a right hand person), whereas that of left hand persons are done the other way round all with the baton. Occasionally, the head is used for those with long hair. The use of fermata is also not left out for the conductor to arm his or herself while working with cueing.

Experience conductors are of the view that, the best conductors memorize songs, lines and entrances of cues. This is done with the idea of reading scores over and over till one gets perfected. It will interest you to know that not all conductors have that ability to memorise scores, of course some scores can be really lengthy. Mostly, there are conductors who result to the use of markers to make an indication on their scores for easy identification and application.

It is the responsibility of every conductor to make time to take his or her ensemble through rehearsal sessions be it choir, orchestra or band. Inadequate time for rehearsal makes the ensemble a weak one, and for fear of bad performance some performers would like to exempt themselves from performance. The conductor is to draw a plan and also strategise for rehearsal session in order to attain maximum result.

Tempos are set by conductors by conductors as part of the six principles that is to be observed by every conductor. However, every tempo has its markings based on its origin. Tempo markings are based on three

main European languages that is: Italian tempo terms, that of Germans, French and English tempo terms. This helps conductors to navigate through when they come across these tempo terms, and change of tempos during performance since some scores do not have a permanent tempo.

As far as theory of music is concerned, musicianship is required of every conductor in order to perform with comfort. The ear is one of the organs that determines your musicality and ability to identify various instruments in your ensemble. Couple with general conducting, the use of Ictus is also a requirement for every conductor to be able to bounce well while conducting. The use of cut-offs are not to be left out since conductors will at a point stop the music entirely, and this requires the use of a cut-off.

Conductors who are into military, brigade and regimental and in the case of Ghana Police Ceremonial Band bands are to adhere to regulations that pertain to militarism. Conducting on parade requires the conductor's both hands to be raised to attain his or her focal point. Maintaining neatness in uniform is paramount in this direction since the conductor is seen as a role model and a leader.

Recommendation

A conductor brings performers together by way of tempo and beat. He or she articulates rhythmic structures and also pays critical attention to the sound that is produced. To emphasize on this fact however, The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians maintains that fact saying that:

Modern conducting combines at least three functions: 1) the conductor beats time with his or her hands or with a baton in performance; 2) the conductor makes interpretive decisions about musical works and implements these decisions in rehearsal and performance; 3) the conductor participates in the administration of the musical ensemble. The word conducting acquired its present meaning in the 19th century, as the practice developed in its modern form. Conducting is largely limited to the tradition of Western art music, although other traditions have adopted the practice (e.g. Turkish art music, big band jazz) (Sadie & Tyrrell 2001:261).

In Ghana, it is compulsory for every music student to learn how to play piano, which the author finds appropriate. However the art of conducting music is largely a matter of discretion of the student. In this direction, students graduate from the music schools without having the fundamental training in conducting. In today's Ghana, looking at the rate at which chorale ensembles have developed both in the churches and private groups, the writer finds it appropriate for conducting lessons to be made compulsory at the music institutions in Ghana.



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