

SCORE MASTERIZATION

Five Aspects of Successful Conducting

Musical

Emotional

Physical

Intellectual

Spiritual

- Eliminate the need for a music stand
- Eliminate any barriers between conductor and performers
- Look nowhere but at the performers in the ensemble
- Audiences mainly watch the conductor (unless they are related to the performer)
- Promote a higher level of communication, more information to both performers and audience members
- Promote a higher level of expression, greater physical freedom
- Create beauty beyond yourself and the performers

Podium Responsibilities

- Convey mood and style
- Assure accurate tempi
- Control dynamic contrasts, balance and blend
- Shape and direct the musical phrase, interpretation
- Create the proper emotional intent, character
- Assist performers to make music to the best of their abilities with proper cues, entrances, cut offs, all/any changes

Rehearsals vs. Concerts

- The Score is a reference for rehearsal only
- Incorporate a structure of architecture. Within that form include melody, harmony, rhythm, primary, secondary and supportive material, starts/stops/changes, etc.

Knowing every note vs the importance of how the music should unfold at every necessary point in the piece.

Moving away from the score

- No professional musician practices only in rehearsals
- Practice conducting the entire score out of rehearsal. Include all aspects of conducting techniques, phrasing, meter changes, attacks/releases, cues, etc.
- Sing the score, move to the score, dance with the score, become physical with the score
- Ingest-digest the score to the point where it becomes a mental and physical part of your being
- Transfer this knowledge to the performers and audience through silent physical gestures

Conduct the concert without the score

- Overall physical conducting ability will improve
- Preparation will be at a higher level
- Greater overall expression
- Higher level of communication
- Closer intimacy with both the performers and the audience
- Start with one piece and move forward from that experience. It will be an extremely liberating and life changing event!

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Two questions that must be answered first:
- 1) What is the musical message?
- 2) How is that musical message to be communicated?
- Traditional vs. Non-Traditional gestures
- Aural onomatopoeia = words that describe sound (i.e. buzz, hiss, boom, ring, etc.)
- Non-Traditional gesture = visual onomatopoeia = The use of body language to initiate the motion that elicits the sound.

Examples of nonverbal non traditional gestures

- Mimic the motions of the performers
- Mimic string players motions to increase musical expression and intensity (show string vibrato, striking the bass drum with the baton-handle, the downward stroke of the timpani, two hands moving apart signifying a cymbal crash or a splash of sound, the slide of the trombone, the gliss of the harp, etc.)
- Be creative

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

- “Even the most expressive of patterns can never communicate the emotional content or composer’s intent as effectively as the face”
David Whitwell
- “The expression of your eyes and your general facial expression can tell players more about the music than fancy hand waving.” Max Rudolf
- To utilize facial expressions successfully the conductor must first internalize the music

Six Universal Facial Expressions

- PRIMARY EMOTIONS
- Surprise
- Fear
- Anger
- Disgust
- Happiness
- Sadness

Three Key Facial Areas

- The Brow and Forehead
- The Eyes, Eye Lids and Bridge of the Nose
- The Lower Face which includes the mouth, chin, jaw, cheeks, nose and the BREATH!
- Most conductors believe the Eyes are a major means of communication on the podium
- The Eyes are a “window to the soul”.
- Always look players directly in the Eyes!

What do the Eyes do and When do they do it

- What psychological emotional meaning do Eyes convey?
- Squint, blink, stare, glare, glance, scan, focus, recede upward, wink, left, right, up, down, sparkle, glaze, blank
- Van Karajan conducted with his eyes closed to convey deep thought or feeling, meditation, dreaming, being asleep?
- Refer to the Study of the Identical Twins, “In the Minds Eye”.

Dropping the Face

- When the face drops to the floor, out of view, the ensemble immediately loses connection with the “character” of the piece established by the conductor on the podium
- Conductors tend to look down due to insecurity or lack of knowledge of the score
- Potential for clarity and richness of communication is immediately magnified when the conductor’s eyes and face are visible to the ensemble

The Mouth

- The next most expressive facial expression after the eyes
- Grin, smile, pout, tight lips, clenched teeth,, open, closed (varying degrees of each)
- Mouthing rhythms, counting, (careful as this will take away from the hands) mouthing the words (choral)
- Breathe with the performers through the mouth and/or nose, especially on entrances

CONCEPTS & GESTURES

- Clean consistent manual and physical technique bring clarity, economy and expression to our musical leadership
- We can talk less and conduct more allowing the musicians to make better music
- Refine silent techniques to clarify and optimize the musical message
- Clarity comes from efficiency and economy of physical gesture. **DON'T BABBLE**

Gestures loose their meaning through repetition or lack of connection to specific musical intentions. Stop conducting and gesture only when something needs to be indicated.

Our traditional canvas is from the waist up

- Face, eyes, shoulders, arms, chest, torso, legs and feet (stance) all need to be working together to present a cohesive musical message
- Fluid flowing arms and a tight, restricted face may send a contradictory message depending on the score
- Posture and Presentation must be considered
- The idea of being lifted to the ceiling by an invisible string
- Opening up the sternum generates a more open, available atmosphere/environment

Become Available

- Conductor visibility and vulnerability are crucial to our musical expression and communication with the musicians
- It is appealing to the musicians to put your heart in front of your head as you seek to create great music
- Shoulders pulled back and down help to create strength and open up the sternum

Establishing the Character of the Music

- It is imperative and important to establish the “character” of the music immediately
- Remain consistent while the music retains the character
- Musicians depend on consistency of gestures to keep meaning clear
- Musicians become frustrated when manual technique appears unreliable
- When the meaning of the music has been decided gestures come more readily and naturally. They directly connect with the specific character and movements of the music

PROPRIOCEPTION

- Deep Sensibility
- Our awareness of our own posture and position of our extremities in space
- As conductors, we need to be aware of how we are positioned in space so we can control the visual perception of the ensemble