

## Section 3. Musical art

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### ON SOME ISSUES OF CONDUCTING ART

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#### Abstract

Mastering the conductor's position is a continuous process, during which students learn not only the correct hand position, but also such concepts as hearing, memory, control through gestures, control of complex unity of movements. This also implies learning to use conducting techniques and purposeful and precise distribution of their actions.

The conductor communicates with the orchestra through movements of the head, hands, and gestures (facial expressions). During the "conversation" a certain content is expressed. The "conversation" occurs freely, without mental and physical strain, and with the correct use of hand technique, the conductor clearly conveys his thoughts to the performers. The accuracy of the language of movements depends on the conductor.

**Keywords:** *conductor, hands, body, legs, head, facial expressions, conducting technique, image, width, depth*

Conducting posture does not mean standing in one place, but a whole complex of movements and mental states. Therefore, when the teacher explains the conducting posture – not just telling how to hold the legs, arms, head, body, but, on the contrary, during communication with the orchestra, he teaches the student to distribute his movements appropriately, towards the goal. As a result, the conductor's "conversation" with the help of his hands does not raise unnecessary questions in the orchestra musicians.

Free movement in the conducting posture is the first required stage of correct communication. During the conducting, attention

is paid to the correct distribution of muscle freedom and the work of the muscles, sensing the point.

The formation of the conducting posture lasts up to a year of the training process. During the year, it is necessary to be under the constant supervision of the teacher. During this time, the basic manual (hand) technique and the internal mental state response (reflex) of the person to it are formed.

We begin by relaxing the apparatus (the whole body) of the correct conducting position. It is much more difficult for a person to relax his body than to compress it. Only when we physically feel and understand the differ-

ence between the two positions can we work on ourselves. If we do not feel the differences in our own physical position, it is impossible to understand what is being said.

Connecting our exercises with breathing is a natural thing. Physically, when we inhale, we tense up, and when we exhale, our muscles relax.

It is also impossible to conduct by completely relaxing our muscles. When we conduct, the muscles contract and lose tension – this is understood as freedom of movement.

The question arises. Even today, there are doubts about “should we assume the position of a conductor? Should the conductor be able to explain his thoughts to the performers?”.

It is the same in conducting. The only difficulty and difference is that his instrument is a living team of skilled performers. He cannot affect the instrument with his own hands and produce sound. Rather, he describes and explains his wishes through hand movements, and the team performs in harmony. To work with an orchestra, the conductor must “speak” through clear, simple and ordinary movements. If there is economy in hand movements, it will be easier for performers to accept.

The position of the legs in conducting. The position of the conductor begins with the feet. The feet are the conductor’s support points.

In the standing position, we pay attention to the fact that our legs are divided into two parts – the toes and the heels. During conducting, the main support point is the toes of the hands. If the support point is shifted to the heels, the balance is lost when moving the body. The strength of the support point in the conductor’s orchestral management ensures the free movement of the body.

It is also not recommended that our legs be in a too open position and stick together. The stronger the legs are, the more confident our body moves. One leg is slightly forward, the knees are not bent. When turning to the left and right sides, the legs change their position unconsciously.

**The position of the hands in conducting.** Correctly placed hand position is the basis of free movement. The freedom and naturalness of the movement process depends on the hand positions. There are three different positions in conducting. They are used

based on the speed of the piece, the content, and the interaction with the instruments.

1. High, 2. Medium, and 3. Low.

Hands placed too high limit the conductor’s amplitude (arm span), and therefore we are forced to work in a small range. Raised shoulders, on the other hand, impede the freedom of the muscles.

The high position is used to depict light, clear and quiet sounds.

The convenience of the middle position for work has been physically proven by many years of practical experience of our conductors. Therefore, in orchestral conducting, our permanent working position is the middle position.

In the low position of the hands, it is difficult for all musicians to follow the point in our conducting movement. Movement with a large amplitude leads to a distortion of the musical phrase.

The low position of the hand helps in legato, marcato strokes in “deep”, “deep” sounds.

It is also advisable to use the high and low hand positions in episodic resonances.

**Parts of the hand and their functions in conducting.** It is known from anatomy that our hands consist of three parts.

1. Shoulder, 2. Wrist, and 3. Palm.

The palm (cist) is the part of the hand that moves the most among the parts of the hand and serves as the main controller. It itself is divided into several parts. Therefore, it is the most flexible, and the sound is also located in the palm. It comes in various forms and describes how the sound performance sounds. It can slide, break, press, invite, call attention, move sharply, jump, hit (etc.). These forms have a certain meaning in relation to the performance. The forms such as a round fist, open up, directed down are used depending on the expression of the sound. Since the sound is located in the palm, we can also describe its weight, timbre (color). For example: deep, heavy, light, soft, wide, hard, etc. Because the palm is the only part of the hand that has the ability to reveal the character of the performance. Throughout the movements, the performance echoes the conductor’s personal interpretation, based on the essence of the work.

The fingers, which are considered parts of the palm, serve as expressive parts.

However, they remain almost motionless when setting the beat. They take on only the most expressive movements. Breaking, placing, collecting, distributing the sound, deep and light reproduction fully fulfill their functions. Their movements further clarify the meaning of the palm movements. Generally speaking, they reflect the “appearance of sound”, and other parts of the hand are an exception to this. The functions of the palm include showing performance strokes (*legato*, *staccato*, etc.), performing dynamic performances of *p*, *pp*, mainly setting the beat at high speeds. To be able to perform these tasks, our palm must move in an uncompresssed, unstrained, and relaxed state. By nature, we observe that some people have a loose palm movement, while others have a tight one. Before conducting, it is advisable to relax our tight palm.

### Head position

The conductor's head, when held upright with the orchestra, is ready for communication. The face and gaze are the window to the conductor's soul.

Therefore, these gestures should have sufficient content. The movements of the eyebrows, eyes, lips – give a lot of information about human behavior and morality. The human face is not for nothing compared to an “open book”. There is even a separate science that deals with such studies, which is called physiognomy.

When the conductor goes to the helm, he begins to work after making sure that the orchestra is ready for practice.

The expression of a person's inner feelings is, first of all, in the gaze. The conductor demonstrates control and emotional experiences through his eyes with his movements.

The head is practically motionless. When pointing to the musicians, it can change its position. A head tilted down, looking down at the orchestra – requires a thoughtful, sad, deep sound, while a head slightly tilted

back – is characteristic of a triumphant, solemn, affirmative sound. Every movement of the head and facial expression has its own meaning, like a song without words.

Performers in a team (regardless of the number of participants) must feel the control of the conductor's gaze, and the conductor must look each performer in the eye. Sometimes the players receive more information from the conductor's eyes than from his hands. Therefore, the conductor's head on the floor or on the score, as well as a meaningless gaze, dampens the players' enthusiasm for the performance and creates apathy.

One of the shortcomings of our young conductors is repeating the measure with the head and hand movements or singing in the mouth. Excessive movements with the head indicate a lack of confidence in the conductor, while when singing with the mouth, we only listen to the direction of the melody. The harmonious performance of harmonic structures and polyphonic flows are out of control. Such control is not the control of collective performance, but rather “mono” control.

During the performance, auditory and visual control are carried out simultaneously. The conductor's gaze falls on each instrument and follows the direction of the phrase.

As we have said above, the position of the head is important in the art of conducting. Sometimes our conductors, without any mood, are limited to only technical expressions. The reason for this is the conductor's lack of imagination and shallowness of the performing fantasy.

The conductor's ability to influence the orchestra depends on his ability to perfectly convey his hand movements and mental state (emotion). The timely execution of these tasks (physical hand movements, gaze, gestures and the conductor's communication with the orchestra) depends on the level of his internal culture and knowledge.

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