

Dear friends,

Welcome!

After analyzing the material from the former master classes, we concluded that the majority of the mistakes often made by the young conductors are common. It became an obvious fact that each of our new participants has to face all the same problems. Therefore we thought that if each new participant could know the rules of the class and also have them in front of his eyes in printed form, this could speed up his technical and creative progress. At the same time it would be useful for old participants as well to see this memorandum on whose points they have been working already for years. We hope that this list of main ideas offered here will help each and everyone of the participants of this masterclass to understand and master the basics of our school of conducting on a deeper level.

Before going behind the music stand:

- Do not forget to take off your wrist watch before conducting.
- The conductor must always be perfectly visible to all the musicians who play under his direction, and he should also be able to make eye contact with each and every musician in the orchestra.
- Before starting to conduct, do not forget to check the height of the podium and the conductor's music stand.
- The height of the music stand must match the height of your waistline, or the level of the your hands while hanging straight next to your body.

Posture

- Stay away from the “hand on the hips” or “hand in the pocket” positions.
- Be careful not to bend or arch your back and not to have tension in your shoulders.
- Always try to be economic in your movements on the podium; avoid any unnecessary movement.
- Unnecessary, and therefore useless, or even harmful movements are those after which there is no change in the sound quality of the orchestra under your direction.
- Watch out so that your body is relaxed; trust your hands and believe in them more.

Legs and Feet

- Do not tense your leg muscles; distribute your weight evenly on both legs while standing.
- Do not stand on your toes , do not jump, and do not move your toes inside your shoe.
- Do not bend your knees and do not half-sit.
- Do not put neither your left nor your right leg forward without any reason.
- Do not tap with your feet; this act is impolite and unmusical, and disturbs everyone.
- Do not allow yourself to walk on the podium.

Shoulders

- Preferably keep your shoulders maximally peaceful while conducting.
- Arm is just the connecting link between shoulder and wrist, which helps keep wrist and baton in the desired direction.
- Avoid excessive movement in your arms.
- The movement of the arm is a special technique which should encourage the appearance of new qualities in the sound of the orchestra, such as *legato*, *tenuto*, etc.

Elbows

- Try not to raise your elbows without any special reason.
- Elbows should as often as possible be in their basic position, i.e. next to the body.

Hands and Arms

- Do not keep your hands in a high position. Always strive to keep the hands in the lowest possible position.
- Do not stretch forward your arms too far without a serious reason.

Right hand (division of functions)

- Act more with right hand.
- The right hand is the generator, engine and the controller of the ensemble.
- The right hand is responsible for tempo, dynamics, and also gives the entrance cues.

Left hand (division of functions)

- Do not stretch forward your left arm too far; left hand should not eclipse the right hand and prevent it from being always perfectly visible to all the musicians.
- Do not allow your left hand to mirror your right hand; right and left hand have different functions.
- Left hand corrects the dynamics, gives the cues and cuts, and virtually finishes off all the tasks that right hand has not had time to do.

Wrist

- The wrist of the hand which holds the baton is the most important part of the manual technique.
- The wrist must be flexible enough but not floppy!
- Sometimes the wrist needs to be very firm, but not cemented.
- The wrist can and should work all the time, but not more than the baton!
- The wrist should almost never move more than the tip of the baton.

Fingers

- Watch out that the fingers of the hand which holds the baton, and especially the small finger, do not stick out.
- Do not spread your fingers without a reason; this act deviates the attention of the musicians from the baton.

Face

- Do not allow yourself to make facial expressions which are unconnected to the music; your face should not distract the attention of the musicians from the music that is being played at that moment.
- The face must be like a clear screen which is ready to reflect any emotions and ideas of yours.
- Do not obstruct your face from showing what you feel.

Eyes

- Eyes (glance) is also part of the manual technique.
- Eyes should help the conductor; they are just as hands, part of the conducting apparatus.
- While conducting try to make eye contact to specific musicians in the orchestra.
- Do not forget to anticipate more important entrances with your glance.
- Do not shut your eyes while conducting. Make your eyes work!
- While conducting do not allow yourself to look at walls or ceiling.

Gesture

- Your gesture must not contradict the character of the music, but it should stimulate its sound.
- Work on the expressiveness of your gestures continuously.
- Unceasingly work on the clarity and beauty of your movements.
- Try to get rid of the habit of showing *piano* with big gestures.

Baton

- Always make sure that the tip of your baton is lower than the level of the wrist of the hand holding it.
- The tip of the baton must look as if it is arriving at the next beat ahead of time, but it should never do so.
- The tip of the baton should be the first to arrive at any beat and the first to leave to the next.
- If the tip of the baton stays always up then it might have a “slowdown” effect on the orchestra.

Calligraphy and the aesthetics of your movements

- Conductor's gestures are like his personal handwriting; the clearer they are the more accurately the orchestra will play.
- Make sure that each and everyone of your movements is aesthetically appealing.
- The beauty of a conductor's movements is a sign of his politeness; it is like good manners in high society.
- Do not only think of the correctness, but also of the aesthetics of your movements.
- The beauty of a conductor's movements brings out the artist in each one of the orchestra musicians.

Leading the sound

- One of the main rules of sound-leading is this: do not wait for the sound but move forward!
- Try to avoid delaying on the beats. Always strive to move ahead.
- Try to "hook" (catch) the sound and do not let go of it throughout the whole process of conducting.
- Learn to always keep your hand on the pulse of the music.
- Try to conduct the orchestra without waiting for the sound but forewarning it.
- Do not push and do not rip the fabric of the music, if doing so is not necessary due to some specific musical task.
- When giving the entrance cues to the musicians do not forget to breathe with them.
- While conducting do not hold your breath, but breathe with the orchestra musicians on the same flow.

Amplitude

- For achieving *crescendo* one must enlarge the amplitude of his movements and for achieving *diminuendo* one must diminish it.

Rehearsing style

- While talking to the orchestra do not forget to end each one of your requests with the word "please".
- Do not allow yourself to speak to the orchestra when your hands are already raised (to start conducting).
- If you have already raised your hands, then give the first upbeat no later than after five seconds.
- If after raising your hands you suddenly remembered something truly important to say, then lower your hands, apologies for the interruption, tell the orchestra what you intended to tell them, and after that raise your hands again and this time start no later than five seconds after raising your hands.

The score

-It is useful to know the score by heart, but it is no less important to be able to conduct from the score!

-However you should not allow yourself to conduct without looking away from the score.

-Look away from the score as often as possible so that you could connect to the orchestra musicians.

Sic!

Always strive for the economy of each one of your movements.

The sooner you acquire a taste for the reserved style of conducting the sooner other mysteries of the manual technique of high style conducting will be revealed to you.

P.S.

Dear friends!

If any of the above mentioned theses are not completely clear to you do not hesitate to ask for further explanation.

Remember that this is just a brief proposal of the basics of conducting school and for each thesis you can receive detailed clarification.

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