

Richland School District and WSASCD
5th Annual RTI-PLC Institute
August 19 and 20, 2014
Richland High School, Richland, Washington

Topic: The Art of Musical Conducting
Clinician: Larry Gookin, Director of Bands, Central Washington University

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Clinic Outline:

We will explore the difference between basic conducting technique and expressive conducting. As music educators we often become obsessed with preparing ensembles for technical perfection and miss the expressive intent of a composition. Our focus becomes technically oriented, and our conducting gestures reflect that focus. Our most successful professional conductors intuitively use expressive conducting gestures, and as music educators we should emulate their technique. The answer to the correct conducting gesture can be found in the score.

1. Introduction and welcome:

What does it take to become an artistic conductor?

1. Rehearsal Technique (motivation and pacing)
2. Stick Technique (movement and gesture)
3. Score Study (knowledge and understanding)
4. Podium Personality
5. Love of music and musicians (students)

2. The Paramount Purpose of Music: Finding the Musical Truth (*Melos*)

1. Art Music
2. Educational Music
3. Functional Music
4. Entertainment Music

- a. Music is *feeling*.
- b. Finding the Musical Truth, the *Melos* of Music

“The tears come from the heart and not from the brain.”/ Leonardo da Vinci

“What is best in music is not to be found in the notes.” / Mahler

“Music, I feel, must be emotional first and intellectual second.” / Ravel

“Music is an outburst of the soul.” / Delius

“Music is to me the perfect expression of the soul.” / Schuman

“Music is the speech of Passion.” / Wagner

“Music is the shorthand of emotion. Emotions which let themselves be described in words with such difficulty, are directly conveyed to man in music, and in that is its power and significance.” / Tolstoy

“The musician must train not only his ear but also his soul.” / L. Gookin

3. Does “Standard Conducting Technique” have value?

“Conducting is only to a small extent the beating of time -- it is done far more through the eyes -- still more it is done through a kind of inner communication between players and the conductor.” / Stokowski

“If your imagination is clear, then you will communicate with the orchestra even if your beat and technique are not first-rate The inexplicable miracle of conducting is that the body, eyes and soul of a conductor transfer something intangible and unique to an orchestra.” / Solti

4. Observing Professional Conductors.

Great Conductors of the Past

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|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Arturo Toscanini | 5. Leonard Bernstein |
| 2. Herbert von Karajan | 6. Sir John Barbirolli |
| 3. Otto Klemperer | 7. Sir Thomas Beecham |
| 4. George Szell | 8. Arthur Nikisch |

Who are your favorite conductors? What do they have in common?

5. The Paramount Objective of Score Study:

“Music is a form of beauty.” / MENC

“Anyone who still hasn’t got past the stage of the beauty of music still knows nothing about music. It has beauty as well, but the beauty is only the bait. Music is truth.” /Sergiu Celibadache

“Music ought not to seek for that which is pleasant, but for that which is true.” / Plato

6. Musical Score Study:

1. Begin with the thought clearly in mind that the goal is to discover the Melos, the emotional meaning of the composition.
2. Study and learn a score by ear, not by eye.
3. Introduce your own experience.
4. Memorization
5. Assimilation

7. The Technique of Musical Conducting

1. Standard Conducting Technique
2. “Alexander Techniques” F. Matthias Alexander (1869-1955)
3. Laban “Qualitative Movement” – Rudolf Laban (1879-1958)

Personality - “to personify the emotional meaning of the music.”

“Conducting technique ... nobody really knows ...When you feel something, it should come naturally to the music. What kind of life you have ... what kind of person you are ... what you can feel is more important.” / Ozawa

8. Conducting examples:

1. "Song Without Words" Second Suite in F - Holst
2. "Harkstow Grange" - Bach

9. You Tube examples:

1. Three year old Jonathan - Beethoven - Symphony No. 5
2. ARTS: Conducting philosophies - Larry Livingston - USC - School of Music
3. The Art of Conducting - Great Conductors of the Past
4. Riccardo Muti - Conducting Lesson
5. Fredrick Fennell - A Life of Joyful Discovery
6. London Symphony Master Class - Valery Gergiev
7. Ravel: Ma mere l'oye - Simon Rattle - Berlin Philharmonic
8. TED: The Transformative Power of Classical Music - Benjamin Zander
9. Gustave Dudamel: Dvorak
10. TED: Italy Talgam - Lead like the great conductors

Suggested Reading:

The Art Of Musical Conducting/David Whitwell
Whitwell Publishing
815-A Brazos Street #491
Austin, TX 78701 USA
<http://whitwellbooks.com/contact/>