



*Conducting Nuances:  
Little Things Mean A Lot*

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CONDUCTING NUANCES – “Little Things Mean A Lot”  
GIA Publications

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## CONDUCTING CLINIC

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***"The sign of true talent for conducting is the instinctive faculty of immediately transmitting one's own musical impulses to the ensemble."*** Bruno Walter

#### I. BASIC ESSENTIALS

##### A. Purpose of the Conductor

1. Communication of the composer's musical intentions,
2. Portraying the musical "story"  
silent score from podium to performers to listener
2. Inspiration
3. Leadership
4. Graphic (physical) representation of the music

##### B. Conductor Characteristics

1. Dedication - a love for music
2. Musicianship - musical competence
3. Manual Technique
4. Organization
5. Psychology
6. Physical presence/persona/personality/sense of humor
7. Ability to display emotion, sensitivity
8. Ability to impose one's will upon others in a pleasing and enjoyable manner  
without violating personal feelings
9. Interpersonal skills - ability to work with people

##### C. Prerequisites/Elective Courses

1. Acting
2. Mime “Beyond the Word: The World of Mime by Stefan Niedzialkowski (Royal Oak, MI: Momentum Books, 1993)
3. Dance

##### D. Physical Aspects

1. Stance
2. Body, Posture
3. Arms

4. Hands, especially "left" hand
5. Fingers
6. Face, including head, eyes, eyebrows, mouth
7. General Movement

#### E. Ready Position

1. Horizontal Plane and variations
2. Vertical Plane and variations
3. Saggital/Extended Plane and variations
4. Use of the baton, grip
5. Changing the focus (negating the baton)
6. Two hands vs. one

#### F. Preparatory Beat/Respiration (when to play)

1. Tempo
2. Dynamics
3. Style - articulation, mood
4. What beat
5. Who/What plays

#### G. Dynamic Considerations

1. Pattern - symmetry, asymmetry
2. Left Hand (fingers)
3. Facial expressions
4. Body language/stance
5. Combinations

#### H. Cueing

1. Pattern
2. Left Hand
  - a. posture/position
  - b. clockwise, inside out
  - c. counter-clock wise, outside in
  - d. geometric designs
3. Head, including eyes, etc.
4. Body behind the cue
5. Preparation of cue
6. Include style

#### I. Subdivision

1. Full to Half stroke, rebound
2. Half to Full stroke
3. wrist only, no arm
4. only when absolutely necessary, enhancement

## II. PHYSICAL APPROACHES

### A. Fundamental Movements

1. Drag/leading with the wrist
2. Ictus click, attack
3. Release
4. Control of rebound, decay
5. Travel time
6. Mirroring, 2 hands vs. 1 hand

### B. Flow Exercises

1. Various planes(horizontal,vertical,saggital) and numerical combinations
2. Circular movements, similar, contrary
3. Patterns and Planes combined
4. Number combinations

### C. Fermata Gestures

1. Travel
2. Stopping the time, cesura
3. Using Prep as the cut
4. No stop in sound

### D. Gesture of Syncopation

1. Set-up function
2. Technique - stop previous beat
  - a.) eliminate rebound on preceding beat
  - b.) execution of principle beat
3. Soft vs. Hard Stroke
4. Variations - 2-3-4-1, 2-3-1, 3-1
  - a.) floating technique
  - b.) wrist technique

### E. Fractional Entrances/Anacrusis

1. Tip to Tip
2. Arm - 1 beat
3. Wrist to Arm - 2 beats
4. Arm and Wrist
5. "DICTATE" whenever necessary (entrances and cut-offs)

### III. Score Preparation

#### A. Process

1. "Live With It"
2. Know the composer's intent (plot, story)
3. What holds the piece together
4. Build a sound image in your head
5. Determine the "givens": climax/highlight, divisi parts, transposed/concert score, instrumentation, etc.
6. Find melodies, textures, harmonic progressions, transitions
7. Sing silently horizontally and vertically
8. Be physical - tap, cue, grunt, "feel"
9. Know the order of events, recognize landmarks, historical background
10. Work macro-micro-macro

#### B. Specific Suggestions

1. Discover, identify, relate, review
2. Score markings (persona)
3. Continually improve development of "inner hearing", sing, sing, and sing!
4. Make a visual imprint of the page in your mind
5. Write harmonic analysis "on the score" in pencil
6. Definition of terms, systems, number each measure
7. Diagramming, highlighter (avoid too many colors), repetition
8. Internalization
9. 5 W's (who, what, when, where, why)
10. Look for the emotion
11. Become the music (graphic representation of the score)

### IV. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

#### A. Rehearsal Suggestions

1. Each rehearsal is an event!
2. *OBSERVE, DIAGNOSE, PRESCRIBE*
3. Know all the instruments and tendencies  
"A GUIDE to the UNDERSTANDING & CORRECTION OF INTONATION PROBLEMS" A. Fabrizio Meredith Publications
4. Find the magic in the music and communicate it
5. Don't save it for the concert
6. Warm-ups are important, especially percussionists
7. Vary routines, procedures
8. Left side/right side of stand
9. Get off the podium

10. Silent/Monk rehearsals
11. Contrast/Opposite of what is written
12. Be concise, clear, articulate, exactness
13. Start talking as soon as you stop conducting
14. SING, SAY, PLAY
15. Personal vs. Musical comments
16. Rotate players, sections
17. Ending the rehearsal at a high/low point
18. Listen to all kinds of music
19. Experience art in every medium of expression
20. Teach by example

#### B. Maiello's Favorite One Liners

1. Establish credibility by earning it every day
2. Too little obedience to gestures results in excess talk
3. Square off the pattern in times of rhythmic uncertainty
4. Physical presence displays mental attitude
5. Memorization is a direct result of exploration and study
6. Know what you want to hear **before**, not after it is played
7. Know what you want to say before you stop and how to get it
8. Don't learn the music on the podium
9. Score in the head, not head in the score (Toscanini)
10. To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late (Ravalli)
11. Music lifts the spirit and makes you a better human being.  
Good music puts you in a better frame of mind. (G. Solti)
12. Your students will only be as excited as you are
13. Frustration is a distraction. Nothing beats a failure but a try!
14. Teach that what you learn in rehearsal is what you do in performance.
15. Be thankful you are a musician and be sure to give the gift of music to others!  
Remember.....someone did it for us!!!
16. To have respect we must give respect!
17. They have to KNOW how much YOU CARE, before they CARE how much YOU KNOW!" Dr. Tim

**CONDUCTING: A HANDS ON APPROACH (CD and Video)**  
**by ANTHONY MAIELLO (musical examples JACK BULLOCK)**  
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