

Conducting Technique Lesson 13
Pattern Modification: Alternate “2,3,4”/GOS/ Melding/Negating/Ambidextrous
Authority/Macroconducting/
Skill Practice

Pattern Modification

Pattern modification is used to enhance our communication and to essentially look more like the music sounds.

First, let’s review the basics!

REVIEW of the BASICS

The anatomy of a pattern

- Point of attention- Ready to receive the sound

Ictus (when the beat occurs, shows style)

- Direction (which beat we are going toward next)

- Rebound- responds to the ictus, (everything else, specifically how the next beat should be performed, enhances character)

- PREP (is actually a “hanging rebound”)

- Internal Release (often doubles as both the release of a musical phrase and the preparatory beat to the phrase that follows. It is important that the direction of the release puts you into the position to show the following entrance.

- Final release – then freeze, wait before lowering hands

Each part of the conducting pattern is important and has a job to do to communicate our intention and the intention of the music..

Which tool will allow you to **look** like the music **sounds**?

The conducting gesture generally falls into the following three shapes, varying from piece to piece, measure to measure, or even beat to beat, as dictated by the character of the music:

- Pointed

- Horizontal

- Circular

The conducting gesture generally falls into three weights or resistances, varying from piece to piece, measure to measure, or event beat to beat, as dictated by the character of the music::

- Air- floating gesture

- Water- added resistance

- Earth- and even more resistance

The combination of these shapes and weights allow the conductor a myriad of options from which to choose or combine, creating a “conducting choreography” that depicts the character

of the music throughout. This gestural vocabulary will bring limitless expressive options to the conductor.

Further review of expressive options:

Home base- default gesture/position

mf

Non-legato

Andante

(clear, but not emphatic)

Comfortable: stand around navel but not too close

Conducting in the strike zone

(Loose, balanced yet ready posture- much like singing)

Forearm parallel to the floor

Elbows comfortably away from sides.

Sense of lift and upward energy in body

Balanced stance

Upward energy, downward energy, open expansion

Open, inviting, engaged face and body

Shoulder blades in pocket

Sense of conducting with bones

Tempo Modification

Tempo Adjustments

Accelerando- conduct ahead of the beat until tempo is achieved
Ritardando- show upward movement prior to giving

Subdivisions: remember is using subdivision at end of piece or section, start slowing the tempo one measure prior to the subdivision to prepare it and signal something is about to happen

Subdivisions: Remember, you do not always need to subdivide the entire measure.

ADJUSTING GESTURES (Gestures of Articulation)

Legato- Nah

tenuto – Yah

Staccato- snick or click

marcato-/bong

Laban terms:

Float

Wring

Glide

Press

Flick

Slash

Dab

Punch
(Pull)

MORE ADVANCED ADJUSTING TECHNIQUES

Gesture of syncopation- activity off the beat (see below)

Negated gesture

Melded gesture

Dead beat

Breath Indication- sticky beat with subdivision

Breath indication- negated beat with subdivision

Breath indications- using LH with subdivision

Alternate 2/3/4

The Gesture of Syncopation

The gesture of syncopation is a very powerful tool for helping with choral accuracy when executing syncopated rhythms and/or syncopated entrances. (A syncopated entrance or rhythm is movement that occurs off the main beat, typically on the “and” of a beat.)

To execute a GOS, it is important to set it up properly by negating (passive gesture) the beat prior to the gesture of syncopation. and then using an active vertical stroke from which your singers can “bounce into the rhythm”. Following the GOS, “catch the rebound” and get right back into the regular pattern. The GOS is a strong compelling gesture that evokes clarity and accuracy from your group.

The Negated and/or Retracted Gesture

As its name suggests, the Negated Gesture de-stresses a particular beat in the overall context of the measure or phrase. Thus, all beats will not receive the same amount of weight. This gesture is often used when showing a de-stressed textual syllable. While the gesture DOES show an ictus, it is modified with less weight than those preceding or following. In a sense, it is a smaller, gentler gesture. This gesture not only shows destressed syllables, but destressed notes within a musical phrase, allowing the stronger notes to become more predominant by the sheer fact that the notes around them are negated, without having to accent them. This leads to the ability to shape phrases in a very natural way. This gesture is also very effective to “set up” a syncopated entrance (see below) or to set up an accented note by negating the gesture prior. A gesture may be negated in several ways: 1. smaller with little rebound or 2. retracting the gesture slightly inward toward the body to replace the destressed beat (this would be referred to as a Retracted Gesture). This is a wonderful set up prior to an accent or sforzando, allowing the conductor to literally drop into the accented beat.

The Melded Gesture

The Melded Gesture is used by the conductor when no one is moving over the course of more than one beat. This gesture allows for altering the pattern by combining two or more beats into one gesture. It is important that the sense of pulse has been established in the piece prior to implementing this gesture and to pull through the melded beats with resistance and clear direction. When coming out of the melded gesture, it is important to “catch the rebound” for the final melded beat to effectively get back into the pattern. To underpin clarity in this gesture, an option is to continue conducting the pattern with the right hand, but to negate (mark) the beats while using the LEFT hand to show the melded gesture.

Video Demonstration: The Melded, Negated, Retracted gesture

<https://youtu.be/Wy-kefLqzPw>

Alternate 2,3,4 gesture

When a conductor wants to add growth or connection pushing from the final beat of the measure into the next downbeat, the Alternate gesture is helpful. This gesture is extremely effective when not overused. It is not recommended to overuse this gesture or to use this gesture as the default pattern, but instead to use when a phrase needs to be energized. Notice that the final beat of the pattern moves in an outward circle, which is prepared by rebounding upward on the prior beat.



Edit

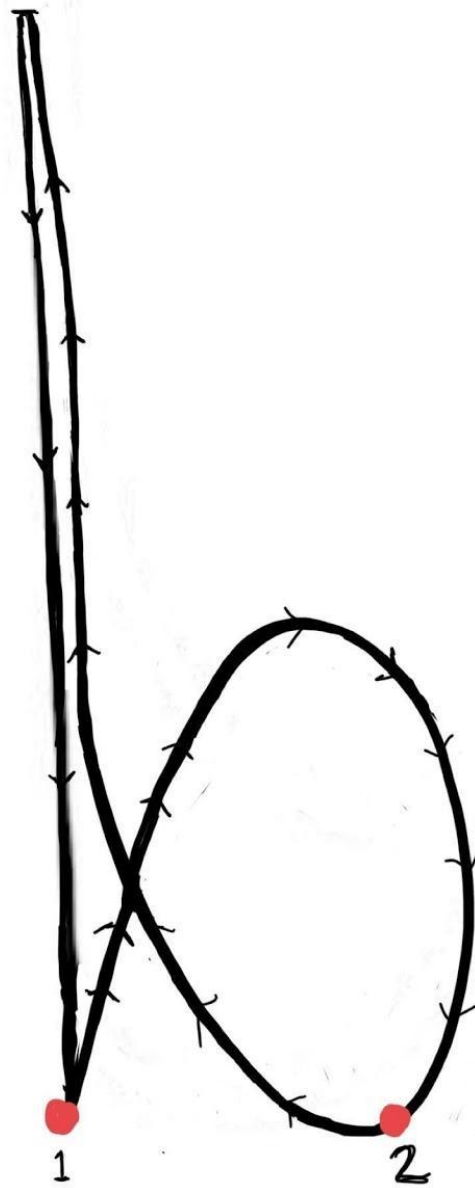


Figure 12.1 Alternate 2 pattern

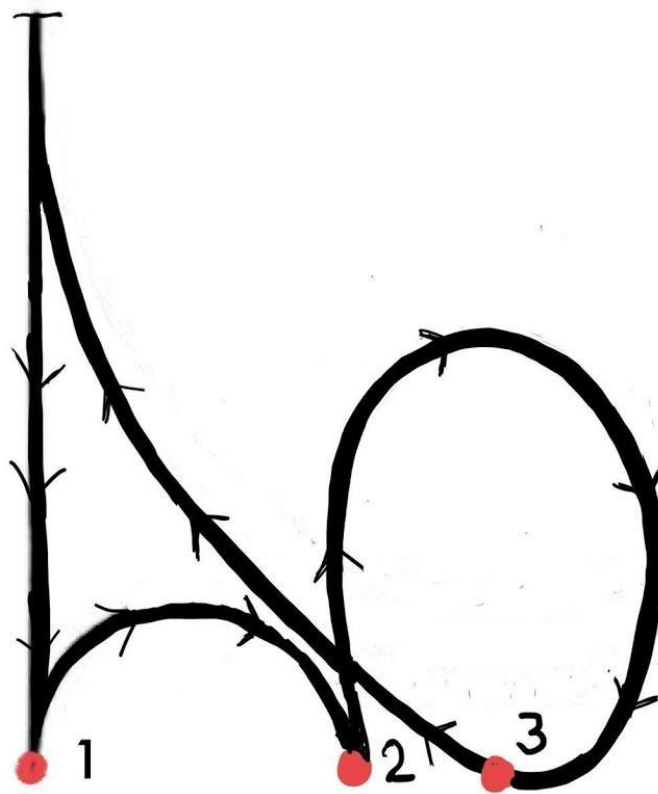


Figure 12.2 Alternate 3 pattern

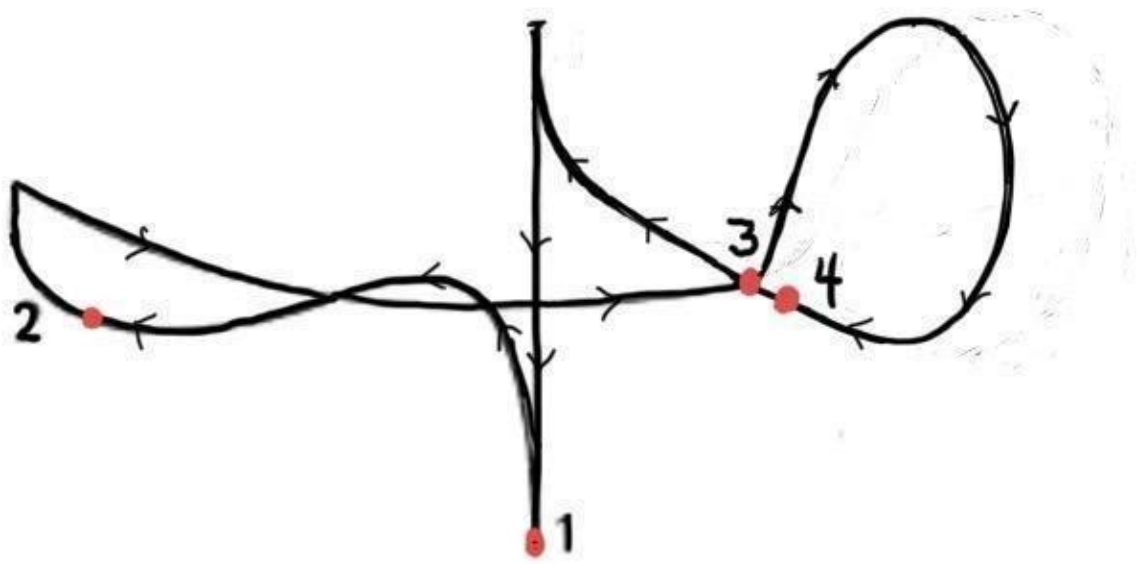


Figure 12.3 Alternate 4 pattern

Video Demonstration: Alternate Two, Three, and Four Patterns

<https://youtu.be/aGVAjEiPMek>

Effective Ambidextrous Conducting

The KEY to Ambidextrous Conducting: Transfer of authority

It is important that the conductor think of “passing authority” between the conducting hands” when called upon to do so. This allows the singers to immediately engage in the action that has been indicated by the new hand. To pass authority to the LH, the RH must get out of the way and delegate authority to the left hand. This can be done by slightly pulling in the arm with the lesser authority and slightly extending the arm with the new-founded authority. While it is not uncommon for both hands to communicate simultaneously, there is a sense in which the hands need to work synchronously as a team, allowing the hands to move in and out of authority, as dictated by the music. For example, if the LH is used to articulate, shape, or show a release, it will look more natural if the RH allows the LH to take prominence at such points. Frequently, these LH articulative gestures can actually be used to REPLACE a RH beat in the ongoing pattern, and then be reauthorized back to the RH once again. This adds authority and conviction to the hand “in charge” and will bring clarity to your ambidextrous conducting.

Macro-conducting

What is “macro-conducting”? Macro-conducting is a technique that allows the conductor to convert multiple measures written “in one” into a larger conducting pattern that spans several measures. It is helpful to think of it as the exact opposite process of the subdivision. Whereas in subdivision, the conductor is dividing each beat into smaller segments, in macro-conducting, the conductor is putting together groups of measures into a larger pattern. While the conductor is still conducting “in one,” the gesture for each measure is altered slightly to feel like a “four pattern” over the course of four measures, with each measure in one serving as a beat of a larger four-pattern. This allows the phrase shape to become more apparent and allows for some horizontal movement to aid in the shaping of the larger phrase. The key to effectively macro-conducting is to still show the one gesture clearly, but move the ictus points just slightly apart to function as both the one pattern and the larger four-pattern (or three-pattern, two-pattern) simultaneously. The conductor moves in and out of the micro-pattern and the macro-pattern seamlessly as the overall phrasing of the piece dictates. This technique adds a buoyancy and shape to the sometimes monotonous and non-musical act of conducting in one

Demonstration Video: Macroconducting

<https://youtu.be/n8bf5tBoGRU>