Conducting Technique Lesson 3
Brief history of conducting/Beat styles/Prep and Release gestures (internal and final)/THREE Pattern and TWO Pattern/Skill Practice- multiple meter exercises, moving beat pattern between hands

Source: Oxford Music Online

The History of Conducting

There are three periods of conducting development over western music history: The Singer-timebeater (15th-16th century), The instrumentalist-leader (17th–18th century), and The baton conductor (19th–20th century).

The Singer-timebeater (15th–16th century)

During this period, singers would mark the tactus to themselves by tapping a foot, hand or finger and sometimes would strike a book indicating tactus. Oftentimes was an audible sound and was initiated utilizing a rolled up piece of paper. The gesture was given by a choirmaster or a singer. The development of Cori spezzati practices of the early 17th century made time-beating even more necessary to synchronize multiple choirs, and a timebeater was often assigned to each choir, each watching and coordinating with the "lead timebeater."

The instrumentalist-leader (17th–18th century)

As musical ensembles were accompanied by a keyboard, or performed along with instrumentalists, the instrumentalist-leader emerged. In choral settings, the keyboard player (often the composer) would lead; in the orchestral setting, the first violinist or composer (who may have been keyboardist or violinist) led by playing either aurally or visually. Leading by playing or singing along was common. The "leader" was sometimes on a platform. With the development of opera, more directive became necessary. From mid-17th century until the beginning of the 19th century, performances at the Paris Opera, was directed by a time-beater with a baton, who gave visible and audible signals to the singers, dancers and instrumentalists. By the first decade of the 18th century the *batteur de mesure* had become established as a distinct function at the Opéra. Sometimes audible beat, sometimes rolled up scrolls, sometimes baton.

The baton conductor (19th–21st century)

1820 has long served as a watershed in the history of conducting; Ludwig Spohr is said to have introduced the baton at a concert in London that year. Although he probably used a violin bow, Spohr took credit in his Autobiography for 'the triumph of the baton as a time-giver'.

The rapid shift to the baton suggests the extent to which the craft of conducting was transformed between the 1820s and 1847, the year of Mendelssohn's death. The need for a central figure visually in charge of the ensemble became widely accepted. The codification of visual signals as the sole systematic means of guiding a performance quickly followed.

This led to the rise of conductors who were NOT the composer, as conducting began to separate from composition. Habeneck was among the first conductors who were not composers.

Mendelssohn did much to codify conducting method along with rehearsal expectations during the 1830s-40s.The leading figure in the history of conducting during the 1830s and 40s was Mendelssohn. In 1856, Berlioz wrote the first important modern treatise on baton conducting. He made a clear distinction between time-giving and the real art of the conductor, interpretation. He set forth the standard patterns of silent time division (preferred to audible time keeping), including complex metre (5 and 7) and a circular triple metre. The role of conductor was further developed by Wagner, shifting the role to more interpretive in nature.

Over the course of the 20th century, beat patterns became largely standardized and capable of being understood by musicians around the world. The idea of tactus represents that of fixing the central pulse of a passage in a regular and identifiable beat pattern. At the end of the 20th century stick technique and podium manner had become more standardized than at any point in the history of conducting. The rise of formal training at college and conservatory levels, the influence of international competitions and local apprenticeship programmes, the impact of recordings and film in the establishment of a conducting 'common practice,' codifying the "modern maestro"

Patterns and Muscle Memory

It is important for the new conductor to internalize patterns as cleanly and clearly into the body as possible, in order for expressive conducting to take place as the conductor grows. The best way to internalize is to learn each pattern as a default gesture, non legato, mezzo forte, as the body's muscle memory is established. This requires repetition and becomes very much auto-pilot for the conductor. While it is not unusual for the conductor to occasionally get thrown off the beat in the early learning, it is a skill that needs to become autopilot. This can be achieved by initially counting aloud while conducting to music, then transitioning to thinking the beat while conducting to the music, and finally, being able to multitask while maintaining the conducting pattern. Some multitasking strategies are to conduct to a piece of music while also carrying on a conversation with another person, stopping and starting the conducting pattern while the music continues, and moving the pattern back and forth between the hands. Another way to build musical memory is to shift between conducting patterns every four measures: 4/4, ¾, 2/4, ¾, 4/4, etc.

The THREE PATTERN and TWO PATTERN

THE THREE PATTERN

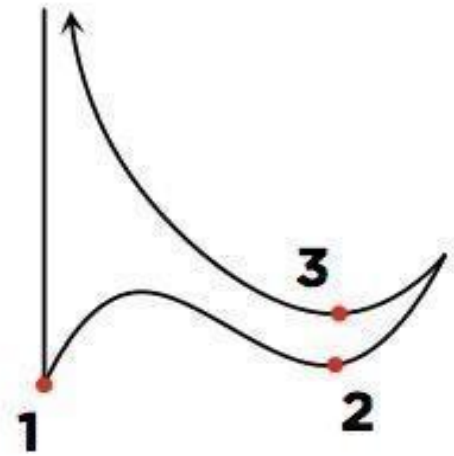


Figure 2.1 The Three Pattern

Video Demonstration: The Three Pattern
https://youtu.be/Spq0SWuRFdk

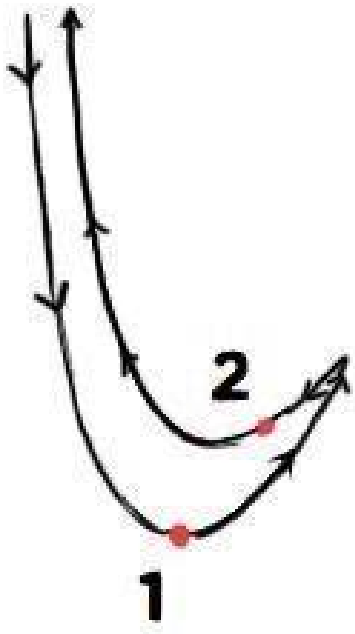


Figure 2.2 The Two Pattern

Video Demonstration: The Two Pattern
https://youtu.be/uJJ7MOOCkjE

Adjustments to the two and three patterns
As with the four pattern, you will need to able to alter and control the basic pattern shape and travel time between ictus and rebounds, as the musical style requires.

Reminder: Three types of ictus: (dictated by the style of the music)
Circular- rounded ictus/pattern- This can sometimes look similar to a figure-eight, with ictus points being shaved off into a circular gesture.
Vertical – pointed ictus – (staccato)- flicking drops of water/ stop between ictus points, angular, ictus points generally closer together
Horizontal- (legato)flattened ictus- wrist leads the hand and arm, baton tip follows the wrist- paint roller/ imaginary paint brush, ictus points generally further apart.

BEAT STYLES are created using different hinges and resistances as travel through space occurs.
Our Hinges:

Shoulder
Elbow
Wrist
Fingers

The SIX Articulations
An effective conductor must exhibit a strong command of six articulation gestures:

1. Legato (water) (YAW)- arm/wrist leads/resistance
2. Staccato (air)- wrist click (CLICK) lightly spaced (staccatisimo) points closer together
3. Marcato (earth) (BONG) staccato, but comes from the arm/shoulder instead of wrist, which adds heaviness, elbow helps with the jab gesture
4. Pesante/tenuto (earth) (BONG/YAW)- combination of legato and marcato
5. Leggiero-(air) (DANCE) Lift (air/dance)
6. Tenuto-" sticky beat"(PULL) pulling during rebound portion of the pattern, as it moves from ictus to ictus point.

ENTERING ON AN INCOMPLETE MEASURE

When entering on a beat **other** than beat one, the Prep Gesture will be shown on the beat prior to the entrance beat

So:

If the group enters on beat TWO, you will show beat ONE as the preparatory gesture with clear direction and breath

If the group enters on beat THREE, you will show beat TWO as the preparatory gesture with clear direction and breath

If the group enters on beat FOUR, your will show beat THREE as the preparatory gesture, with clear direction and breath.

You will quickly notice that it is important to find the right place for your hands to start, so that you can clearly show the correct direction in the prep gesture.

Entering on incomplete measure-

1. Show just one beat prior to entrance if possible, with breath, clear direction
   Prep gesture must be convincing and confident
   You will need to (and can) train your group to be prepared with just one prep gesture

0. Dead beat/active beat prep: When more clarity is needed at the beginning of piece, you may show one dead beat prior to your prep, followed by a very energized prep

0. "Measure for nothing" is sometimes used by conductors, generally not needed and looks a bit unprofessional

0. "Count Off measure"- often used in rehearsals, but you will wean your group off of this asap

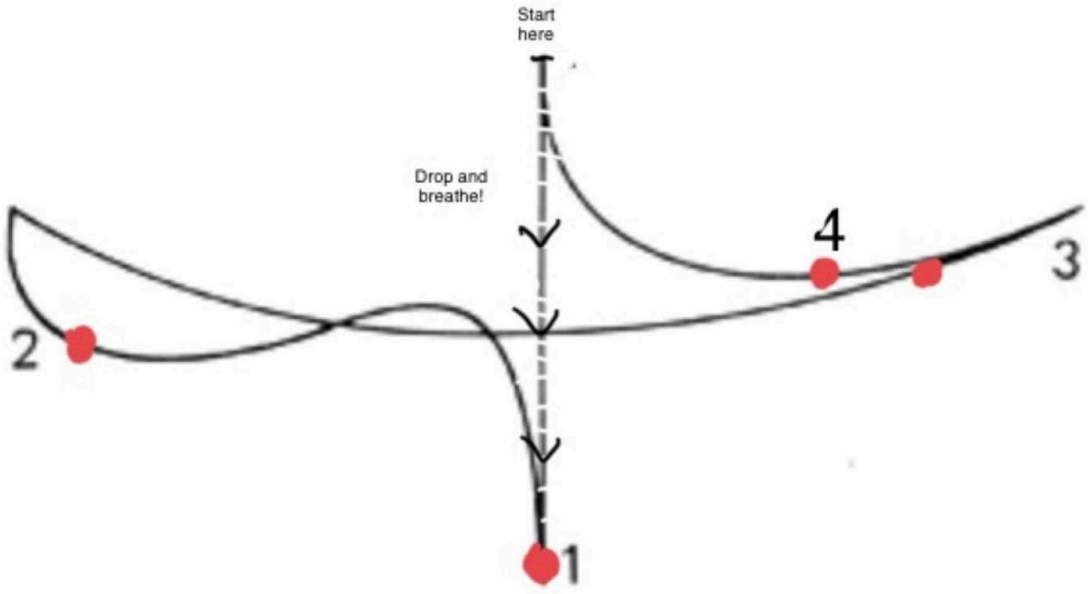


Figure 1.5 The Preparatory Gesture for entering on beat two in 4/4 time

Video Demonstration: Preparatory gestures entering on various beats
https://youtu.be/Bhr8XSHKMcY

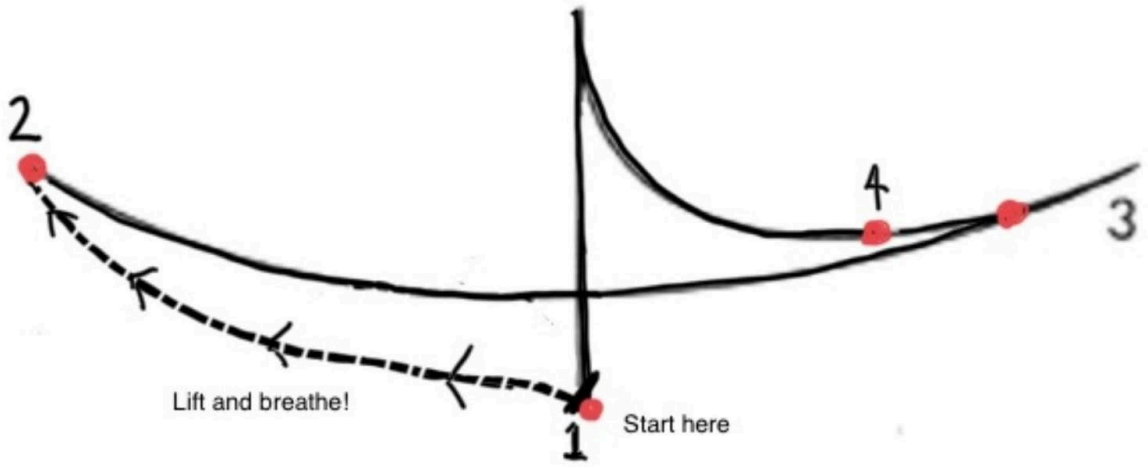


Figure 1.6 The Preparatory Gesture for entering on beat three in 4/4 time

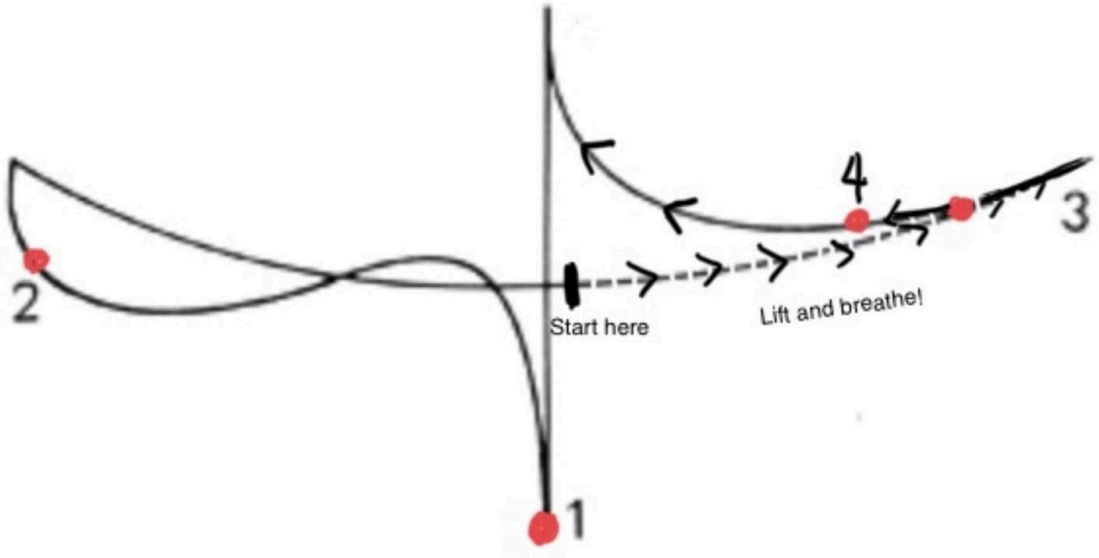


Figure 1.6 The Preparatory Gesture for entering on beat four in 4/4 time

Ambidextrous Conducting

It is important for the conductor to be able to mirror conduct to build ambidextrous conducting skills. While we generally conduct with the right hand, the left hand will need to be engaged

periodically when necessary for cueing and expressive gestural reinforcement. Practice mirroring the pattern, and then switch back and forth every two measures; every one measure.