

MODERN CONDUCTING:
AN EXHIBITION OF TRADITIONAL AND COMMERCIAL CONDUCTING

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE—FUNDAMENTALS OF CONDUCTING	3
Definitions and Philosophy of Conducting	3
Components of Gestural Conducting.....	4
Off-Stage Conducting Roles.....	8
Conducting in Stages	10
CHAPTER TWO—TRADITIONAL CONDUCTING.....	15
Overview	15
Instrumental Conducting	15
Choral Conducting	20
Mixed Ensemble Conducting	27
CHAPTER THREE—COMMERCIAL CONDUCTING.....	33
Overview	33
Conducting for Film and Media	33
Conducting Jazz Ensembles	40
Conducting Worship Ensembles	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	50

LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example:

1A. Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus - score..... 19

2A. All The Things You Are – score25

3A. I Need Thee Every Hour – score30

4A. The Map – score39

5A. What A Friend We Have In Jesus - score 44

6A. Cover The Earth – score48

INTRODUCTION

The art of conducting has long been a staple of Western music, from the romantic era to the present. Today, instrumental, choral, and mixed ensembles are directed by a skilled conductor, who in many cases serves as the ensemble director. Many traditional conducting concepts and gestures were developed and standardized over the centuries. However, the emergence of new ensemble types and the vast developments in the music industry during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have necessitated altered conducting styles and techniques. These varied conducting styles are built on traditional approaches but also include unique elements that contextually require further specialization and skill.

The significant musical and technological developments over the last 100 years have resulted in the emergence of new commercial performance scenarios, all of which are built on universal principles of conducting. However, each form requires distinctive technical approaches when compared to traditional conducting scenarios. The goal of this study is to examine, compare, and contrast various conducting styles and forms which modern conductors may be required to perform.

Both traditional and commercial conducting techniques will be assessed. The traditional conducting contexts include instrumental conducting, choral conducting, and mixed ensemble conducting. Commercial conducting contexts will include conducting for film and media, conducting a jazz ensemble, and conducting a worship ensemble. While each scenario shares similar conducting principles, further examination with regard to the unique nature of the technical challenges will be discussed in detail. The commercial conducting scenarios will be examined with

greater detail given the more recent developments in twentieth and twenty-first-century music and technology. Before the traditional and commercial approaches are assessed, fundamental conducting concepts and principles will be reviewed to provide some context for comparing traditional and commercial approaches. The fundamental areas to be discussed include the definition and philosophy of conducting, universal conducting gestures, the specific roles of a conductor and common preparation techniques.

CHAPTER ONE
FUNDAMENTALS OF CONDUCTING

Definitions and Philosophies of Conducting

Conducting is an art form and means of communication. It can be described as musical sign language and a visual representation of one's musical ear.¹ Conducting involves carefully crafted perceptual motor-skills in the form of gestures that transmit a plethora of musical information to an ensemble. The goal of conducting is to effectively lead an ensemble to perform music that is masterful and infused with interpretive and emotional passion.²

The art of conducting encompasses many roles and responsibilities which require competency in various musical and non-musical disciplines. Part and parcel of effective conducting involves teaching. As a leader, the conductor is tasked with the duty to direct, enlighten and teach ensemble members.³ The conductor is expected to ignite within the ensemble members the enthusiasm embedded in the musical selection.

A conductor's goal is to produce an aural re-creation of the written music with all the inherent expressive and interpretive characteristics that were internally conceptualized by the

¹ Anthony Maiello, *Conducting: A Hands-On Approach*, 2nd ed. (Van Nuys: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp., 1996), 10.

² Daniel L. Kohut and Joe W. Grant, *Learning to Conduct and Rehearse* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 71.

³ Ibid.

composer.⁴ The ensemble can be viewed as an extension of the conductor's musical interpretation and it behooves the conductor to translate his musical intentions clearly. The conductor therefore must translate all artistic and interpretive musical elements through clear physical gestures to ensure ensemble members perform the music as intended. Such precise execution requires much training and expertise on the conductor's part. The conductor must be a trained musician, know how to work with performers, have a thorough knowledge of composition, music theory and analysis, and be familiar with various musical styles and performance practices.⁵ Successful execution and translation of musical intentions occur through various standardized physical gestures. As such, mastery of common conducting gestures is necessary.

Components of Gestural Conducting

Before engaging in any form of physical motion, a conductor must understand the physical attributes and moving body parts that enable precise execution. Overall body control from the ground up is crucial for effective conducting. A conductor's stance and posture are the foundations through which all gestural motions are built. Generally, the feet must be firm, fixed, slightly apart, pointed forward, and positioned at the center of the conducting podium.⁶ This should be accompanied with an erect stance and an arched back, similar to that of a military commanding

⁴ Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ Harold Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique: A New Perspective* (Miami: Alfred Publishing, 1997), 23.

officer. Such a stance and posture exude a great sense of authority and confidence, which are essential attributes for conducting and directing an ensemble.⁷

The torso can be understood as the delivery system for conducting gestures, offering a wide range of necessary directional motion. The shoulders should be relaxed to avoid tension. Three main arm joints of conducting include shoulder, elbow, and wrist, all of which contribute to correct baton technique.⁸ These three components are widely responsible for the motion techniques and gestures that are performed within the vertical and horizontal conducting planes. The center of the chest is considered the focal point of one's conducting frame or conducting plane.⁹ The range of motion is defined by the extreme vertical and horizontal limits of the arm from the focal point.

The right hand is traditionally used to indicate the tempo and time signature by providing a consistent beat pattern.¹⁰ The size and smoothness of the beat pattern also indicate other musical characteristics such as dynamic level and the manner in which the music should be performed, such as legato or staccato.¹¹ The right hand can also be used to infer expressive elements. However, the left hand also serves and an indicator for dynamic and expressive musical elements, as well as for cueing entrances and cutoffs.¹² A conducting baton is commonly used to enhance the precision

⁷ Maiello, *Conducting*, 17.

⁸ Farberman, *Art of Conducting Technique*, 24.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Donald Hunsberger and Roy E. Ernst, *The Art of Conducting*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 3.

¹¹ Rudolf, *Grammar of Conducting*, 233.

¹² Ibid.

of the conductor's beat pattern. Proper use of the baton is predicated on a number of essential techniques.

The use of a baton is of great benefit to a conductor. The baton is considered an extension of the conductor's persona and a physical extension that shortens the distance between the conductor and ensemble.¹³ It is essential for conductors to display proficiency in their poise, motion, and baton technique which ensures clear communication of musical information to an ensemble. A conductor's physical gestures directly affect the overall performance.¹⁴ The conductor must have freedom and ease of motion more so than any other musician, sometimes approaching dance. Therefore, correct baton technique is an absolute necessity. The baton stick should be held between the tip of the thumb and the side of the index finger.¹⁵ A vital principle of baton technique is the placement of the ictus. It is recommended that the baton tip serves as the ictus.¹⁶ This placement is most effective for ensemble members' precise detection of the beat and progressive motion of the music. While the right hand wields the baton, the left hand must also perform critical functions to ensure that precise musical instruction is directed to the ensemble.

Conductors must develop independence of both hands to effectively communicate all musical intentions to the ensemble. As such, the conductor must have the ability to use the left hand independently of the beat driven right hand. The left hand provides expressive and dynamic

¹³ Maiello, *Conducting*, 17.

¹⁴ Rudolf, *Grammar of Conducting*, 233.

¹⁵ Maiello, *Conducting*, 17.

¹⁶ Kohut and Grant, *Learning to Conduct and Rehearse*, 36.

information as well as providing cueing of entrances and cutoffs.¹⁷ As compared to the right hand, the left is used in a less consistent and more selective manner, alerting ensemble members to be aware and ready for a particular preparatory instruction that informs and shapes the particular passage of music. However, another critical form of communication to the ensemble comes from the conductor's eyes and facial expressions.

The use of the eyes creates a deeper level of personal contact from the conductor to the ensemble. Conductors should keep most of their eye contact with the ensemble as opposed to the score to ensure ongoing contact with the ensemble.¹⁸ Continuous eye contact however requires much familiarization with the score. The more time a conductor spends in score preparation and study, the more eye contact the conductor can have with the ensemble. In congruence with eye contact, a conductor's facial expression also serves as a valuable form of expressive musical information. Conductors must be well invested in the music to a degree that permits them to relay their internal emotions effortlessly through their facial expression. Another fundamental principle of conducting relates to visibility, without which all efforts become meaningless.

A clear line of sight and complete visibility is necessary for all ensemble members to receive and respond to the conductor's gestures. Conductors are typically positioned in front of the ensemble on an elevated podium. Additionally, conductors often refer to and create suitable seating charts that ensure an adequate line of sight for each ensemble member within the context of the entire ensemble. The use of seating charts also organizes the ensemble in a manner that

¹⁷ Elizabeth A. H. Green and Mark Gibson, *The Modern Conductor*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2004), 78.

¹⁸ Rudolf, *Grammar of Conducting*, 235.

complements the overall sound of the ensemble and assists in planning stage layouts, as well as giving the conductor the correct directional context with regard to cueing specific sections or soloists.¹⁹ As such, it is imperative that conductors are sufficiently knowledgeable about the various ensemble configurations and choose the layout that best suits the specific ensemble and the repertoire being performed. Apart from attaining mastery of conducting gestures, a conductor has many off-podium responsibilities that ensure all primary conducting duties are not impeded.

Off-stage Conducting Roles

A large portion of a conductor's duties deals with the day to day administration of the ensemble. Depending on the ensemble type and size, the help of an assistant may be enlisted. However, the conductor must oversee all operations. Conductors are usually tasked with maintaining the ensemble members and ensuring that all ensemble positions are filled.²⁰ The conductor must be familiar with the personnel that make up the ensemble and periodically audition new members when positions in the ensemble need to be filled.²¹ With regard to performance preparation, a conductor is initially tasked with various programming duties related to concerts and performances. Many factors must be considered when planning successful programs.

When choosing appropriate repertoire, the conductor must consider factors such as the skill level of the ensemble, the potential audience reception to the repertoire, and the challenge it may pose to the conductor.²² Seasonal programs usually require planning timelines of twelve months

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hunsberger and Ernst, *Art of Conducting*, 118.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

in advance. This gives the conductor ample time to forecast potential concert dates, venues, featured performers, thematic performances aligned to yearly holidays, and dress rehearsal and concert date timelines.²³ Once the long-term planning is completed, the conductor then focuses on other pertinent administrative responsibilities.

After selecting appropriate repertoire for the ensemble, the conductor must plan all intricate details from the first rehearsal to the concert date. The music for all performers must be organized and ready for distribution when new repertoire is introduced.²⁴ Music must be purchased or retrieved from a library and organized for distribution to the respective performers. The conductor must then finalize, coordinate and communicate all rehearsal dates and times to the ensemble.²⁵ Rehearsal spaces must also be prepared prior to the beginning of rehearsals, where all necessary seating arrangements, music stands, and other related preparations must be made.

Leading up to the performance date, the conductor must plan all logistics surrounding the event. The event must be widely publicized and program notes must be generated and printed. An appropriate venue must be secured with ample time for dress rehearsals and other performance related elements. The conductor typically serves as a liaison to the technical production staff of the performance venue to discuss all lighting and audio/visual needs for the concert. After the concert, the conductor must spend time debriefing and analyzing the course of events leading up

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert L. Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music*, 8th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 202.

²⁵ Ibid.

to the performance. This gives the conductor meaningful feedback of the strengths and weaknesses of employed planning strategies, thus strengthening the effort for future endeavors.

After detailed planning for rehearsals and events, a conductor must undergo a set of procedures in preparation to lead, direct, and conduct the ensemble. The time spent in score preparation accounts for a significant amount of the conductor's personal and private preparation, long before a rehearsal is scheduled.

Conducting in Stages

A conductor must perform a series of preparatory procedures to lead an ensemble effectively. This includes score research, analysis, markings, and internalization. The following preparatory procedures of conducting are drawn from Timothy Sharp's book, *Precision Conducting: Seven Disciplines for Excellence in Conducting*. Score research is an important part of a conductor's duty. Answering a few key questions can guide conductors regarding the literature that is chosen for the ensemble. This includes music from various time periods, specific composers and large or small-scale works. Afterward, further questioning can help to refine the search for suitable and accurate selections of literature. These include finding reliable editions, seeking works that are still in print, and finding the best edition. Score analysis must be accomplished long before a conductor thinks of planning a rehearsal. The time spent in score analysis informs all other decisions.²⁶

The analysis process begins by identifying the major sections of a musical work. The musical work can be analyzed using a full-score chart where all the major movements are outlined

²⁶ Timothy Sharp, *Precision Conducting: Seven Disciplines for Excellence in Conducting* (Ohio: Roger Dean, 2003), 53-56.

on one page. Afterward, each sub-section and smaller movements within the work can be classified, described, and broken down. This breakdown includes instrumentation and choral involvement, tempo, key center, meter, number of movements, page location information and related text information. After completing this exercise, the conductor gains the ability to view the overall progression of the musical work.²⁷

Once the full-score chart is complete, the conductor is now ready to create a single movement chart which provides a detailed analysis of phrases, units and sections within a single movement, and should contain the following information: (1) Groups of measure that form units, (2) Analytical facts about each unit, and (3) Rehearsal considerations based on these analytical facts. The single-movement chart becomes a written guide in prose for the conductor and sets the foundation for the score internalization.²⁸

Internalization is a very demanding stage, requiring immense focus and concentration. The internalization process is realized by the conductor creating an aural image of what the score should sound like. As the score is internalized, the conductor becomes familiar with many facets of the music, such as timbre, vibrancy, phrasing and other artistic and interpretive elements. When internalization is done correctly, the conductor can easily build rehearsal plans to audibly re-create the internalized soundscape.²⁹

Score markings are intended to inform the conductor of critical moments in the progression of the music such as entrances, cutoffs, tempo changes and other crisis moments. Though a

²⁷ Ibid., 4-7.

²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 17-19.

conductor is familiar with the score from the analysis and internalization stage, the score markings serve as reminders during rehearsal and live performances. Musical elements that should be marked include the following: (1) Conducting pattern changes, (2) Phrasing marking and significant cutoffs, (3) Tempo and meter alterations, (4) Entrances that may go unnoticed, (5) Large section rests, and (6) Anticipated crisis areas. Markings should be large and emphatic. Conductors may devise their own unique marking symbols or utilize some conventional markings.³⁰

It is essential for the conductor to make necessary markings on individual instrumental parts. Such examination and markings further strengthens the conductor's knowledge of the intricate details of the musical work. It also allows for the conductor to examine the score and individual parts for engraving errors. By marking the individual parts, the conductor can ensure that each instrument and section perform the music with the conductor's artistic elements in mind such as bowings, attacks and desired timbre.³¹

Planning the rehearsal is a direct result of the score analysis (particularly the single movement chart analysis) and the internalization process. After completing the preceding steps, the conductor becomes aware of potential areas that will require special attention. The rehearsal considerations column in a single-movement chart serves as a rehearsal guide that alerts the conductor of areas that may require the most attention.

Conductors must pace their rehearsals in a balanced manner for effective learning and mastery of the music. A rehearsal plan should include the following: (1) Tuning and doing

³⁰ Ibid., 21.

³¹ Ibid., 22-23.

warming exercises, (2) Rehearsing familiar material first, (3) Rehearse new or more challenging material when everyone is sufficiently warmed up and engaged, and (4) When fatigue is noticed, the rehearsal should be concluded with a complete performance of a familiar piece.³²

Rehearsing the rehearsal is another essential stage in conductor's preparation. A conductor may discover how to perform a rehearsal effectively by mentally and physically rehearsing the rehearsal. The elements of the mental and physical rehearsal is drawn from the various details gathered from the conductor's score preparation phases. The process should be guided by the notes made from analysis charts and rehearsal considerations. Essentially, the conductor gets a practice run at carrying out the rehearsal and is able to devise the best rehearsal strategies. The mental and physical rehearsal also ensures that the real rehearsal is executed with efficiency. It is beneficial for the rehearsal space to be rehearsed, which ensures all necessary facility arrangements are prepared ahead of time.³³

The first rehearsal sets the standard for all latter rehearsals. A detailed rehearsal plan should be distributed at the beginning of each rehearsal, informing all personnel of the goals of each rehearsal in context of the performance timeline. At the rehearsal, the conductor enacts his rehearsal plan in the prepared order. Conductors should exude a great deal of passion and excitement during rehearsal which in turn inspires musicians to perform with excellence. During the rehearsal, the conductor should make continuous observations and notes regarding issues that may require additional attention in future rehearsals. After each rehearsal, comments and feedback should be noted, all of which can be addressed in following rehearsals. Recording rehearsals,

³² Ibid., 26-27.

³³ Ibid., 29.

getting feedback from musicians, and making small notes at the end of each rehearsal help in the preparation for future rehearsals.³⁴

The aforementioned fundamentals of conducting allow for the further investigation of the specific competencies required for the various traditional and commercial conducting scenarios. Each scenario is built on the fundamental concepts discussed. However, each scenario requires a unique skill set, a working knowledge base, and various technical approaches that must be mastered to effectively conduct the various ensemble types.

³⁴ Ibid., 30-32.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL CONDUCTING

Overview

The fundamental conducting concepts will be assessed and applied to the three traditional conducting scenarios: (1) instrumental conducting, (2) choral conducting, and (3) mixed ensemble conducting. Each scenario utilizes core concepts from the aforementioned conducting fundamentals. However, each scenario presents unique challenges that require specific conducting techniques, approaches, and a working knowledge of the ensemble's unique characteristics.

Instrumental Conducting

Conducting an orchestra entails a variety of unique challenges that a conductor must overcome to achieve a smooth and accurate ensemble performance. The goal of instrumental conducting is to achieve a precise representation of the repertoire with the inclusion of the desired interpretive and expressive elements. The conductor therefore must employ a number of specific conducting approaches to achieve this goal.

A conductor's preparation, analysis, marking, and internalization of the score are pivotal stages that must be completed before any attempt is made to direct the ensemble. The conductor must know the music with intricate detail and formulate a well-crafted rehearsal plan for maximum rehearsal efficiency. This preparation includes knowing the instrumentation, form and progress of the piece, identifying individual or sectional solos, and attaining a 'road map' of the repertoire. Once this stage is successfully completed, the conductor is now ready to lead a rehearsal.

Providing a clear and consistent beat pattern is a pivotal aspect of instrumental conducting. Orchestral instrumentalists rely heavily on the conductor's continuous beat pattern to remain synchronized throughout the performance.¹ Instrumentalists pay close attention to the nuances in a conductor's beat pattern to ensure precise execution. Instrumentalists also distinguish a variety of gestures that indicate the need for alterations in dynamics, articulations, points of transition, and other expressive functions as indicated in the music or by the conductor.

Orchestral players are required to maintain a visual balance of reading the music and observing the continuous flow of musical information from the conductor as the piece progresses. Instrumentalists rely significantly on their peripheral vision to observe the conductor's motion while they simultaneously read the music.² Instrumentalists will, however, look directly at the conductor occasionally at crucial moments in the music to ensure synchronization and smooth transitions.

Another key factor in instrumental conducting is that of preparatory gestures. Entrance, cutoff, and transitional cues must be clearly articulated through precise conducting gestures to ensure clarity of the conductor's performance-related intentions towards the ensemble. The smooth execution of preparatory cues is a result of the conductor's score preparation, analysis and internalization. All gestures to be interpreted by the orchestra must be well-crafted and rehearsed during initial score analysis and score marking stages.³

¹ James Jordan, *Evoking Sound*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009), 339.

² *Ibid.*, 340.

³ *Ibid.*

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

In 1922, Helen H. Lemmel wrote the well-known hymn, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.” The arrangement under analysis was created by Jay Rouse. This instrumental piece is orchestrated for strings and brass. The arrangement is constructed in a standard ABA form (Chorus-Verse-Chorus). The A section begins in concert Ab major and modulates up a half step to A major in the B section. Upon transitioning into the last A section, the piece modulates to C major which is followed by a final modulation a few measures later to E major. The initial tempo marking is set to 76 bpm with an expressive marking that reads, ‘Warmly.’ The piece contains a homophonic texture with the inclusion of solo instruments that carry the melody (example 1A).

The melody is first carried by trumpet 2 in the A section with lush chordal accompaniment by the string section. The melody is then performed by the alto sax in the B section with a more expressive and rhythmically dynamic accompaniment in the strings. The score includes an expressive marking that reads ‘Freely’ for the solo instrument. In the final A section, the melody is performed by trumpet 1 and alto sax with a homophonic accompaniment by the other brass instruments and string section. The piece concludes with a brief restatement of the melodic song title, played by the cello and supported by the rest of the string section.

The pedagogical approach for a piece of this nature was relatively straight forward. The sheet music provided the instrumentalists with the all the performance related information. The conductor must effectively lead the ensemble through the music and alert them of any additional desired expressive elements. For the first rehearsal, the sheet music was distributed and the instrumentalists were conducted through the entire piece. Given the tempo marking and the gentle and lush nature of the piece, some artistic tempo variations such as rubato and ritardando were included. The instrumentalists were apprised of these minor tempo variations and instructed to

follow the conducting gestures that demonstrate this desired effect. It was necessary to ensure that musical passages with tempo alterations were conducted with utmost clarity to the orchestra.

The A section progresses with a natural smoothness and one must keep the musical phrases in mind. The tempo was varied to include brief pauses to imitate a sense of breathing in between phrases. Such a tempo variation aligns with the expressive tempo mark in the score, as well as exercising some expressive freedom throughout the performance. The nature of the accompaniment changes as the piece flows into the B section and the melody switches to the alto sax. The preceding measure of transition must be handled delicately to ensure an effective cutoff of the trumpet and strings, a clear and smooth entrance of the alto sax, and a precise re-entry of the string accompaniment.

Example 1A. "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" score.

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus
Instrumental

Words and Music by
Helen Howarth Lemmel

Arr. by Jay Rouse
Orchestrated by Mark McDowell

Score

Warmly ♩ = 40

A- CHORUS

Alto Sax

Trumpet in B \flat 1

Trumpet in B \flat 2
f cantabile

Trombone

Violin I
mf dolce

Violin II
mf dolce

Viola
mf dolce

Cello
mf dolce

Double Bass
mf dolce

In this arrangement, many of the string entrances in the B section fall on beat two while the melody gently progresses unaltered. Careful attention to the string section cutoffs and re-entries must be handled with clarity and precision. Measures 30-34 lead up to a crescendo and key change,

indicating the need to build the energy for the upcoming transition. This build must be preceded by a steady expansion of the conducting frames accompanied by gestures that indicate the grandeur at the point of transition between mm 34 and 35. In the latter section A onward, this energy must be maintained until the dynamic change to *p* in measure 47. It was necessary to communicate a decrescendo into the measures preceding the dynamic change. The insertion of a minor ritardando also accompanied the dynamic change to enhance the expressive nature of the moment. Additionally, the pickup to measure 48 needed to be handled delicately to ensure a smooth re-entry of all instrumentalists as the piece calmly progressed to the conclusion. With the implementation of the aforementioned pedagogical approach and expressive insertions, meaningful progress was observed in the first two rehearsals.

Choral Conducting

Conducting a choral ensemble comes with a varied set of challenges as compared to instrumental conducting. As such, the conductor must implement various pedagogical and rehearsal strategies for achieving excellent choral tone. The conductor's primary goal in choral conducting is to achieve a unified, balanced, and blended sound with the inclusion of all necessary interpretive and artistic musical elements. Many factors affect the accomplishment of this goal. The conductor must implement carefully crafted techniques and approaches to successfully lead the choral ensemble. The distinctive attributes of choral conducting will be assessed.

By nature, choral conducting is more expressive as compared to the consistent rhythmic nature of instrumental conducting. Choral conductors place a greater emphasis on gestures that display musical expression rather than rhythmic consistency.⁴ A measure of time keeping is still

⁴ Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music*, 202.

maintained and infused in the conducting. However, most of the conducting gestures pertain to the intricate musical shaping that the conductor desires. Secondly, a baton is not typically used in the choral conducting tradition. This is largely due to the greater expressive nature found in choral conducting as opposed to providing consistent rhythmic pulses.

In choral rehearsals, an accompanist or rehearsal pianist is commonly present, fulfilling a key role in the pedagogical process. Rehearsal pianists provide the necessary accompaniment for rehearsals in addition to providing vocal sections with pitch references and choral parts in select passages of the music as needed. Rehearsal pianists are invaluable assets to the conductor and the ensemble, providing the musical context of a piece during the pedagogical process.⁵ Many of the major distinctive features of choral conducting are found in the factors that contribute to a unified choral sound. These factors include, balance, blend, vowel unification, breathing, and the unification expressive elements.

Blend and balance are very important factors for achieving excellence in choral sound. The conductor must have a personal concept of choral tone, critical listening skills for diagnosing tonal issues, and the requisite pedagogical tools for addressing the issues. The overall choral tone is intricately dependent on the contribution of each member of the ensemble. Conductors must ensure that each member performs various techniques to accomplish proper choral tone such as breath support, phonation, resonance and articulation. The following principles of are derived from Timothy Sharp's book, *Precision Conducting: Achieving Choral Balance and Blend*.

Balance deals with quantitative issues, whereas blend deals with qualitative issues. Choral balance can be described as the achievement of an equal weight of sound in each vocal section

⁵ Green and Gibson, *Modern Conductor*, 183.

toward an equilibrium between sections. To achieve choral balance, the conductor must consider the number of singers within each vocal section, the volume generated by each section, and the strength, power of timbre, and vibrancy within each part. An ideal choral balance is achieved when each factor is equal among the sections. This form of choral balance begins to overlap into choral blend, but it all begins with balancing issues.⁶

Blend is defined as the achievement of the imperceptible shading of many individual sounds into one sound. In a choral context, each individual and section ought to become blended into one entity. Blend is also very much dependent on the foundation of choral balance. As mutually inclusive elements, balance and blend are interdependent and as such, the conductor's duty is to shape the blend of the choral ensemble. Choral conductors must therefore give attention to three simple principles for achieving choral blend: (1) Choral blend is determined by the development and achievement of each ensemble member; (2) Choral blend is determined by each singer in the chorus subordinating their own idea and inherent timbre, vibrato and vibrancy related to tone production, rhythmic stress, and pronunciation to the blended and unified tonal ideal dictated by the conductor; and (3) Choral blend is achieved by allowing each singer to produce the tone that is unique to their voice, but within a unification of vowels, consonants, rhythms, vibrato, and interpretive devices as nuanced by the conductor.⁷

Choral conductors must insist on some crucial absolutes to achieve choral blend including rhythmic precision, vowel unification, vibrant and energetic consistency, correct intonation, and

⁶ Timothy Sharp, *Precision Conducting: Achieving Choral Balance and Blend* (Ohio: Roger Dean, 2005), 6-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-28.

vocal ease while singing. The intricacies of language and the text being sung (such as diphthongs and sung and unsung consonants and vowels) make it necessary for all vocalists to conform to precise rhythmic execution, as dictated by the conductor.⁸

Vowel unity ensures that each vocalist pronounce each vowel in the manner intended by the conductor and it also assists with clarity and intonation. The conductor must direct vocalists in the exact formation, pronunciation and shaping of vowel sounds throughout a given piece. Choral blend is very much dependent on precise intonation as exemplified in three techniques: (1) Tonize—find the home key, (2) Identify pitch carriers—notes carried by other section or accompanists, and (3) Sub-vocalizing a pitch—hearing pitches internally before vocal production. Conductors are encouraged to drill vocalists continually to hear and reproduce precise pitches.⁹

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“All The Things You Are”

“All The Things You Are” is a popular jazz standard, the music written by Jerome Kern with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. The a cappella version under analysis was arranged by Kirby Shaw for SATB choir. The piece follows a 36-bar AABA form with a 4-measure introduction and an expansion towards the end inserted by the arranger. Though the original piece was written in Ab major, this arrangement was written in F major. The piece contains tonicizations to C major, and to E major, followed by a return to the home key. The beginning tempo marking is set at a range of 88-92 bpm with an expressive marking that reads, “Freely, with warmth.” The texture is mostly homophonic with few contrapuntal passages. Shaw uses a mixture of cluster voicings with tight harmonies, as well as open voicings with a greater vocal spread. The sopranos carry the

⁸ Ibid., 30-32.

⁹ Ibid., 40-41.

melody throughout the piece and a vocal solo is introduced in the B section with sustained chordal accompaniment by the choir.

The score was meticulously marked by Shaw, highlighting the intricate expressive detail that is desired throughout the piece. Such markings leave little room for personal interpretation but also give the conductor a specific guide at achieving the desired choral tone. Apart from standard dynamic marking and articulations, Shaw includes numerous suggestions for breathing, unison and divisi markings, and a few optional voicing choices in select measures. For the successful reproduction of this piece, various pedagogical considerations must be applied (example 2A).

At the first rehearsal, the sheet music was distributed, and a studio demo version was played to provide the musical context to the choir. After listening to the demo and concurrently following the sheet music, an estimated timeline of completion was given, and rehearsal goals were mentioned. The first few rehearsals centered on achieving precise notes, rhythms, entrances and cutoffs. The piece was broken down into manageable eight measure phrases. Each phrase was progressively rehearsed to ensure accuracy of pitch and unified rhythm in the overall sound. Considerations were also given to the breath marks and divisi voicing choices during this phase of learning. Some passages included up to six voices and the divisi voice parts were

Example 2A—"All The Things You Are."

from **VERY WARM FOR MAY**
ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE
 For SATB* a cappella
 Duration: ca. 2:55

Arranged by
KIRBY SHAW

Lyrics by **OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II**
 Music by **JEROME KERN**

Freely, with warmth ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 88-92$)

Soprano
 Alto

Tenor
 Bass

Oo, *mf* Oo, *mf* *div.*

Oo, *mf* Oo, *mf*

Oo, _____ Oo, _____

4

no breath

You are the prom - ised kiss of _____

no breath *unis.*

spring - time _____ that makes the lone - ly win - ter _____ seem

All The Things You Arefrom **VERY WARM FOR MAY**

Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

Music by Jerome Kern

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assigned accordingly. During this initial phase of notes and rhythms, some attention was given with regard to shaping. However, once the vocalists displayed mastery of the fundamental notes and rhythms, subsequent rehearsal focused on fine tuning the expressive elements of the piece.

A lot of the expressive elements in the piece were found in the variations of dynamics, tempo, and vibrancy of vocal production. The piece includes many dynamic changes that added to its expressive nature. These dynamic changes such as crescendos, were communicated with the use of various conducting gestures such as increasing the conducting frame size and employing appropriate right-hand gestures. These gestures indicated the need for an increasing dynamic level. Breath marks in the score were communicated by right-hand gestures that suggest a continuous, uninterrupted flow from one word to the next. This gesture helped to remind the vocalist not to breathe between specific passages in the piece. Staggered breathing was indicated for certain passages that contained sustained notes. Vocalists were instructed to breathe in a staggered manner in between these sustained notes as opposed to breathing on the note changes.

Specific attention was given to vowel unification, the sectional blend, and the overall blend. Clarification of vowel unification was made throughout the progression of the piece to ensure consistency in the overall choral sound. Vocalists in each section were instructed to listen critically to each other and to blend within their section and the other sections. The instruction and engagement of each vocalist to critically listen for blending issues assisted in the achievement of a unified sound. Each vocalist and section automatically made necessary corrections and adjustments to their vocal production that resulted in a more homogenous sound. Given the musical instruction, individual and section adjustments, planning strategies, and conducting gestures, the ensemble achieved very satisfactory results within a short timeframe.

Mixed Ensemble Conducting

Conducting ensembles that include choir and orchestra presents a number of unique challenges to the conductor. The conductor's goal is to lead the ensemble in a cohesive performance that bears all desired artistic elements while ensuring that all performers are given appropriate direction throughout the progression of the piece. Leading a mixed ensemble requires specific conducting techniques and much preparation on the conductor's behalf.

Conducting mixed ensembles present varied challenges as compared to solely conducting instrumental or choral ensembles. The conductor becomes responsible for managing larger forces and must ensure that a balance is maintained in the overall sound. When choral works are performed with accompaniment, similar principles for choral balance are applied to instrumental accompaniment. Numbers are important. More instruments mean greater attention to balance. It may become necessary to have instrumentalists play softer to compensate for the volume difference. Other factors include instrumental strength, timbre and vibrancy. Factors such as room size and acoustical properties of a performance venue must also be considered for balancing purposes. With regard to performances with electronic amplification, conductors must work alongside audio engineers to ensure balance is maintained.¹⁰

Choral conductors that are to lead a mixed ensemble must be prepared to lead an instrumental rehearsal efficiently as orchestral players are trained to rehearse faster than choral ensembles. A working knowledge of the dynamics of the orchestra is necessary and expected. Prior to the first instrumental rehearsal, the choral conductor must be familiar with numerous orchestral

¹⁰ Sharp, *Achieving Choral Balance and Blend*, 26.

considerations such as: (1) Instrumental sections involved and appropriate orchestral layout and seating arrangements, (2) Unique characteristics of each section such as pitch range, sound production techniques, intonation and tonal attributes, (3) Specific bowings for stringed instruments, and (4) Limitations of each instrument. Preparation for an instrumental rehearsal with these factors in mind equips the choral conductor for an efficient instrumental rehearsal.¹¹

On the other hand, instrumental conductors that are to lead a choral rehearsal must be keenly familiar with the choral parts in addition to the instrumental parts. A working knowledge of the dynamics for achieving excellent choral tone is necessary. In preparation for choral rehearsals, the instrumental conductor must consider rehearsal strategies that assist in achieving choral balance, blend, and vowel unification. The instrumental conductor may also consult and/or defer to the chorus master to work through specific details such as choir seating arrangements, appropriate times for the choir to stand and sit, and choral enunciation issues.¹²

Mixed ensemble conducting contains a combination of distinctive instrumental and choral principles. The conducting style becomes a matter of prioritizing between the two groups, given the nature of the repertoire being performed. The conductor must make informed decisions regarding the gestures intended for choir and orchestra as the music progresses. Much of the decision making occurs during the score analysis, marking, and internalization phase. The conductor's duty is to ensure each group receives the required direction, particularly at crucial moments in the piece. The conducting style may reflect a mixture of choral and instrumental techniques where necessary. The conductor must provide a clear beat pattern for instrumentalists

¹¹ Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music*, 234.

¹² *Ibid.*, 235.

while offering necessary expressive gestures that guide the shaping of the choral tone. The conductor must also give precise directional cues to the intended section/group to avoid any miscommunication with other sections.

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“I Need Thee Every Hour”

This well-known hymn was written by Annie Hawkins and Robert Lowry and was first published in 1883. The arrangement under analysis was created by Jay Rouse. The piece is scored for SATB choir, piano, brass and strings. The initial tempo marking is set to 88 bpm and includes an expressive marking that reads, ‘Freely.’ The piano serves as the primary medium of accompaniment. (example 3A).

Example 3A—"I Need Thee Every Hour."

Score

Words and Music by
ROBERT LOWRY & ANNIE HAWKINS
Arr. by Jay Rouse
Orchestrated by Mark McDowell

Freely ♩ = 88

INTRO

The score is for an instrumental introduction in 4/4 time, marked 'Freely' with a tempo of 88 beats per minute. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The instruments listed are Alto Sax, Trumpet in B-flat 1, Trumpet in B-flat 2, Trombone, Piano, Soprano Alto, Tenor Bass, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The piano part is the only one with notation, starting with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The piano introduction consists of five measures. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The melodic line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a quarter note D5, and continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass line starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, Bb2, and C3, then a quarter note D3, and continues with a series of quarter and eighth notes.

Alto Sax

Trumpet in B \flat 1

Trumpet in B \flat 2

Trombone

Piano *mp*

Soprano
Alto

Tenor
Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

The brass and strings enter at various segments of the piece to deepen the harmonic accompaniment in addition to accentuating the melodic and polyphonic material. The choral arrangement includes monophonic and homophonic textures with hints of polyphony. Some segments include five and six vocal parts, requiring divisi in some vocal parts. The distribution of divisi parts were based on the written vocal ranges

The piece begins in the key of Eb major. In mm 1-9, the piano introduces a descending melodic and harmonic motif that recurs throughout the piece. In mm 10-18, the verse is introduced by the sopranos and altos in prime unison and is underscored by the piano. At the pickup to the chorus in mm 19, the tenors have their first entrance and the vocal parts are split into harmonies. The sopranos maintain the melody for the entire chorus from mm 19-34. The first 6 measures of the chorus feature cluster harmonies where the altos are in divisi (mm 19-24.) The basses and string section have their first entrance at the pickup to measure 25. All four vocal parts and string sections continue to the end of the chorus and fade out after the first two measures of a brief interlude and modulation to G major (Interlude—mm 34-36).

The melody of verse 2 is carried by tenors and basses in prime unison. Two measures before the second chorus, the sopranos, altos and strings re-enter along with a first entrance of the brass section (mm 44-45). The entrance into the second chorus is marked with a crescendo. Within the second chorus (mm 46-59), the vocal spread alternates between four and five voices where altos are in divisi as needed. The brass section remains in until a decrescendo to *mp* in mm 53. The strings and choir both fade out during the first two measures of the second interlude (mm 60-67). The second interlude leads into the final modulation to Ab major with a choir entrance at the pickup to the modulation at mm 64. The strings also enter on the modulation at mm 64. Verse 3 (mm 68-83) begins with a slightly faster tempo, indicating forward motion in the music. The choir sings

the entire third verse in unison until the pickup to the third chorus in mm 84 where they once again split into parts. The brass section also re-enters at the pickup chorus 3.

This final chorus (mm 84-97) serves as the pinnacle of the piece and is met with a preceding crescendo to *f* from verse 3. The energy remains until a minor dynamic change to *mf* in mm 91 where the brass section decrescendos and exits. The latter half of chorus 3 (mm 92-97) gradually reduces in energy to *mp* where the choir and string section eventually decrescendo and exit in the first two measures of the outro section (mm 98-100). Further in the outro section (mm 98-111) features the choir in a few a cappella moments and lightly accompanied by the piano until the last measure where the choir, piano and strings are held in suspension by a fermata until the cutoff is given by the conductor.

To rehearse this piece effectively, separate choir and orchestra rehearsals were scheduled. In the choral rehearsals, attention was initially given to achieving correct notes and rhythms. Afterwards, a greater focus was placed on breath support, vowel unification, and overall blend. The instrumental rehearsal progressed more quickly in comparison. The piece was initially conducted, after which brief comments were made on areas that required adjustment. The piece was performed again to ensure a precision with the indicated adjustments.

For the joint rehearsal, the piece was conducted with a baton. Given the nature of the arrangement, the conductor has ample opportunities to interact with the choir, providing the necessary expressive elements, while having the opportunity to give the orchestra their necessary entrance and cutoff cues with ease. The implementation of these conducting strategies yielded noticeable results.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMERCIAL CONDUCTING

Overview

Numerous observable developments have occurred in the music industry from the early-twentieth century to the present. A significant part of these developments includes the emergence of contemporary genres of music and redefined performance practices. Additionally, the technological advancements observed in this time period have also played an important role in the development, production and distribution of music to the masses. The developments in the industry have also played a significant function in the emergence and performance practices of commercial forms such as music in film and media, the jazz ensemble, and the combined use of classical and contemporary forms in modern worship contexts.

The aforementioned commercial forms have distinctive performance practices that differ from traditional forms. Consequently, these commercial forms require altered conducting approaches for successful execution. Commercial conductors in each scenario must familiarize themselves with the terminology, workflow, and surrounding characteristics of the form and apply the appropriate techniques to lead the ensemble successfully. Each commercial form will be analyzed, and the distinctive conducting approaches will be investigated.

Conducting for Film and Media

The film industry has undergone vast developments since the early-twentieth century. The technology that introduced ‘moving pictures’ or movies to the masses emerged in the late- 1800s,

and a new industry standard was on the horizon. This technological development aided in the emergence of the silent film era.¹ As this new form of media presentation blossomed, live accompaniment by a pianist or small ensemble became a standard feature that livened the overall experience.² The inclusion of music to the silent film was a secondary concern. However, as the art form developed, film producers began to see the value of music that was scored specifically for their films.³

As we fast forward to the present, film music has become an essential staple of modern film making. Scoring for film and media has become an industry in itself, the film scoring stage being the central point that brings the music to life. The intricacies of the new industry produced many pertinent factors for a conductor in the commercial setting of the film scoring stage. Before conducting approaches can be discussed, exploring the intricacies of the film scoring stage environment is necessary.⁴

The film scoring stage refers to the gathering of all necessary personnel at a uniquely outfitted recording studio to ‘print’ or record the music for a film or media presentation. The recording session includes the composer, the film directors and producers, orchestrator, music editor, music supervisor, recording engineer, technical assistants, musicians and of course, the

¹ Mervyn Cooke, “Contents,” in *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), vii-x.

² David Neumeier, *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 611.

³ Cooke, *Film Music*, 468.

⁴ Richard Davis, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Berklee Press, 2010), 4.

conductor.⁵ Each person in the production chain plays a key role in bringing the music to life. The conductor's duty is to lead the ensemble during the recording session, an important task that has many moving parts. A crucial aspect of combining music with any form of media is precise synchronization. The music written for the media is intended to be specifically aligned with the chronological progression of the media. A number of advancements in audio/visual technology and music production software enable composers to create music that calibrates to the media with intricate precision.⁶

The use of digital media formats has greatly assisted film makers in the production process. Composers that are hired to score original music for a film are given a 'locked' digital media file. The locked media file represents the final edits in relation to the chronological progress of the media. Imprinted on the locked file is what is known as the 'Timecode.' The timecode sub-divides the media into minutes, seconds and frames. As such, a composer has the potential to write music that aligns with the media within 1/24 of a second. The composer then begins to craft the synchronized music that compliments the media.⁷

Music for media is composed in segments called cues. Each cue corresponds to a specific timecode range of the media. Due to the synchronous nature of music cues, the composition may contain a variety of evolving musical elements, particularly, changing tempos. Two primary compositional modes must be considered: Rhythmic and Free time. Rhythmic compositions contain consistent tempos throughout the cue, whereas Free Time compositions have no defined

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright, *On the Track: A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 500.

⁷ Ibid., 508.

tempo and may be performed with some rhythmic freedom. To achieve precise synchronization amidst an ever-changing tempo landscape, a tempo map is generated within software platforms known as Digital Audio Workstations (DAWS). Tempo maps follow the precise rhythmic progression of the music in relation to the media, as intended by the composer. Technological tools such as click tracks and streamers are particularly helpful and necessary for conductors to lead an ensemble in a performance that synchronizes with the media.⁸

Click tracks are rhythmic pulses that are generated from the tempo map. As such, they follow the tempo changes throughout the progression of a given cue. Click tracks are mostly used for rhythmic compositions and allow the conductor to remain precisely in time with the intended rate of musical progression. For free time compositions, streamers serve as a useful conducting aid. Streamers are digital imprints of vertical lines that move across the film frame or conductor's score. The speed at which the vertical line moves across the frame or score determines the rate of the musical progression. Some cues may also include quick transitions, orchestral effects, and critical orchestral 'hits' (unified rhythmic accent). Such musical elements are also aligned with click tracks or streamers. These conducting aids are typically present in the recording session to ensure synchronized performances.⁹

Given the various moving parts of the film scoring stage, the conductor must engage in a specialized kind of preparation to execute the task effectively. The conductor's goal is to lead the ensemble to create a precise and synchronized performance of the written music, inclusive of all the necessary expressive and interpretive elements. The conductor's method of preparation is

⁸ Ibid., 511.

⁹ Ibid.

similar to principles discussed in instrumental conducting. However, a few additional considerations are critical.¹⁰

The conductor needs to receive the scores for each cue ahead of time before the recording session. Upon receiving the scores, the conductor begins analyzing, marking and internalizing the score. Specific attention is given to instrumentation, tempo changes, interpretive and expressive details, transitions, and the overall flow of the music. It is common for some instrumentation, musical elements, and special effects to be ‘pre-layered’ or pre-recorded. These typically include percussion parts, pertinent sound effects, sound design elements, as well as synthesized samples. All pre-layered elements are marked in the score, notifying the conductor of its placement in the composition. The pre-layered elements are not conducted but simply marked in the score. Conductors must be aware of these pre-layered elements for contextual purposes. After working through the score analysis phase, the conductor must additionally consult any accompanying conducting aids such as click tracks and streamers. This additional preparation is crucial. To conduct with precision, the conductor must be very familiar with the tempo changes, interpretive elements, transitions, orchestral hits and other crucial musical moments for each cue.¹¹

The film scoring stage is a fast-paced environment and bares an immense responsibility. All personnel involved must virtually perform their duties flawlessly. In particular, the studio musicians that are hired for the recording sessions are highly skilled performers and sight readers. Much of the time constraints stem from the budgetary considerations such as booking studio musicians, the recording facility, and technical personnel. Therefore, the conductor must execute

¹⁰ Ibid., 509.

¹¹ Ibid., 512.

each cue with accuracy throughout the recording session as little time is allocated for multiple recording takes and referencing the playback of specific takes. The conductor may decide to briefly rehearse specific challenging cues, thus ensuring the ensemble is prepared for any musical passages that contain challenging transitions or critical moments.¹²

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“The Map”

The cue under analysis was composed for a 90-second segment of an audio theatre production. This cue contains four distinct sections (A, B, C, and D) with varying musical characteristics that follow the emotional and thematic changes of the segment. The instrumentation includes piano, string section, and a synthesized atmospheric pad. The piano and synthesizer pad are pre-layered elements and will not be conducted. A rehearsal marking with a timecode stamp is inserted in the score (example 4A).

Section A (08:58:27.20) enters at mm 4 in the key of G major with a ‘Moderato’ tempo marking and bpm of 108. This brief section is characterized by a sense of mystery and tension. The strings enter at *mf* with a dissonant tremolo articulation that resolves to an open dominant chord with a pizzicato articulation in mm 7. A quick transition occurs to section B (09:07:23.16), which changes to a cheerful pizzicato motif from mm 8-15. This section includes a minor tempo change to 110 bpm and is indicated in the conductor’s click track.

Section C (09:29:01.61) follows immediately after the preceding section and the synthesized pad slowly fades in. This section modulates to G minor where the mood changes to one of reflection and inquiry. The tempo drastically changes to a bpm of 65 and the pre-layered

¹² Ibid., 503.

Example 4A—“The Map” from *The Encounter* audio theatre production season 2 episode 11.

The Map
// Cue S2 E11-4//

The Encounter Series Music by Mark E. McDowell

A - 08:58:27.20
Moderato (♩ = c. 108)

Score

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Synth Pad

synthesizer pad and piano introduce the mood change (mm 17-20). At mm 21, the strings re-enter in a lush harmonic motive that gradually swells and diminishes at mm 21-24. At section D (10:00:22.34) the mood briefly reverts to the cheerful pizzicato motif in G major for two measures

(mm 26-27) and concludes with a perfect authentic cadence, indicating the end of the scene. Measures 28-31 serve as a musical transition between the scenes and quickly follows after the prior cadence. The tempo changes to a bpm of 74 and the key reverts to G minor. The strings perform a lush harmonic theme in arco technique and are complemented by the pre-layered piano and synthesizer pad. The notes are sustained in the final 3 measure (mm 29-31) with a slow and gradual decrescendo.

Prior to the first rehearsal, it was necessary to analyze the progression of the music, paying particular attention to the points of transition, changes in tempo, and accompanying expressive elements. In the preparation phase, the cue was rehearsed without and with the click track respectively. At the first rehearsal, the sheet music was distributed, and the piece was then initially conducted without the click track to provide players with a first take of the music. Afterwards, the piece was conducted with the click track to ensure alignment with the media cue.

Conducting Jazz Ensembles

Jazz music is a popular American-born genre whose existence is due to unique geographical, sociological and musical confluences. Jazz music is described as “a music of rhythmic contrast, featuring personalized performance techniques that usually involve improvisation.”¹³ This music is considered a mixture of African (complex rhythms) and European (harmonic development) influences.¹⁴ Its conception is not clearly documented, but it emerged around the 1900s in New Orleans among the African-American community, based on existing musical forms of the day such as blues and ragtime. The geography and cultural diversity of New

¹³ Kevin Whitehead, *Why Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11-12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Orleans played an integral role in the musical developments that lead to the emergence of jazz music. New Orleans' close proximity to the Mississippi Delta made the city an ideal transshipment point for goods and services. New Orleans became culturally diverse due to the influx of foreign cultures into the city.¹⁵ Eventually, cultural mixing of musical traditions took place, which lead to the early development of New Orleans jazz.

What started in New Orleans in the 1900s eventually spread across America and variations of the jazz style, distinct performance cultures and prominent jazz figures began to emerge. Though jazz music originated from New Orleans, other cities, such as St. Louis, Chicago, and New York quickly became prominent centers for the jazz culture. Jazz ensembles vary in size, ranging from jazz trios with drums, double bass and piano, to full jazz orchestras with rhythm, woodwind, brass and string sections. Ensembles can contain an array of varying configurations. Some popular ensemble types include trios, quartets, quintets, and big bands. As jazz music continued to gain momentum, the genre naturally developed its own set of performance standards.

Modern-day jazz music is built from a rich historical tradition that has led to many common performance standards and performer expectations. Many popular jazz tunes were eventually canonized as jazz standards, which were often written in a 32-bar AAB format.¹⁶ The rhythm section typically includes drums, bass, piano, and electric guitar. For rhythm sections, jazz repertoire was commonly notated using chord charts that included the melody. Written music was used when orchestral instruments such as brass and strings were included in the performance. A typical performance setting included a rhythm section and an instrumental or vocal soloist. The

¹⁵ Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux, *Jazz* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2009), 23-24.

¹⁶ Whitehead, *Why Jazz*, 45.

entire 32-bar song melody called the ‘head’ is initially played through as written on the chart, after which, the band members repeat the form and perform live improvisation over the given chord progression of the 32-bar tune. The ‘flavor’ of a performer’s improvisational solos would often be determined by the performer’s mood at the time of the performance.¹⁷ Solos also demonstrated a player’s level of artistic skill, dexterity and improvisational ingenuity. ‘Trading fours’ is another popular performance practice in jazz where two musicians trade solos over alternating groups of four measures, simulating a form of dialogue between the two. Given the distinct culture and performance practice in jazz music, a number of considerations are made within the purview of the conductor.

The role of a conductor in a jazz setting is rather informal as compared to classical conducting. For rhythm section ensembles, the conductor can be viewed simply as the director of the group. All musicians are very much aware of the performance directives and require very little instruction. The duty of the director is to lead the performance and guide the direction with regard to providing the initial tempo, directing musicians for solo sections, returning to the head and providing the cutoff at the end of a tune. Where necessary, the conductor would often provide emphatic gestures that correspond to some of the syncopated rhythmic elements of a tune being performed. In some cases, the director is also a performer in the ensemble and gives the necessary guidance cues from his instrument. The principle of eye contact is very present under these circumstances. However, in the context of larger ensembles, such as a jazz orchestra, the director/conductor role begins to mildly resemble hints of instrumental conducting.

Jazz orchestras, which included strings, brass and woodwind sections, constitutes the need

¹⁷ Ibid.

for a form of conducting that mirrors instrumental conducting. Due to the informal nature, conductors may decide not to use a baton unless the intricacies of the repertoire require a baton for precise execution. Orchestral players can often rely on the steady beat of nearby rhythm section players and thus the conductor typically may not provide a consistent beat pattern. Through the performance of a jazz tune, the conductor provides the necessary cues for the starting tempo, entrance and cutoff cues, as well as emphatic gestures for syncopated hits.

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Joseph M. Scriven and Charles C. Converse wrote the words and music for this well-known hymn. This arrangement was scored for rhythm, brass, and string sections with a lead female vocalist. The tune is set to a medium swing tempo and begins in the key of C major (example 5A). The arrangement follows a standard ABA form with an 8-measure intro. The head is performed once, followed by repeats for solos by various ensemble members, inclusive of trading fours by the bass player and drummer. Following the conclusion of the solo section, the tune contains a short interlude that leads into a modulation to Db Major and repeats the head in the new key. The melody of the A section in the new key (mm 46-62) is played by the brass section in a homophonic texture, after which the female vocalist resumes singing the melody from the B section to the conclusion of the tune.

The tune is interspersed with specific brass and string entrances at various points. The string parts are written to add lush harmonic support throughout the song with a few emphatic

Example 5A—"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Score

What A Friend We Have in Jesus

Jazz Orchestra

Words by Joseph M. Scriven
Music by Charles C. Converse
Arr. & Orch by Mark McDowell

Medium Swing ♩ = 130

INTRO $\frac{C\text{maj}7}{G}$ $\frac{D\flat\text{Maj}7}{G}$ $\frac{C\text{maj}7}{G}$

Rhythm *mf*

Trumpet in B \flat 1

Trumpet in B \flat 2

Alto Sax

Trombone

Violin *mf* tremelo

Viola *mf* tremelo

Cello *mf* tremelo

articulations and expressions. The brass parts include a mixture of sustained harmonic phrases and contrapuntal phrases that complement the melody.

Initially, rhythm section and orchestral rehearsals were held separately. Chord charts were given to rhythm section members at the first rehearsal and the form of the tune was explained. The rhythm section then worked through the piece a few times and appropriate comments were made to fine tune various performance elements in the music such as rhythmic accents, transitions, and the repeated sections for solos. In the orchestral rehearsal, the sheet music was distributed, and a brief explanation was provided about the form and progression of the tune. The orchestra then rehearsed the entire piece, after which further comments were made regarding the nature of the rhythmic accents, expressive articulations, and the transition leading to the modulation.

A joint rehearsal was held after the individual sections displayed mastery of the various musical elements of the arrangement. Once the initial tempo and an entrance cue for the introduction was provided, the ensemble required little instruction afterwards. An informal gesture of snapping the fingers provided a form of beat keeping, and instrumentalists were given entrance and cutoff cues when necessary. An informal gesture was given to appropriate musicians to indicate their entrance to begin improvising during the repeated solo sections. At the end of the solo section, the ensemble was led emphatically into the transition, thus ensuring all members performed the modulation accurately. The brass section was then conducted with emphatic gestures that corresponded to the syncopated nature of their parts in the latter A section. The remainder of the tune was lightly conducted, and the appropriate release gesture was given at the end.

Conducting Worship Ensembles

In the modern era, it has become a common practice for houses of worship to utilize a fusion of classical and contemporary practices for weekly services. The worship ensemble can be

viewed as a modernized version of the traditional mixed ensemble. The worship ensemble often includes a rhythm section, orchestra, choir and frontline vocalists. The size of the sections and overall ensemble is usually determined by the availability of personnel to fill the needed positions. The rhythm section usually includes drums, electric bass, electric guitar, piano, acoustic guitar and a synthesizer keyboard and/or Hammond organ. The orchestra is likely to include all instrumental sections such as woodwinds, brass, percussion and strings. A standard SATB choir is commonly used. Frontline vocalists are usually comprised of one or two singers per vocal part (only SAT).

Performances are linked to weekly worship services and weekly rehearsals are scheduled. Repertoire for each service is chosen from a pool of familiar songs which keeps weekly rehearsals manageable and less strenuous. New songs are occasionally added to this pool. Sectional rehearsals, where necessary, are typically scheduled during the week and a full rehearsal usually takes place prior to the beginning of the worship service. Rhythm section players are given chord or rhythm charts that include the form, chord progression and specific instructions for the various band members. Orchestral players are given sheet music and perform the written parts. Choir and frontline vocalists typically perform from memory as most of the music is familiar and vocal parts are usually written in a contemporary 3-part harmony. For songs that have specific SATB parts, choir members are provided with the choral anthem which includes the lyrics and the written notes for each vocal part.

Modern worship ensembles utilize technological tools that assist in the co-ordination and execution of weekly performances. Projection screens directed to the stage are commonly used to project the song lyrics, eliminating the need for sheet music for the choir and frontline vocalists. The rhythm section commonly uses what is known as in-ear monitoring where specialized headphones or earplugs are used to provide the players with a personal audio feed of desired on-

stage audio sources such as other instruments and vocalists. Click tracks are also used extensively in the worship ensemble. The click track is a consistent rhythmic pulse that determines a song's performance tempo. Click tracks often include verbal cues and instructions with regard to the song form and band instructions. Rhythm section players in particular, are fed the click track through their in-ear monitoring system, thus maintaining rhythmic cohesion. The role of the conductor in a worship ensemble mirrors that of a traditional mixed ensemble. However, a few additional elements must be considered.

The conductor is responsible for directing the orchestra and the choir. The fundamental concepts of choral and instrumental conducting do apply. The tempo of the song is dictated by the click track and the conductor is to direct the ensemble according to the pre-determined tempo. However, the conductor must provide all entrance, cutoff and interpretive cues for the song. The conductor may have some freedom to provide more expressive gestures instead of a consistent beat pattern due to the close proximity of the rhythm section, thus orchestra and choir may usually rely on the steady beat of the rhythm section.

Analysis and Pedagogical Considerations—“Cover the Earth”

Israel Houghton, Meleasa Houghton, and Cindy Cruise Ratcliff wrote “Cover the Earth” and Dan Galbraith arranged it. The song was arranged and orchestrated for rhythm section and orchestra. The form of the song is as follows: Intro—Verse 1—Chorus—Verse 2—Chorus—Interlude—Bridge—Chorus³ x2—Outro. The key is D major and the tempo is set to 130 bpm with a tempo marking that reads, “with energy” (example 6A).

Separate sectional rehearsals were conducted for choir and frontline vocalists, orchestra, and rhythm section. This approach ensures that each section performed the song as written with

Example 6A—"Cover the Earth."

Score

Cover The Earth Orchestration

With energy ♩ = 130

INTRO Repeat 5x arr. Mark McDowell

Bm D/F# Bm

The score is for a piano introduction in 4/4 time, marked "With energy" and a tempo of 130. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The introduction consists of a 12-measure phrase that is repeated five times. The first measure is in the Bm chord, the second measure is in the D/F# chord, and the final measure is in the Bm chord. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The string parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello) play a sustained, melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, also marked *mf*. The brass and woodwind parts (Trumpet in Bb 1, Trumpet in Bb 2, Alto Sax, and Trombone) are marked with a rest, indicating they are silent during this introduction.

the intended dynamics and expressive elements. During the band rehearsal, particular attention was given to the specific instructions regarding dynamics, entrances and alternating playing styles. For the choir rehearsal, the notes and rhythms of the vocal parts were rehearsed, and further

clarification was given regarding the shaping of the phrases of the song. The orchestral rehearsal was fairly straightforward. Instrumentalists were given the music and the song was rehearsed, and necessary comments and observations were highlighted. The joint rehearsal progressed smoothly as each section displayed mastery of the material in the sectional rehearsals.

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