

**National Band Association
Illinois Grade School Music Association
Band Director Workshop**

November 2, 2021

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A Conducting Tune-Up

I. PREPARATORY POSITION

Posture – Should reflect your priorities/musical intent (Shoulders, elbows, hands)

Baton Position

Eye contact – look at the players!

II. PREPARATORY BEAT/GESTURES, ATTACKS

Prep beat initiated on the beat plane with a “nudge” or flick

Breathe during prep beat. Do not count off!

Eye contact maintained (at least through the downbeat)

Attacks are clear and precise

III. POINT OF BEAT and BEAT PATTERNS

Clear *Ictus*. Beats defined by slight wrist action

Beat frames. Symmetrical? Asymmetrical?

Visual clarity of beat patterns. How?

Straight line motion – most effective/efficient. Think “lines.”

Size of beat patterns is appropriate – music stand

Horizontal/vertical planes are appropriately placed – Green exercises

Conducting frame – limitation of space yields most effective motions - “Less is more.”

Necessary beats vs unnecessary beats – melded gestures

IV. RIGHT HAND

Proper baton grip. Baton advanced toward players (esp. for cues)

Controlled and consistent

Releases are clear, prepared, and in the style of the music

Fermatas executed with a moving baton

V. LEFT HAND

Independent of right

Dynamics, Stylistic indications

Cues – When? How? Entrances on and off the beat

Balance, Phrase shape

Supports long notes or final tones

VI. STYLE, INTERPRETATION, PHRASING

Staccato, legato, marcato, tenuto, neutral

Appropriate tempo

Phrase direction indicated by movement and release

Varied facial expression. (Look "loud." Look "soft." Look "angry." Etc.)

Indicated climaxes, accents. Dynamics

GENERAL THOUGHTS

Primary responsibilities/functions

Know the score.

Know what you want to hear.

Conduct how you want the music to sound.

Establish the correct tempo and maintain a strong inner pulse.

Cue entrances as needed and appropriate. (Avoid looking like a traffic cop)

Communicate the style of the piece.

Indicate balance and colors.

Engage the performers and the audience members. Be dramatic, but do not over conduct!

Direct the listener's ear to important ideas.

Shape phrases – Make music!

Expressive Conducting

What makes a musical performance *musical*?

What makes expressive conducting *expressive*?

What excited you as an ensemble member?

Facial expressions? Eye contact? Beat clarity? Passion?

Do you excite your students in similar or other ways?

Passion

Do you convey emotion, passion in your conducting?

Does your conducting invite/elicit emotional musical responses from your students?

Would YOU want to play for YOU?

What does music mean to you? Show your students *why* you became a music teacher.

Do you live in the land of beauty?

Growth and Development

Observe great conductors – live, YouTube, DVD, etc.

What made Frederick Fennell a GREAT conductor? Was it his technique?

Expand your gestural vocabulary – practice and be creative!

Work with a mirror

Videotape yourself and create a growth plan (Self-Evaluation)

Work with a metronome

Do you have an image of the type of conductor you aspire to be?

CONDUCTING/REHEARSAL SELF-EVALUATION FORM

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Each area of conducting technique is rated as follows:

- 5 – a superior performance; few errors or omissions
- 4 – an above average performance; some minor errors and omissions
- 3 – an average performance; many errors and omissions
- 2 – a below average performance; many errors and omissions
- 1 – an unacceptable performance; not prepared; not effective
- N/A - this category does not apply to this performance.

+ and – symbols are used to indicate strengths and weaknesses for each subcategory.

Rating

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Preparatory Position

Posture is erect, poised. Elbows are extended and in the correct position.
Position of attention easily visible and commanding.
Baton held correctly; in position for preparatory beat to follow.
Eye contact. Visual check to make sure ensemble is ready.
Attention of group secured and maintained.
Doesn't talk with hands in preparatory position or take too much time to start.
Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Preparatory Beat, Anticipatory Gestures, Attacks

Preparatory beat initiated on plane with a wrist flick, with appropriate follow-through motion.
Breathes during preparatory beat.
Preparatory beat indicates correct tempo, dynamic level, and style.
Eye contact maintained through downbeat.
Preparatory or anticipatory gestures used for tempo changes, for resumption after holds, for *subito* changes of dynamics and style, and for cues.
Attacks are clear and precise.
Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Point of Beat and Standard Beat Patterns

Ictus (point of beat) is clear on each beat. Beats defined by wrist action.
Downbeat is straight down; rebounds are not too high.
Beat patterns are clear.
Sizes of beat patterns are appropriate to the music.
Point of Beat *bounces* off the horizontal plane (beat plane).
Standard meter patterns are correct and/or appropriate for music.
Horizontal/Vertical planes are appropriately placed, resulting in beat patterns that are well-defined, well-proportioned, and well-positioned in front of body.
Asymmetrical meters retain even divisions.
Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Use of Right Hand

RH is controlled and accurate throughout.
Releases are clear, concise, prepared, and in the dynamic and style of the music.
Fermatas executed with moving baton and for an appropriate duration; resumption prepared.
Baton advanced toward players for cues.
Comments:

Rating

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Use of Left Hand

LH is independent of right.

LH is used for dynamic and stylistic indications.

LH indicates accents, cues, ensemble balance, and phrase contouring.

LH supports held notes and final tones.

Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Style, Interpretation, Phrasing

Conducts general styles for *staccato*, *legato*, *marcato*, *tenuto*, neutral.

Conducts appropriate tempo and tempo modifications.

Phrase direction indicated by movement and release.

Conductor appropriately varies facial expression.

Indicates musical climaxes, accentuation, dynamics, and nuance.

Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Knowledge of Score and Eye Contact

Conductor appears prepared, not score bound.

Conductor maintains eye contact for preparatory gestures, cues, etc.

Conductor retains place in score.

Conductor's instructions/demonstrations indicate knowledge of score.

Conductor models musical desires.

Conductor correctly interprets terms in score.

Comments:

5 4 3 2 1 N/A

Rehearsal Technique (Detection and Correction of Errors)

Verbal instructions are concise and easily heard.

Time is used efficiently, not wasted. Follows rehearsal plan.

Demonstrations used effectively; clap, tap rhythm, and so on.

Isolates needed sections for appropriate length.

Rehearsal technique follows whole-part-whole approach.

Comments:

5 4 3 2 1

Overall Effectiveness

Conductor's gestures are appropriate and effective throughout.

Conductor achieves musical results.

Conductor has control; leads, does not follow.

Conductor has enthusiasm; maintains interest of performers.

Conductor is musical, artistic, original.

If mistakes were made, they did not show on the face or body.

Comments:

REVIEW

EIGHT POINT CHECKLIST

- 1) proper stance (both feet securely on the podium)
- 2) correct posture (arch the back, no crouching)
- 3) correct baton grip (middle, ring and pinky fingers tucked underneath palm eliminating distraction from tip of baton, palm facing the floor)
- 4) survey the performers (head sweep) to insure readiness
- 5) ready position on the horizontal and vertical plane is set
- 6) internalization of tempo before executing the preparatory beat (touch tip of tongue against roof of mouth in tempo)
- 7) preparatory beat will effectively convey tempo, style, dynamic marking, who plays, starting beat
- 8) inhalation of air during the entire preparatory beat

