

CONDUCTING CLINIC, WT BAND CAMP—7/13/21

Gary Garner

The three fundamental tests: 1) Does it help the ensemble? 2) Does it help the music? and 3) Is it in control and graceful?

Extraneous movement. Every gesture should have a purpose. Among the mannerisms to be avoided are: 1) excessive extension of the arms either forward or to the side; 2) bouncing from the knees; 3) excessive head movement; 4) excessive bending from the waist; 5) unnecessary sub-division.

Preparation. Everything must be prepared. The basic goal is to give as much preparation as necessary and not an instant more.

1) If the note comes on the beat, move immediately after the preceding beat. Rule one always begins at "home." In slow tempos, it may be applied to moving after the second half of the beat.

2) If the note comes on the upbeat or last 3rd of the beat, move after the downbeat. Rule two never begins at "home." Instead, it begins where the preceding beat ends.

3) For pickups of less than a 3rd of a beat in duration, move after the beat (same as rule one).

4) For pickups of more than a half-beat in duration, move quickly on the preceding full beat with a quick stop, then move on the rest.

Dynamics and cues. Dynamic changes require the same amount of preparation. To cue entrances on the beat, look at the person(s) to be cued on the preceding beat. For fractional

entrances, look a beat plus the fraction ahead. Eye contact is essential.

The principle of negation. If there is no rhythmic activity, pulse lightly (in Elizabeth Green's words, "no impulse of will") or, in some cases, not at all.

Left hand. Four purposes: 1) cueing; 2) dynamics and expression; 3) alternating; and 4) duplication (sparingly).

Rebounds. A gesture ending with a stop of a beat of more in duration should culminate with a rebound. It should not be forced and should be consistent with the vigor of the gesture.

Releases. The release should be prepared when the music doesn't continue, but not prepared if the music does continue.

The wrist. Wrist movement can be very helpful, especially at slow tempos, to help define the ictus more precisely. Care should be taken, however, to avoid chronically floppy wrists.

Fermatas. Three types: 1) no break after fermata—baton moves slowly through fermata, increasing in speed in preparation for next beat; 2) break for a breath—release without preparation and move in tempo into next beat; and 3) complete stop—release without preparation and rebound, then prepare the next beat normally.

Sub-division. The division of a beat will always be in the opposite direction of the next main beat.

Extended meters. It's not necessary to learn elaborate beat patterns. Simply change direction every two or three beats, as dictated by the internal rhythmic structure of the measure.

Asymmetrical meters. In 5/8, for example, don't move quickly through the three-8th-note beat. Either 1) move slowly through the first two 8ths, increasing the speed on the third 8th, or 2) stop on the beat and move immediately after the second 8th. Take great care not to move through the long beat quickly and simply wait for the next beat to arrive before moving again.

Beating one beat to a measure. Determine the phrasing of the music and use the appropriate beat pattern(s).

A particular problem: Achieving a precise downbeat at soft dynamic levels and slow tempos. It requires a) a clear ictus; b) careful attention to the baton; c) players' ability to make their instruments "speak" on demand; and d) courage—not being fearful of being "the first one."