

Conducting for Master Directors

“Choreograph” your conducting for consistency. As you and your singers go through the learning process on a song, be aware of any conducting moves you use that result in any degree of success for them. Then try to include these moves in your final conducting plan. These moves can become elements that **trigger** a variety of **positive responses**.

You must **energize** every aspect of your conducting, from your fingertips to your posture/body language.

If you can teach your singers to be responsible for it...**don't conduct it**. Internal dynamics and tempo are two good examples of this.

An **artistic approach to conducting** will always consider the sound as well as the song. You **can** and **should** incorporate vocal production in your conducting moves.

Let your hands be their focal point, NOT their foundation. If you are conducting the “basics,” you'll never get artistry. Try getting them to the point (vocally) where you can guide, NOT lead; strive to direct the artistry, not the basics.

Mouthing the lyrics:

- frequently causes vowel distortion
- makes “leaners” of your singers
- puts the responsibility for correct lyrics on you instead of the singers
- can cause synchronization errors, especially if your hands and mouth don't match

The faster you go...conduct fewer beats per measure. Really **fast tempo** may require only one beat every OTHER downbeat. If the singers are handling the tempo well without help, stay out of their way.

If you work with a **metronome** (electronic) in rehearsal, take the time to wean your singers off the metronome. Going “cold turkey” (without halving and halving again the number of beats they rehearse with) can still leave you with tempo inconsistencies. They need a process through which they can internalize the subdivisions of the tempo. Once they have gone through this weaning process, be sure that you avoid conducting those tempo subdivisions.

Work to make your conducting reflect the **vocal production** you want to hear:

- legato
- synchronized
- resonant
- supported
- energized
- artistic
- rhythmic

Incorporate the actual **execution of vocal skills** in your conducting:

- isometrically/kinesthetically support the softs
- stabilize the target sounds
- encourage overtones
- shape the sound
- time the word elements (esp. the vanish of a diphthong)
- assist them in shaping their sound

Require response (the more specific, the better) for every movement you use in your conducting. If there is no required response, why are you using that move?

Be efficient. Conduct as little as necessary. Explain what you want from your singers and then be sure to follow up on that by “saying” what you mean with your hands.

Try to avoid conducting for their present skill level. Give them something to strive for: **conduct for their developing skills**...a level higher than your singers are able to execute.

Listen to your singers with your **imagination in high gear**. Then use that connection with them to enhance your success.

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