

Following Different Conductors

Emerald Choral Academy

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Following Different Conductors

Introduction

- Different performers = Different styles.
 - Not every conductor is right for every singer.
- Not titled “difficult” conductors.
- You and the conductor share the same goal: to make beautiful music.
 - They have dozens of variables at every second.
- These are my personal suggestions.

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Three Categories of Challenges

- Gestural
- Verbal
- Environmental

- Prepare questions about conductors you've known.
 - Let's keep them anonymous.
 - We're not here for complaining, but for problem-solving.

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General Habits

- Be attentive! Trust your conductor and your colleagues.
- Be prepared! The more independent you are, the easier to follow the conductor.
- Mark scores ... *a lot*. If conductor says it, write it.
- Count ... *especially* if the beat isn't clear.
- Breathe ... *especially* if the conductor doesn't show it.
- Watch ... even if you're confused. Actively look at *least* once/measure.

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Conducting Gesture – 1

- General
 - Left-handed conductors.
 - When the choir is after the beat, but together.
- Patterns
 - 3 – The hook! Inward motion. Count.
 - 4 – Too far in/out, or not far enough. Count.
 - More complex patterns – Swoops and circles. Count.
 - 2 – Downbeat bounce too high. Count.

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Conducting Gesture – 2

- Special gestures
 - Conducting size. Larger doesn't mean clearer. Smaller means watch more.
 - Ictus plane. If conducting high, breathe more consciously.
- Very active gestures
 - “Unnecessary” stuff? Probably conveying something.
 - Where's the beat? Listen, *then* watch. (Sometimes look at your colleagues.)
- Emotive conducting
 - What does that mean? Watch for repeated use.
- The stick Usually watch tip. If swoopy, watch base.

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Verbal Communication

- Imprecise terms “Blend” (tuning, vowel), “more” (dynamics), etc.
- Ignores something Perhaps solving through gesture.
- Gender-based words No insult is meant. If you’re troubled, say so privately.
- Individual attention No insult is meant. If you’re troubled, say so privately.
- English units Semibreve=whole. Minim=half. Crotchet=quartet. Quaver=8th.
 - “Some Monsters Crochet Quilts”...?

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Environmental Considerations

- Height Okay to suggest box (environmental). Not to suggest larger (artistic).
- Clothing style Short sleeves? Beware elbow/wrist. Swoopy sleeves? Watch hands.
- Clothing color Same as background?
- Lighting Dark? Look more often. Bright? Angle head, trust, say something.

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Conclusions

- Your conductor is there to help.
- Be attentive and prepared.
 - Mark scores. Count. Breathe. Watch. ... And trust.

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