

# Analysis of Requirements and Significance of Conductors in Large Symphony Orchestra

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**Abstract:** *The collective form of music performance inevitably requires a consistent pace and mutual cooperation among various components. It makes the emergence of a conductor who dominates the overall performance of music an objective necessity, and also puts forward extremely comprehensive and strict requirements for the conductor's musical literacy and even comprehensive ability. In the performance of a large symphony orchestra, the conductor should have skilled physical expression, rich music knowledge, sharp auditory ability and accurate understanding capacity. The conductors of symphony orchestras use indicative, emotional, and evaluative gestures to enhance people's understanding of symphony, interpret the emotions that symphony works want to convey, and control the performance of the orchestra. Conducting can create a good playing atmosphere, closely connecting various stages of performance, producing good music.*

**Keywords:** *Conductor, Conducting Art, Large Symphony Orchestra*

## 1. Introduction

The rhythm and speed of the performance conductor of a large symphony orchestra represent the emotional changes of the music [1]. How to unleash a high level of conducting art is a question that every conductor is deeply contemplating. The performance and conduct actions of a symphony orchestra require careful design by the conductor, fully utilizing the conductor's own expressions, gestures, and movements to control the changes in performance and locate the benchmark for performance, in order to create a suitable playing atmosphere for the performance of a large symphony orchestra. This article will focus on the role of conductor in the performance of large-scale symphony orchestras and provide corresponding explanations. The movements and gestures of the conductor represent the speed and emotional changes of the music performance. In a large-scale symphony orchestra, the conductor needs to develop a conduct plan in advance and gradually complete the corresponding rehearsal work. During the conduct process, the conductor should not only fully consider the rhythm and emotions of the melody, but also pay attention to the coordination between each voice part to ensure that there is no voice part concealment. When the conductor brandishes the baton, it is like a verbal communication with the performer. The meanings of static and dynamic gestures are very rich, directly expressing the conductor's inner emotions towards the music. Professionals who are capable of conducting in large symphony orchestras often possess extraordinary leadership skills, musical insights, and the infectious power of live performances. Orchestra conducting is essentially an art, and the entire world considers it the most infectious and comprehensive form of music art. A large symphony orchestra transforms scores into music, and conductor plays an important role in this process. The orchestra conductor can use rich and colorful body language to drive the atmosphere of the entire venue and create a good playing environment. Large symphonies have different performance parts, requiring musicians to carefully understand the melody and rhythm of the music, and then have a deeper understanding of symphony.

## 2. Development Course of Conducting Art

### 2.1. Formation of Conducting Art

The physiological and psychological characteristics of humans determine the vast diversity of natural human voices, and the emotional experiences and external manifestations of different subjects are uneven. This forms the objective need for the "controller" to control the overall performance of group music. But

the earliest primitive conductors with embryonic significance had neither received systematic nor standardized music professional training, and had to invest more time and energy in their main work. In fact, unorganized professional skills such as tapping, stepping, nodding, or playing a certain instrument, as well as extensive professional tools such as walking sticks, paper rolls, iron plates, or people's natural limbs, determine the amateur characteristics of primitive conducting art in this area. In the 17th century, with the birth and increasing development of European artistic music, conducting art entered a semiprofessional period when composers worked part-time [2]. The conductors working in this field are mostly professional musicians who have received strict professional training and rich experience in artistic practice. Although their conducting work has made significant progress compared to the previous period, their main focus is on directing their own work's business activities, diverse basic conducting skills, and especially the professional identity of composers, which determine the part-time nature of conducting art here. What truly had a significant impact on the professionalization process of conducting art was the performance of the German composer and violinist Louis Spohr in London in 1820, using a modern sense of self-made baton to conduct a symphonic orchestra. In 1835, Mendelssohn introduced this method to Leipzig and, together with Weber, gradually established a modern form of conductor with a right-handed baton, standing on a podium with the back facing the audience and collaborating with the band. Afterwards, Berlioz made further efforts to systematize and standardize conduct diagrams, while Wagner pioneered a professional conduct theory known as the concept of "interpretation", which marked the ultimate formation of conducting art as an independent discipline.

## **2.2. Development of Conducting Art**

In the 20th century, the art of conducting has truly achieved remarkable development in the Western professional music industry, and many music schools have successively established departments and majors dedicated to cultivating conducting talents. Some conductor masters have also received enthusiastic admiration and loyal admiration from music fans. After the introduction of conductor art to China, a group of well-rounded and highly skilled professional conductors emerged on the vast land of China. Their hard work has been valued and praised by many industry insiders in other countries, and they will continue to win the sincere respect of artists and musicians around the world. In the field of Western art and music in the 20th century, it can be regarded as a world of conductors. With the end of the rule of Mahler and Weingartner in the European music industry, more conductor masters who won great glory in the 20th century have successively emerged on the historical stage. Artists have achieved the infinite glory of conducting art in the 20th century, creating music legends that are still talked about by many musicians today. Due to the fact that conductors must possess advanced professional skills and comprehensive artistic cultivation, it is impossible for conductor art to have as many practitioners and a wide spread as its sister art, choir, after its introduction to China. However, this does not affect the fact that Chinese conductors have rooted this comprehensive and systematic comprehensive music skill in the fertile soil of art in the land of China. The comprehensive and solid professional skills and outstanding artistic achievements of the conductor not only enable the vast number of domestic music fans in various periods to appreciate the super charm of conductor art to varying degrees, but also win the respect and praise of peers from around the world. From then on, Chinese conductors began to bloom dazzling artistic flowers in the hundred flowers garden of world conducting art [3].

## **3. Requirements of Conductors in Large Symphony Orchestra**

### **3.1. Skilled Physical Expression**

The conductor of a large symphony orchestra should be proficient in physical expression. The conductor mainly uses language such as body movements and eye expressions to guide the band to perform uniformly. Therefore, an excellent conductor should be very familiar with the conductor's movements and proficiently use body movements to express the emotional feelings of the music work, explain the speed, intensity of performance, and convey different signals to the performer. Conductors must focus on mastering solid conduct movements, and only with solid basic skills can they proficiently conduct and remain calm on the spot. Conductors can not only accurately and accurately capture each beat, but also flexibly use their wrists. Take out a piece of white paper, draw a circle in the middle of the white paper, hold the baton in your right hand, and use the tip of the baton to strike down towards the center of the circle. Try to hit each downward movement in the same position as the circle in the white paper as much as possible. Train approximately one thousand or more times a day. After mastering this action, you can reduce the circle on the white paper and continue repeating the same action until it is

accurate. These basic beats need to be kept in mind by beginners, and they can be accurately struck with their right hand at the beginning, as their right hand plays a metronome role in any musical composition. After right-handed training, the training of the left hand can be gradually added, and the conduct pattern of the left hand is exactly the opposite of the right hand. This training can be practiced in front of a mirror every day to achieve the effect of body coordination.

### ***3.2. Rich Music Knowledge***

Large symphony orchestra conductors need to enhance the charm of their music works through their handling of changes in music, personal years of stage experience, and accumulation of music knowledge. A qualified person must truly have depth and meaning. A conductor must have rich and comprehensive knowledge of music theory and a good foundation in music. The so-called knowledge of music theory includes music theory, solfeggio and ear training, as well as accurate control of pitch, rhythm, and intonation. With this foundation, it is possible to conduct in-depth analysis of the conductor's musical works, such as the musical structure, harmonic configuration, polyphony, orchestration, etc. in a work. Only by storing this musical knowledge can conductors have a comprehensive and profound understanding of musical works, combined with their own aesthetics and creativity, and possess unique personal insights and creativity towards musical works. During the performance of a band, multiple instruments are involved, and the conductor needs to have an accurate sense of rhythm in order for different instruments to play harmoniously and create a beautiful symphony. Therefore, mastering, controlling, and adjusting the rhythm of band performance is a very important responsibility of a conductor. The conductor should coordinate and conduct different instruments in accordance with the requirements of the score to present a harmonious and vivid performance. If the rhythm of the conductor is not good, it is difficult to present a high-quality performance to the audience. For example, the rhythm of the music may fluctuate rapidly, and the sound may fluctuate high or low, which can cause great confusion in the performance and affect the performance effect <sup>[4]</sup>. A conductor can improve their sense of rhythm by practicing their conductor movements.

### ***3.3. Sharp Auditory Ability***

Music itself is an auditory art, and when the audience is watching a performance, they mostly rely on their ears to distinguish whether a song is good or not. Therefore, whether it is a band conductor or a choir conductor, their auditory ability directly affects the effectiveness of the band or choir rehearsal and performance. When organizing rehearsals, the first sound or first phrase of each piece is extremely important because it needs to give the audience a dazzling feeling and give them an immersive experience. In the stage rehearsal before the performance, the conductor will face various issues, such as the placement of the microphone, the seating and standing positions of each voice part of the band performer and choir member, the placement of the piano, the placement of the music platform, and so on. Therefore, sensitive judgment on the scene also plays a crucial role. The conductor needs to rely on sharp hearing and make timely adjustments based on the actual performance venue, including the balance between the vocal parts of each performer playing the instrument and the pitch, rhythm, and strength comparison of each choir member, and promptly correct any problems that arise in the music. During performance, any instrument with inaccurate timbre, imbalanced playing force, or a performer's inattention will disrupt the harmony of the entire performance. Faced with these problems, the band conductor needs to detect and correct them in a timely manner through their hearing in order to ensure the performance effect. In order to improve their hearing, band conductors need to have both talent and keen listening skills through continuous effort. They need to have solid basic skills, learn basic music theory, harmony and other subjects, and then undergo solfeggio ear training courses, gradually improving their ability to catch wrong notes and improve their ability to distinguish sounds <sup>[5]</sup>.

### ***3.4. Accurate Understanding Capacity***

Reading the score is a basic skill that band conductors and choir conductors must possess. The reading method of the general score is a compulsory course for conduct, with the aim of quickly reading the general score and laying a solid foundation for the ability to read the general score in the future. When receiving a new track, it is necessary to quickly browse and roughly perform it, roughly understand the basic content of the work, and mark the approximate melody lines and positions with a pen, imagining the sound effect of the work in your mind. When organizing a concert or completing the work of a performance season, this fast score reading ability is crucial. Before rehearsal, the conductor should make sufficient preparations by consulting the creative background, internal music structure, harmony

direction, etc. of the music work, from the whole to the parts, from each movement to each segment, from individual phrases to each small section, and the emoticons and speed marks clearly marked on the score. After these tasks are fully completed, during rehearsals, the conductor can become more confident, confident, proficient, and grasp every detail to complete the rehearsal task. The band conductor uses the score to advance their understanding of the music, grasp the structure of the music and the balance between different parts, and form their own sound system for the score in their hearts. Completing these tasks is considered the preparation before rehearsal. Reading a score requires comprehensive abilities in various aspects, including proficiency in different musical instruments, mastery of different music styles and rhythms, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously train and practice to improve the ability to read a score. Excellent conductors usually spend all their time constantly reading the score, striving to be able to flexibly grasp different styles of works and their patterns.

#### **4. Significance of Conductors in Large Symphony Orchestra**

##### ***4.1. Functions of Emotional Gestures***

The conductor controls the intensity and speed of the rhythm by interpreting the melody and using emotional gestures. Each gesture of the conductor fully expresses a variety of different emotions. Usually, the conductor uses waving his arms and shaking his upper limbs to express passionate and happy emotions, and uses gestures such as clenching and clapping to express the conductor's interpretation of the melody. These gestures are the most common in symphony conductor and leave the most profound impression on the audience. The performance of a symphony orchestra is an expression of emotional art, and each conductor has different feelings for the emotions of the melody. Emotional gestures are the emotional fusion between the conductor and the performer. Therefore, the conductor must have a deep understanding of the background of the music creation in order to better reflect the value and role of finger art. Symphony contains strong emotions, not so much songs as thrilling stories, expressed through songs that contain the author's strong emotions and emotions. Music needs resonance, and different people receive different information when listening to the same symphony. A conductor needs to truly understand the meaning of the performed piece and the emotions it expresses in order to truly appreciate the value of art. When a conductor clearly and correctly perceives the information that music is intended to convey, they can combine emotional gestures in their conduct, using specific body language to express the rhythm and emotions in the song. Such emotional gestures are essentially a direct description of the conductor's personal emotions, allowing the audience to better understand the emotions and connotations that the music wants to convey. The difference between emotional gestures and indicative gestures is also here. The former expresses the personal emotions of the conductor, while the latter does not include. So emotional gestures are used more freely and contain complex content, which includes the emotions conveyed by the entire song.

##### ***4.2. Functions of Indicative Gestures***

In the performance and conductor of a large symphony orchestra, the conductor's indicative gestures mostly express a conduct and viewpoint, which is a feedback gesture from the conductor to the performer. This is a non-emotional language communication that expresses the conductor's objective opinions. In orchestra performance, conductors usually use indicative gestures to correct some minor changes. The movements of the conductor's hands at the mouth indicate that the upper jaw of the mouth needs to be released, while the indicative movements of the arms slowing down indicate the inhalation and exhalation. Indicative actions control the overall rhythm and melody coordination of the orchestra's music, and are mainly used as an objective expression without complex emotional factors. When the conductor uses indicative gestures to convey opinions, the amplitude of the gestures is relatively small and runs through the entire performance process of the orchestra<sup>[6]</sup>. Each stage of performance requires feedback gestures from the conductor to adjust. In the performance of the orchestra, the conductor is in the leading position of the performance, controlling the coordination of the music through various indicative gestures. In traditional large-scale symphony orchestras, conductor plays a crucial role, and the conductor should use appropriate indicative gestures to guide and direct the band, making the cohesion of the orchestra stronger and creating a better playing atmosphere. Due to the diversity and complexity of instruments used in large-scale symphony orchestras, it is difficult to achieve a balance point in performance. Conducting allows the orchestra to better grasp the rhythm, emotional expression, and rhythmic effects of the symphony. Conductors often use concise gestures as a substitute for conduct language, using visible gestures to adjust the rhythm of band training, singing, and other issues. These simple gestures can also

help other performers in the band correctly remember the rhythm, melody, beat, and information conveyed.

### 4.3. Functions of Evaluative Gestures

The evaluative gesture represents the conductor's interpretation and expression of the orchestra's performance work. Only by fully understanding the performance work can the conductor make accurate evaluative gestures. During the conduct process, the conductor must also have a deep understanding of the music, in order to timely evaluate and guide the performance of the orchestra. The main function of evaluative gestures is to control the overall performance atmosphere of the orchestra, fully reflecting the conductor's conduct skills and ability to control rhythm. The guiding role of evaluative gestures during the performance process is very obvious, as it controls the performance of various instruments in the orchestra. Evaluation gestures are a participating part of the orchestra's performance, and each evaluation gesture of the conductor is an indication of the performance problem. The conductor identifies the shortcomings in the performance through their keen perception ability. When there are problems in the performance process, evaluation gestures will appear simultaneously to ensure coordination and integrity between the playing instruments. The conductor continuously provides optimized feedback on the orchestra's performance through body action language. The fusion of the style of the orchestra conductor and the playing melody is an important factor in achieving the sublimation of the orchestra's performance. Symphony is a comprehensive expression of artistic and humanistic emotions, and the interaction between the conductor's evaluative gestures and the playing melody is the determining factor affecting the overall level of performance. A conductor needs to proficiently master the movements of a live conductor, be able to control the atmosphere of a symphony orchestra's live performance, and drive everyone to enter and appreciate music. Among conduct gestures, evaluative gestures have great practical value. The conductor, while listening to the symphony, uses evaluative gestures to direct the orchestra's next performance, while expressing their praise for the music and encouragement for the performers. Evaluative gestures can make the relationships between various performers closer and increase interaction during performance.

## 5. Conclusions

The conducting art has a long history and was officially formed in the 19th century. After development in the 20th century, it has become one of the art forms with special charm. Large symphony orchestras have strict requirements for the ability to conduct, which requires proficient physical expression, rich knowledge of music theory, keen auditory ability, and accurate understanding. This article explores the role of conducting gestures in large-scale symphony orchestra performances, including the roles of three main gestures: indicative, evaluative, and emotional. A good symphony performance requires a professional conductor to accurately position the playing tone, smoothly express the emotions contained in the performance pieces, and resonate with the audience.

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