

RECIPE FOR **DEVELOPMENT OF EXPRESSIVE CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE**

HARMONIC RHYTHM AND CHANT,
ADD LABAN AND BODY MAPPING

JAMES JORDAN

WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE
OF RIDER UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Arms can lie, hands can lie, faces can lie, but the torso will always tell you the truth. (p. 134)

—Etienne Decroux
in Bud Beyer, *Completing the Circle*

I also remember a remark of Albert Einstein, which certainly applies to music. He said, in effect, that everything should be as simple as it can be, but not simpler.

—Roger Sessions
in "How a Difficult Composer Gets that Way"
New York Times (January 8, 1950)

A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: PREPARING AND REVEALING OUR INSIDE, REAL SELVES

The action and the heart go together.

—Elaine Brown
in *Lighting a Candle*

We need to live our lives from the inside out...we need to live by our hearts, which transfers to movement...which transfers to sound...which transfers to healing.

—Charles Bruffy
from Westminster Conducting Institute
(July 5, 2014)

"The pursuit of truth" rightly implies that a gap exists between ourselves and truth. But what's hidden and evasive? Is it we or truth? Maybe it is we who evade truth's quest for us. (p. 119)

—William Sloane Coffin
in *Credo*

After many years of working with conductors on the issues of gesture, movement and nonverbal communication, and then realizing I had stopped short of the real concerns that individuals were facing in music, it finally became clear to me what was missing. What I found missing from the circle was the human being—the imperfect, ecstatic, mewling, searching, confused, magnificent human being. Instead we were seeing only "the perfect" rendition of that person. Conductors and musicians alike presented only their "performance persona" to audiences instead of the whole, wonderful, flawed, complete person. All their fears, insecurities, delights, and possibilities seemed to have been put aside and replaced by a studied image of what they thought a conductor or musician should look like. (p. 30)

—Bud Beyer
in *Completing the Circle*

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR BUILDING “TECHNIQUE”? A METHOD TO THE TECHNIQUE

1. Instrumental technique?
2. Vocal technique?

GUIDING MUSICAL PRINCIPLES TO INFORM AND BUILD CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

The study of musical flow and of the tendency of sound to generate particular sensory reactions must be carefully considered by the choral conductor: (p. 57)

—Albert Grau
in *Choral Conducting*

1. Sound is fluid.
2. Sound is a horizontal event – not a vertical event.

A PHILOSOPHY OF CONDUCTING: A FORK IN THE PEDAGOGICAL ROAD

1. Musicing revolves around rehearsal technique that ensures a consistent performance. Artistic consistency is the aesthetic.
2. We can influence sound and spirits through our instrument – OUR BODY and its SPIRIT – that makes what was rehearsed “come alive.” Spontaneous music-making is when our body causes musicians to sing and play.

DEVELOPING A NEW PEDAGOGY FOR TECHNIQUE AND SOUND INPUT

1. We teach the way we were taught.

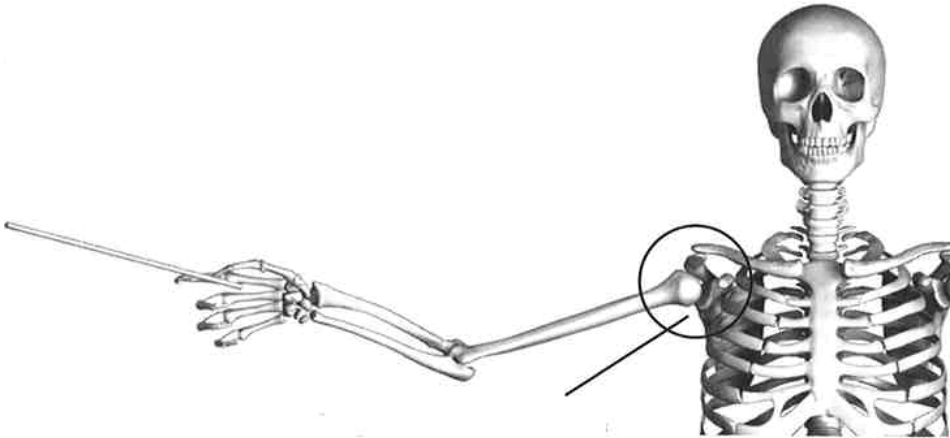
If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always gotten.

—Andrew Carnegie
from Eugene Migliaro Corporon,
Foreword, *Choral Conducting*

2. The scientific justification:
 - a. Mirror neurons
 - b. Sounds and gesture bind themselves, one to each other: the ramifications for teaching and learning conductors.

3. Fix the body map first! And build body awareness. The body and its feelings are your instrument. Awareness is your instrument, for it is that awareness which instantaneously bonds itself to sound in the neurons.

- a. Joints of the arm:
 - The shoulder joint “fantasy”
 - The correct map of the shoulder
- b. The rotations and their importance



Map of the real wrist and the use of the toggle.



Above information taken from *Conducting Technique Etudes* (GIA, 2014). Used with permission.

BUILDING A GESTURAL VOCABULARY TO BE BOUND TO SOUND

1. Preparing a “vocabulary of gesture” devoid of sound is core to the development of technique in conductors.
2. Laban Effort/Shape is the conductor’s “dictionary” of gestural vocabulary.

NOTE: For those wishing to study and learn Laban Effort/Shape applied to conducting, an introduction can be found in *Evoking Sound, Second Edition* (GIA), Chapter 13. A comprehensive study, including a DVD of Laban movement classes, can be found in *The Conductor's Gesture* (GIA).

The theoretical terms:

FLOW **WEIGHT** **TIME** **SPACE**
FREE ↔ *BOUND* *HEAVY* ↔ *LIGHT* *QUICK* ↔ *SUSTAINED* *DIRECT* ↔ *INDIRECT*

LABAN ACTION	TIME	GESTURAL CONDUCTING TRANSLATION	WEIGHT	LIFE EXAMPLES OF EFFORTS IN COMBINATION
FLOAT	Sustained	Indirect	Light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracing a picture with a pencil • Blowing bubbles
WRING	Sustained	Indirect	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twisting a washcloth • Tightening a jar cap
GLIDE	Sustained	Direct	Light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasing a blackboard • Erasing a whiteboard
PRESS	Sustained	Direct	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kneading bread dough • Closing an overloaded suitcase
FLICK	Quick	Indirect	Light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning on a light switch • Touching a hot stove
SLASH	Quick	Indirect	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chopping wood • Slamming a door
DAB	Quick	Direct	Light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popping a balloon with a pin • Making a dot with an artist brush on a painting
PUNCH	Quick	Direct	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumping a pillow • Using a stapler

WHAT DOES LABAN TEACH US ABOUT OUR MOVEMENT VOCABULARY AS CONDUCTORS?

Laban teaches us how to avoid displacement of weight so we do not impede the forward movement of sound!

INFORMING THE EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY: HARMONIC RHYTHM AND CHANT

The rhythm texture of music...In its total effect on the listener, the rhythm of music derives from two main sources, melodic and harmonic. (p. 123)

—Walter Piston
in *Harmony*

I have come to realize over the years that a healthy mistrust of written music is the only proper starting point. The page doesn't mean what it seems. It's only a beginning (sight) not an ending (sound). (p. xxii)

—Alice Parker
in *The Anatomy of Melody*

1. Bond gesture to sound via harmonic rhythm.
2. Bring understanding of musical line through chant.

To define music as the art of combining sounds is to confuse it with its notation. It is almost the same as confusing poetry with the alphabet. (p. 33)

—Carlos Vega
from Albert Grau, *Choral Conducting*

1. Chant
2. Harmonic rhythm


Definition of *harmonic rhythm*:

Harmonic rhythm is the speed that sound moves forward.

ETUDES FOR CONDUCTORS:
LABAN EFFORTS AND DENSITY GRAPHS


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7 VENI CREATOR



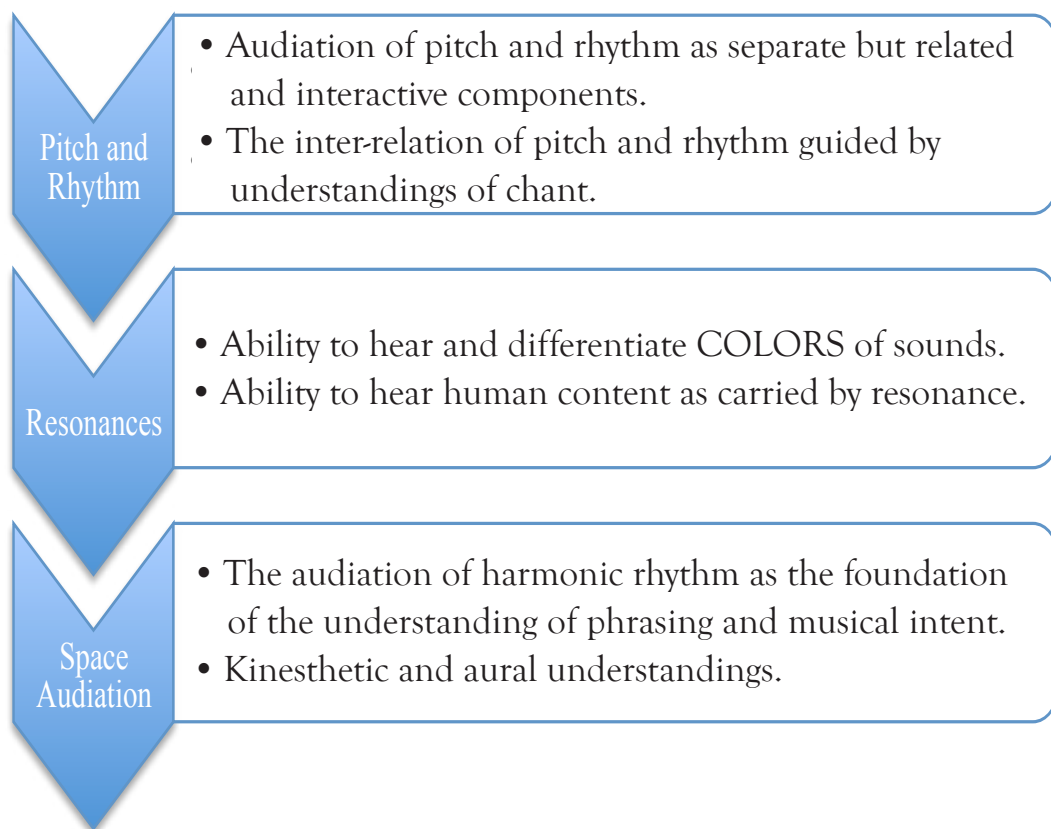
TRACK 7

SOLO FULL



Excerpt taken from *Discovering Chant* (GIA). Used with permission.

USING VISIONING AND DIMENSIONAL FANTASY TO INFORM REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE AND DEEPEN LISTENING



VISUAL FEEDBACK THAT PROGRAMS NEURON BONDING IN CLASS AND PRIVATE STUDY

We can only correct ourselves!

1. iPad
2. Mirrors

A PEDAGOGICAL PATH AND METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING AND TEACHING CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

1. Build an interior.
2. Define your body map.
3. Acquire movement vocabulary through life movement and association with Laban Effort/Shape.
4. Conduct the harmonic rhythm.
5. Understand the “physics” of melody through an intensive study of chant.

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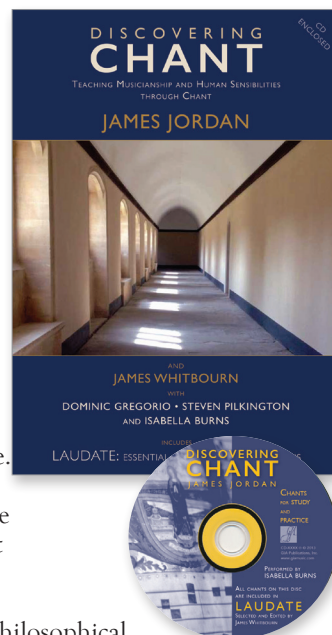
DISCOVERING CHANT

Teaching Musicianship and
Human Sensibilities through Chant

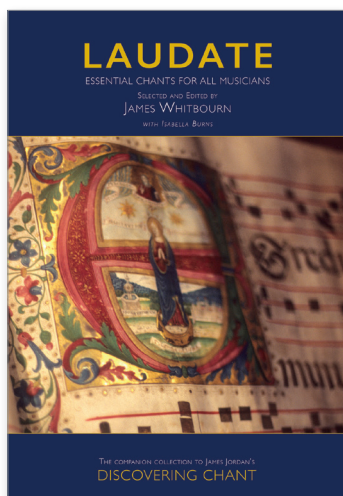
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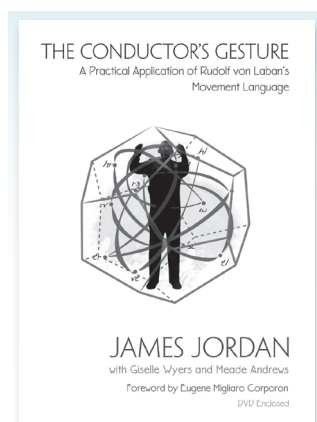
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