

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF CONDUCTING AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PERFORMANCE PROCESS**Badelov Makhammadjon Umarovich**

Lecturer at the Faculty of Art Studies, Gulistan State University

Abstract: This article examines the historical development of the art of conducting, its stages of formation beginning from the 16th century, conducting techniques, hand gestures, the role of the upbeat (auftakt), and the importance of the focal point in musical performance. The leading artistic and organizational role of the conductor in orchestral performance is also analyzed.

Keywords: Conducting, orchestra, upbeat (auftakt), measure, tempo, rhythm, conducting gestures, hand movements, baton, performance technique, musical ensemble, score, dynamics, symphonic orchestra, choral art.

The art of conducting is an essential component of musical performance culture, and its formation and development are closely linked with major historical processes in both Western and Eastern musical practices. By the 16th century, the method of indicating musical beats by striking the podium with a baton began to be widely used in managing collective performances. This technique played an important role in ensuring rhythmic precision and ensemble unity among performers. The improvement of musical notation, the increasing complexity of musical forms, and the emergence of the opera genre created the foundation for conducting to develop as an independent field of performance. Initially, the task of leading ensembles was assigned to harpsichord players, and later to organists. In this regard, great composers such as J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel were active not only as composers but also as leading figures who directed the performance process.

By the 1930s and 1940s, significant progress was observed in both global and Uzbek musical culture. The establishment of symphonic orchestras, choral groups, and professional ensembles greatly increased the practical importance of conducting. In particular, the influence of Russian composers and conducting schools was evident in the development of Uzbek choral art, with the works of composers such as V. Uspensky and S. Vasilenko belonging to this period. In the performance process, the conductor appears as the artistic leader of the entire ensemble. The accuracy, coherence, and perfection of performance depend directly on the conductor's gestures, technical mastery, and psychological influence. The conductor's stage appearance, movements, facial expressions, and behavioral culture play an important role in managing the ensemble as a unified mechanism.

Among the main elements of conducting technique, the focal point, upbeat (auftakt), and gestures for starting and ending a performance are of particular importance. The focal point should be located at waist, shoulder, or chest level and must allow for comfortable and free hand movements. The upbeat is an essential tool that prepares performers for the tempo and character of the piece, ensuring precision and ensemble unity. Hands serve as the primary means of expression in conducting. The right hand mainly determines meter, rhythm, and tempo, while the left hand is used to convey dynamics, expression, and musical imagery. Freedom of movement, relaxed muscles, and clarity of gestures enable performers to correctly interpret the conductor's signals. In some cases, particularly with left-handed conductors, the functions of the hands may be reversed without negatively affecting performance quality. Maintaining a stable tempo is one of the most challenging tasks in conducting. In

very slow or very fast tempos, muscular fatigue may lead to rhythmic instability. Therefore, a conductor must possess highly developed listening skills, refined rhythmic sensitivity, strong musical memory, and aesthetic taste.

At times, one may observe conductors in concerts who indicate meter mechanically with both hands, focusing solely on tempo and metric precision. In such cases, both hands are occupied with beating time, leaving no opportunity to fulfill other expressive functions. Instead of using the left hand effectively to reveal the artistic qualities of the piece, some conductors merely duplicate the movements of the right hand, which leads to a decline in technical expressiveness. When the left hand is also used to mark the beat, the conductor loses the ability to convey the musical and artistic nuances of the performance. Apparently, realizing the ineffectiveness of this approach, some conductors occasionally use only the right hand to indicate meter. However, this raises the question: what function does the left hand perform in such cases? Initially, it may turn the pages of the score, then weakly and uncertainly join the conducting process, afterward drop down again to turn pages, or sometimes hang passively alongside the conductor's body, failing to participate in the management of the orchestra. In other instances, it again joins the right hand in mechanically marking the beat.

The choice of gestures in any given situation depends primarily on the character, dynamics, texture, and tempo of the musical work or its specific sections. In addition, the conductor must consider the harmony and proportionality of movements, ensuring they are comfortable, free, and clearly visible. Therefore, a conductor's hand movements should be plastic, simple, expressive, musically appropriate, clear, and precise.

Through hand gestures, the conductor conveys their emotional experiences and thoughts to the performers. Additionally, they assign the important artistic tasks within the performance. Both the right hand and the left hand have specific roles in conducting, each with its own requirements. Therefore, it's important to consider their distinct functions. In conducting, the right hand primarily fulfills the task of control. It is used to show the beat, indicating the rhythmic subdivisions and demonstrating the structure of the musical work. The right hand also cues instruments or voices, indicates accents, fermatas, syncopations, determines tempo, and reflects the character and dynamics of the movement. As such, the right hand does not move mechanically but is responsive to the characteristics of the music being performed. The right hand is the leading hand, reliable, proactive, and decisive. Finally, the baton, which reflects the conductor's rhythmic instructions and is the focal point of attention, is held in the right hand. This shows that the left hand does not play a central role in marking the beat. The modern conducting technique, which involves using both hands to indicate the beat, is outdated and has long been abandoned. As Igor Markevich points out, marking time with both hands is as senseless as a pianist playing only unison, with no variation in pitch or expression.

In conclusion, the art of conducting is not just a set of technical skills, but a complex performance activity that requires a high level of artistic thinking, strong willpower, and deep musical knowledge. As the artistic leader of the orchestra or choir, the conductor plays a crucial role in revealing the ideological and artistic content of the musical work.

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