

## THE CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE - AN INSTRUMENT USED TO SOLVE THE ISSUE OF CONDUCTING CUTOFFS AND THE "UNA BATTUTA" TIME BEATING TECHNIQUE

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**SUMMARY.** The present study tackles the issue of conducting cut-offs and comes with solutions for solving them. It comprises all types of cut-offs, with detailed explanations on how to execute them, through diagrams and practical exercises. The same pattern is applied when presenting the second subject – the "una battuta" time beating technique. This study is intended to act as a handbook to student conductors, in their attempt of getting acquainted with the basics of conducting.

**Keywords:** Conducting cut-offs, choir conductor, *una battuta* time beating technique, the conducting technique.

### Introduction

In working with students, we often come across the following question: What is more important, the beginning of the musical discourse (the upbeat or *auffakt*) or its closing (the cut-off)? D. D. Botez argues that "it is the way in which we start and finish a musical piece that largely determines the success of all parties involved - the composition, composer, performer and conductor" (Botez D.D., page 101, volume II).

Naturally, both are equally important. It is like assuming that, in the alphabet, the consonants are more important than the vowels. Both of them have their own, specific role in the conductor's musical expression.

### Conducting cut-offs

The *conducting cut-off* entails the completion or the stopping of the musical discourse (of a phrase within the musical piece, or even of the entire musical work).

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Hence, cut-offs are found not only at the end of a musical piece, but also throughout the work (they can be used on every beat, within the measure).

### Types of cut-offs

Cut-offs can be of two types:

- on beat
- on a half-beat.

### Executing conducting cut-offs

From a conductor's viewpoint, cut-offs are made in two phases:

- the anticipation of the cut-off;
- the execution of the cut-off.

*The anticipation of the cut-off* – shall be made by means of the upbeat (*aufтакт*) that precedes the cut-off.

The upbeat shall be fitted into the metric pulsation of the work, the only change being made in the amplitude of the gesture. In the given context, a gesture of higher amplitude shall be used; it will be a gesture of anticipation/warning.

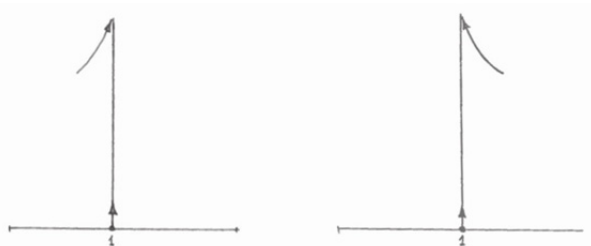
This phase (stage) can be used for both types of cut-offs.

*The execution of the cut-off* shall be made in accordance with the type of cut-off.

*Cut-offs on beat* shall be made according with the following methods:

- In the end of the musical discourse or phrase, a movement of upbeat/impetus/back-stroke shall be made; in this case, the back-stroke will be on the trajectory of the executed stroke.
- Should the cut-off be followed by a breath or *caesura*, the double-function gesture shall be used: impetus + back-stroke – cut-off + upbeat; the back-stroke of the cut-off is the upbeat for the next stroke.

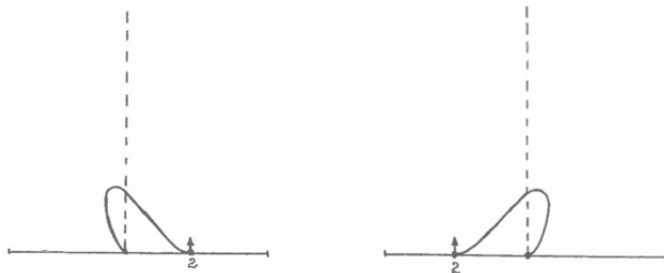
*Cut-offs on beat, in the 4-beat pattern:*



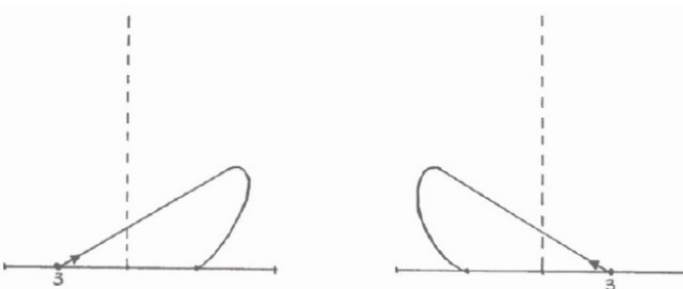
**E.g. 1**

THE CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE - AN INSTRUMENT ...

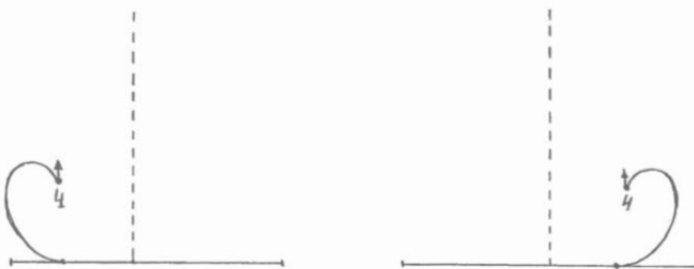
**E.g. 2**



**E.g. 3**

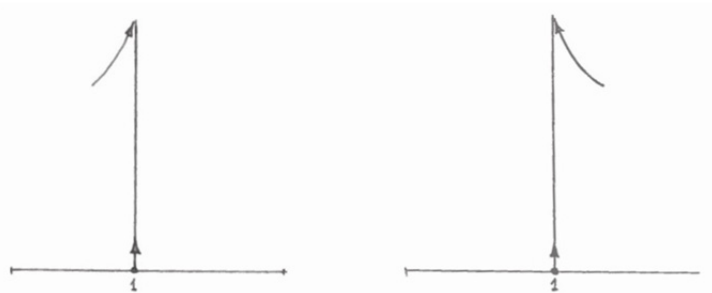


**E.g. 4**

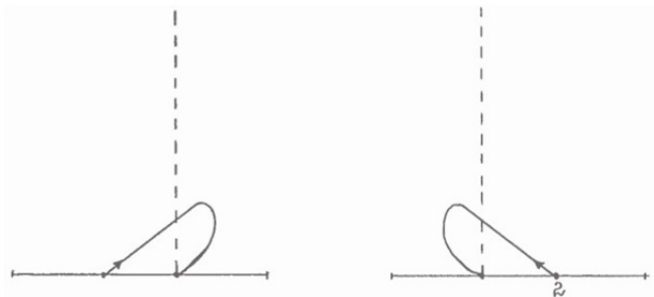


*Cut-offs on beat, in the 3-beat pattern:*

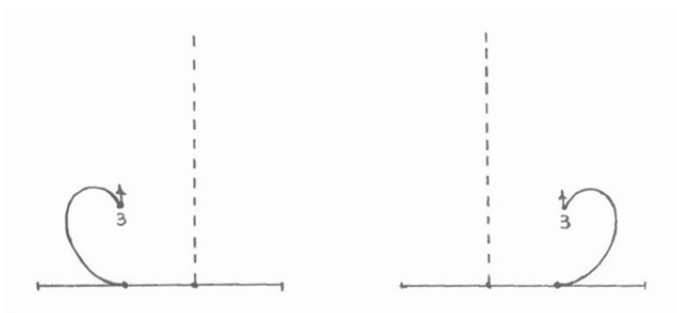
**E.g. 5**



E.g. 6

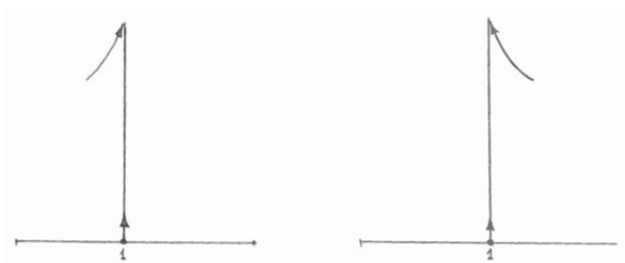


E.g. 7

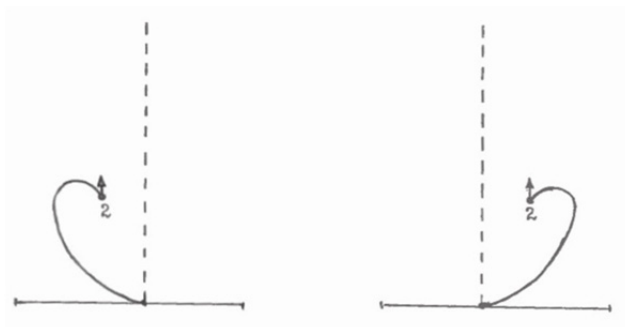


*Cut-offs on beat, in the 2-beat pattern:*

E.g. 8



E.g. 9



*Cut-offs on a half-beat* are carried out from the impetus movement (the back-stroke is there, too, yet it is very small, almost imperceptible).

## **Practical Exercises**

### **Exercise no. 1**

We will practice the cutoffs on each conducting stroke, within the measures of 4, 3 and 2 beats.

Sitting on a chair in front of a table, a chain of 4-beat conducting measures shall be executed, with a stopping after each beat (the stopping requires an impetus/back-stroke movement). The return into the pattern after each stopping shall be made by means of the upbeat. Everything shall be made on the surface of this table, which will be later on replaced by the conductor's imaginary plane. After practicing this exercise in the 4-beat measure, it shall also be carried out in the 3-beat and 2-beat patterns.

### **Exercise no. 2**

Exercise no. 1 shall be executed, from the imaginary conducting plane (an average music-beating level)

### **Exercise no. 3**

We shall practice the signalling of cut-offs within a chain of conducting strokes which entails a musical quasi-phrase:

From the conductor's natural standing position, a chain of 4-beat conducting measures shall be executed. Let us assume that each chain is comprised of 2-3 bars. Each chain of bars shall have a cut-off on a different conducting stroke, for instance: the first – on the second beat of the 3<sup>rd</sup> bar (the warning upbeat shall be made on beat 1), the other one – on the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat (the upbeat shall be made on beat 2), and so on. This exercise shall also be made for 3-beat and 2-beat bars.

### **Exercise no. 4**

The following rhythmic exercises shall be conducted:

E.g. 10

1A

1B

E.g. 11

2A

2B

### The “*una battuta*” time beating technique

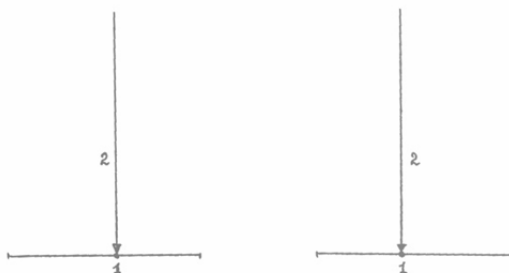
“*Una battuta*” entails the concentrated beating of music – the conductor’s stroke replaces an entire measure (one beat = one measure).

The element that requires “*una battuta*” (concentrated time beating) is the tempo.

Usually, this type of time beating is used in works with ternary or binary beats, with fast and very fast tempos.

The musical works with ternary beats ( $3/4$ ;  $3/8$ ) have three beats for one stroke, the binary ones ( $2/4$ ;  $2/8$ ) – two beats per stroke.

E.g. 12



E.g. 13

### Sârba pe loc

*Tempo de joc* *Gheorghe Danga*

Sopran  
Ro - mă - nu - lui ii pla ce jo cul mân dru plin de foc

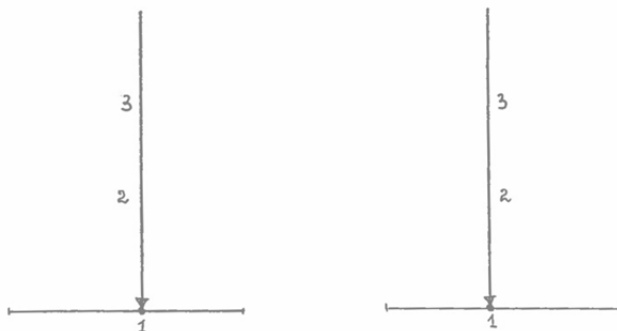
Alto

Tenor

Bass

fragment from a Romanian folk dance “Sârba pe loc” by Ghe. Danga

E.g. 14



Un-de toți sfin-ții s-au du-su

Un-de toți sfin-ții s-au du-su

### Fragment from “*Colo-n susu*” by S. Drăgoi

In both types of measures, the first sound of the formula (binary or ternary) shall be made on the impetus movement, the other ones – on the back-stroke.

In the “*una battuta*” time beating technique, the back-stroke is permanently on the trajectory of the executed stroke.

In this type of time beating, the relation between a strong beat and a weak beat within a measure shall be replaced with the *strong measure - weak measure* relation. The phrasing of the works shall be made according to this principle.

### Conclusion

By solving the issues of conducting cutoffs and the “*una battuta*” time beating technique, the student conductor shall acquire essential conducting knowledge which, later on, will facilitate their understanding of the “mental-technical approach”, “a concept that basically reflects the conductor’s approach on how to render the musical work through their conducting technique” (Guțanu L., page 77)

### REFERENCES

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