

COORDINATES AND STAGES OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDY OF A CHORAL SCORE BY THE CONDUCTOR

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SUMMARY. The conductor's study of a choral score requires a great deal of expertise. Prior to studying the actual score, each conductor will have to undertake several compulsory phases, as follows: the first phase is the analysis of the musical work, which comprises three important stages: Stage I – The Syntactical – Morphological Analysis of the work (Stg I -SMA); Stage II – The Vocal - Choral Analysis of the work (Stg II – VCA) and Stage III – the mental approach on the score (MA), which, in its turn, comprises the technical mental approach (TMA) and the interpretative mental approach (IMA). This latter stage is the practical one, which entails the actual study of the musical score. It requires a few vital steps, particularly the first one – the study of the score by the inner pulsation, involving intent. This study develops, reveals and explains the necessity and importance of all the other stages.

Keywords: The Syntactical – Morphological Analysis of the work (Stg I - SMA), The Vocal - Choral Analysis of the work (Stg II – VCA), The mental approach on the score (MA), analysis of the musical work, individual study.

“The artistic act must be expressed both technically and interpretatively. In the process of interpretation of a choral work, the conductor’s mission is to attain a unity between the technical and artistic aspects. Attaining this unity is possible only when the conductor has established a mental approach of the work (the Technical Mental Approach and the Performing Mental Approach), which they can achieve after going through two stages: The syntactical – morphological analysis (SMA) and the Choral – Vocal Analysis (CVA).”[1]

After undergoing all the stages of analyzing a choral work, the conductor shall set out to study the work proper, namely to put all the knowledge acquired into practice.

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The stages of the actual individual study of a choral work are:

1. Studying the choral score wholly and knowing it by heart;
2. Studying the choral score according to the conductor's inner pulsation;
3. Studying the score by applying the entire conducting apparatus.

The first stage, studying the choral score in its entirety, requires that the conductor assimilate:

- a. the horizontal plane of the work,
- b. the vertical plane of the work,
- c. the conductor's melodic line.

Regarding the horizontal plane of the work – the melodic line of each voice from the score: the conductor should be able to sing it, ideally by heart; if not, they should be able to sing it impeccably from the score.

As to the vertical plane - the chords: they should be able to play each chord of the vertical plane of the score.

The conductor's melodic line – the melody with thematic importance, which has voice entries – should be known by heart. Note: the melodic line shall be performed by the student conductor in the most comfortable vocal register, regardless of the intervallic leaps that may appear throughout the score or in what voice part. They will all be sung in the middle register, as, while conducting, a different kind of breathing is being used, as compared with the one employed when singing.

In the second stage, the student conductor is to study the choral score according to their inner pulsation. This study entails studying the score without using the hands. All the conductor's intentions (the upbeat stroke (Germ: **Auftakt**), the cut-off gestures, the leading of the choir, the leading of the musical phrase) are to be carried out by resorting to his/her inner pulsation, intention, mimicry and conducting will. During the study, both the choir and the time-beating gesture pattern are to be visualized.

When Maestro Sergiu Celibidache was asked, in an interview: "*What is there in the score?*" he replied: "*Everything, except for the essential part!*" [2].

Thinking more deeply about the words of Maestro Celibidache, I have concluded that, indeed, we can find everything in the score, which means, in my opinion, that we can find all there is to know about that piece of music, from the technical viewpoint, namely TMA (the Technical Mental Approach). In turn, the "essential" part that we cannot find there is PMA (the Performing Mental Approach). This "essential" part is, probably, the hardest to find, but also, the most beautiful side of the creative process).

I mentioned this here on purpose, because it is precisely at this point of study of a choral score that the two pillars, TMA and PMA are solved. But remember, only by using the inner pulsation!

Of course, the conductor will begin with TMA and then, they shall switch to PMA.

The student conductor shall take a *well-balanced, straight posture and, by visualizing the choral ensemble* in front of them, shall start conducting the work strictly by employing their inner pulsation (no hands), their intention, mimicry and conducting will. They must execute absolutely everything that they find in the score (the entire upbeat strokes, the complementation, cut-off gestures, caesuras, etc.), by singing the conductor's melodic line (specifically, this entails that every vocal entry, etc. be sung by the conductor in a comfortable vocal register).

In a first phase, the student conductor may use the score (if needed and only for small reference points or for more safety, and then gradually, they should stop using it). Ideally, they should know the score by heart, because only this way can the conductor's intention and will be fully exploited.

After analysing the technical part of the score (TMA), the student must shift to the performing part (PMA).

As I mentioned in the study: "The Complexity and Characteristics of Choral Art", "the performing mental approach is the moment in which the feelings, intuition, creativity, imagination and, of course, the spiritual depth of every conductor come together. By spiritual depth I mean their openness towards art, the universe and divinity.

The performing mental approach —> spiritual level —> performance level

In the mental performing approach, the student conductor shall have to decide on the intensity of the dynamic indications (the dynamic plane), on balancing them properly. This will reflect into their conducting gesture, through the inner energy transmitted to the instrument (choir)".[3]

In this stage, prior to performing the work by means of inner pulsation, the conductor shall ask questions, such as: "*How do I want to render this moment?*", or, "*With what dynamic indication do I want to emphasize a particular word, message or an entire phrase?*". This helps create the imaginative plane of the work's performance. Only when the conductor has found the answer to these questions will he/she be able to start conducting from the inner pulsation, thus delineating the expression and interpretation of the work. The outcome will be the emergence of phrasing ideas, the leading of the choir, and also, a

dynamic plane of the work will take shape. It is recommended to always start working from *micro* to *macro*, and essentially, on musical phrases. These searches will take some time, until the Performance Mental Approach is actually completed.

From this moment on, the third stage may begin: studying the choral score by applying the entire conducting apparatus. This entails conducting the choral work by maintaining the inner pulsation, the conductor's intention, will and mimicry, whilst adding the use of hands. The conductor shall lead the choir while singing the melodic line with the expressivity and dynamic indications desired, that is maintaining the PMA attained in the second stage. If necessary, this can be further developed.

Only after the three stages of individual study are completed, can the student conductor appear in front of a choral ensemble and start working on the choral piece.

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