

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **LUMINIȚA GUȚANU STOIAN: CHORAL CONDUCTING TREATISE - THE BASES OF CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE (THE PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE ROMÂNIA DE MÂINE FOUNDATION, BUCHAREST, 2016)**

*“Thank the flame for its light, but do not forget the lamp holder standing in the shade, with constancy of patience!”* says a wonderful teaching from the writings of the great poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore.

We initiate this presentation in the very attractive and efficient style – let us admit it – that we are to discover in almost all the pages of this entire treatise, at the beginning of nearly every chapter: we are greeted not by an arid definition, but by an appropriate quotation from the teachings and experience of some great maestros of choral conducting. The well-determined purpose of technically elucidating, from the very beginning, the essence of the problem (tackled in that respective chapter), gets „sweeter”, but also „arms itself” both with the personality of some great artists and professors, as well as, with their incontestable professional authority. This can be either a strategy, or a gift; however, it is, certainly, an easier, more pleasant and thorough way of learning. We can also find, subliminally, that, in our practical undertakings, the essential purpose is the very practical application of one’s skills, on condition one understood and used, concretely and efficiently, the intellectual, technical and psychological spark that can trigger the energies needed for this application. The object of study is, in turn, either the technical aspect, the psycho-technical, or the movement-related one; throughout the present treatise, each of the stages proposed by the author - especially the last one - are strewn with subchapters that present, in an orderly and definite manner, practical and gradual exercises of comprehension, dexterity, gesture efficiency, as well as of kinetic and intellectual undertaking of the final conclusions provided by the problematic of each chapter.

The actual subject of analytical / technical and, then, practical approach of the essential problematic raised by the basics of choral conducting represents the logistic foundation of the systematic elaboration of this treatise: the basic conducting positions, warm-up exercises for the conductor, the conductor’s stroke, the upbeat („Auftakt”) and the anacrusis, the analysis of the conducting patterns and of the complex metric formulas, the cut-offs, the gesture “design” within the multitude of various situations and metro-rhythmic elements and systems, the dynamics and agogics in conductors’ expression, the syntactical and morphological analysis, as well as the assessment of the specific tone colours in the field, the mental concept and the case study of the score – all these are essential „bus stops” on the route towards study and knowledge, which the author stops at systematically, inviting to diligence in learning, to constant practice and

to the later, correct and authorized application. In this sense, the entire treatise meets, in a practical manner, the immediate needs of today's reality, pertaining to this delicate field of *technical coordination* (and not only) by an authorized person (the conductor), and of *collective vocal performance* (in our case – the choir). There are various methods of reaching this complex purpose. As long as the conductor works with “people” and not with “mechanisms”, the necessity to explain and understand, respectively, the subjective factor, the ad-hoc adjustment, depending on specific terms – all these will evidently require personalized ways of action. This is exactly what this present treatise aims at, thus becoming an efficient and useful course of study, for the analysis and application of the basic notions, in this science and art of choral conducting.

Just as people try to unravel the universe, by daring to fly spaceships toward distant planets, or just as the complicated laws of flying or building those daring vehicles entail industrious studies, logistics, experiences, calculations, science, strategy, construction, tenacity, competence, a lot of hard work and many other things, so the sensitive universe of the human being has an intense need of skilled explorers and enterprising “vehicles” which, by convention, we will call: composition, performance, choir and conductor. The science of communication between them and through them is precisely the object of study of this treatise.

The enterprise of creating her own logistic endeavour, for her professional and didactic betterment, denotes the author's determination to express herself in this field, but also the trust in her diligent assimilation of the basics, for the exertion of this charismatic occupation. You can notice how well you know something only when you have to explain that “something” to someone else, who does not know of it, yet, but who has a chance of finding out, thanks to you.

The score analysis that the treatise invites us to, in its last chapters, entails the examination of a few choral works which the author considers illustrative for the intended purpose. The analytical model can be extended to an entire repertory collection, the didactic purpose being reached in this regard, as well.

Given the context – in no way saturated – of the technical-application literature in the field of authorized study of the science and art of choral conducting, the present work offers one more basic support, it invites to comprehension and study, it encourages diligence, involvement and dedication. Oh, and a lot of motivation!

In essence, the Conductor is a model. A model of conduct, of essence, which can be recognized in real life, namely amongst fellow musicians, but also amongst the people that experience Music truly and affectively. The personal example from this real life, offered generously, modestly and elegantly by Luminița Guțanu Stoian – the conductor, a woman in arts and culture – is entirely enlightening, proving beyond doubt that...“it is possible!”. In truth, conducting represents the skilfulness in communicating the great Music to the great Humanity, through the voice of the great Ensembles. Fascinating is this lesson, fascinating is this world, fascinating it is to learn the laws of communication, from their beginning. This is actually the very purpose of the author, in the present work. The chance to a professional, high-performance “upgrade” in choral conducting receives, as we can see, yet another plausible argument.

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