

Techniques for conducting a church choir



Techniques for Conducting a Church Choir

**with
Angela Westhoff-Johnson**



Before we get started.....

- Best viewing
 - Close other programs or applications
 - This will improve your viewing and sound quality
- Questions
 - Use the question section on your control panel
 - Questions can be typed in at any time
 - Answers will be given at the end



Presenter



Angela Westhoff-Johnson



Techniques for conducting a church choir

What a Wonderful Gift!

Lord, how easy it is to take for granted
the power of the gift of song.
We have become very accustomed to
our spiritual sound....
the crowded church....
the spirit in our midst.
Yet every so often it is good
to set ourselves apart
and think about worship without music.
Then we can see the grace and power of
your gift.
What if there were only words for prayer,
and never that fine sweet melody
that transforms a quiet hope
into a triumphant Alleluia?
What if asking for mercy could only be
spoken?
What if we could never laugh
and sing the Gloria?

Music is the only way
your people can get beyond themselves
and touch heaven.
Music is a divine vehicle and
extraordinary grace
that allows us to clap our hands
together with you.
You lift us to the place
where our spirits can dance,
free of earth
free of death,
free of every bond.
Lord, keep us mindful
that we are ministers of the finest grace.
Help us to remember that,
without your spirit song
which you sing through us,
many would never feel your touch
many would forget your words of love.
You honor us with a gift beyond measure.
With your help, may we treasure it.



Techniques for conducting a church choir

- ❖ **Proper body language and conducting gestures**
- ❖ **Ways to develop vocal technique among your choir members**
- ❖ **How to plan an efficient rehearsal to maximize time**
- ❖ **Conducting techniques specific to different choir types**



How to Run a More Effective Choir Rehearsal

REHEARSALS

- Create a rehearsal lineup
- Prepare the room
- Create a seating arrangement
- Take attendance....this is more important than you may realize
- Start on time



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REHEARSALS

- Start with vocal warmups
- Incorporate sight-singing
- Use time wisely
- Balance standing and sitting



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10/12 Rehearsal Lineup

7:00 Communion Antiphon

MOVE TO THE CATHEDRAL LOFT

7:07 A Requiem of Peace (Andrew Wright) 11/5

MOVE TO THE APSE

7:45 The Eyes of All (Berger) 11/19

7:53 Sicut Cervus (Palestrina) 10/22

7:58 Ubi Caritas (Gjeilo) 10/15

8:07 *If Ye Love Me (Tallis) 10/29

8:07 In Remembrance (Ames) 11/12

8:15 Jubilate Deo (Lasso) Christ the King 11/26

8:20 *Exsultate Justi (Viadana) Christ the King 11/26

8:25 Alma Redemptoris Mater (arr. Benson) Advent

8:32 The Beatitudes (Stopford) 11/12

8:40 I Know that My Redeemer Lives (R. Farrell) 11/19

8:47 Jerusalem the Golden (Whitaker - women only) 10/29

Shepherds Pipe Carol

The Holly and the Ivy (Gjeilo)

A Spotless Rose (Howells)

Behold, How Good (Trotta)

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (Gawthrop)

Perfect Rose (Luke Mayernik)



KNOW YOUR MUSIC!

- Be positive and upbeat
- Set high standards
- End rehearsal on time
- Debrief for yourself soon after the rehearsal (begin planning the next rehearsal)
- Sunday morning rehearsal is important. Call should be 1 hour before Mass. Rehearse the psalm and anthems for that day and then move to their rehearsal folder



PEDAGOGY

- Warmups are important. Include warmups that focus on the following choral techniques
 - a) sustained singing
 - b) staccato and detached
 - c) crisp diction, arpeggios – beginning low and ascending & beginning high and descending
 - d) chords that ascend in half-step intervals for tuning,
 - e) solfege (do, re, mi) or chord tones (1, 2, 3)
- Sunday mornings warm up with chant
- Each week have one section come early – work on vocal production, note shedding, etc.



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GESTURE

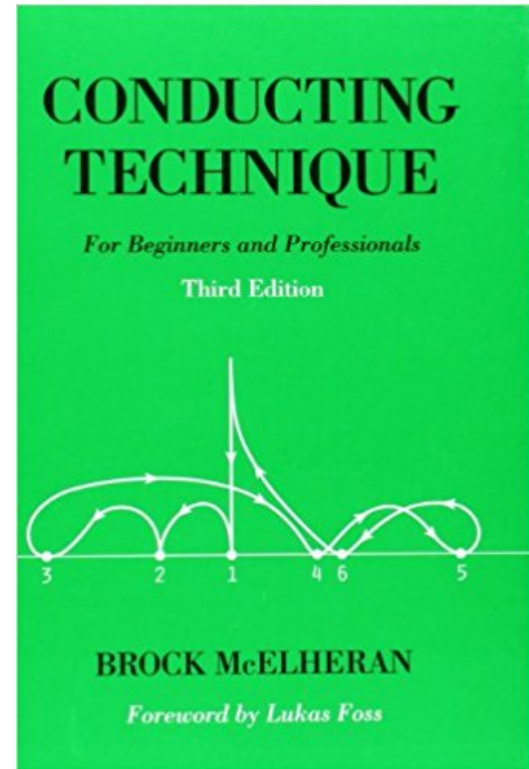
- Gesture *will* change the Choral Sound
- *tight conducting results in tight singing!*
- Posture
- Pleasant face



Techniques for conducting a church choir

Conducting is a universal language.....if *your* gesture is something only *your* choir understands, this is a disservice

Conducting Technique (1966)
by Brock McElheran
For Beginners and Professionals
(Oxford University Press)
ISBN 0-19-386854-7



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Choral technique– look for simple ways to explain not so simple things!

Choral singing is different than solo singing....no one person is more important than the next! Unified vowels, consistent cut offs, look up.



CONDUCTING GESTURES

1. Posture
2. Beat Patterns
 - 4/4 (12/8)
 - 3/4 (9/8)
 - 2/4 (6/8)
 - 3/8 (in 1)
3. Dynamics
 - Basic levels
 - Crescendo
 - Diminuendo
4. Cueing
5. Articulation
 - Legato
 - Marcato
 - Staccato



STARTING A PIECE

- Gesture is *very* important.
- Preparation (prep beat) must be in the tempo of the piece.
- Some say only one prep; if giving more than one, the final beat must be the strongest. Let's practice!



PULSE

- Metric beat (time signature) versus underlying pulse.
- There are sixteen sixteenths (or pulses) in each measure (in 4/4)
- What can pulse do?



MUSICAL PHRASES– beginning, climax, ending

- There is tension under the pull of the climax.....once the climax of the phrase is reached, there is some relaxation to the end of the phrase. These two sides must have balance.
- Sing with the pulse while phrasing



DICTION

- International Phonetic Alphabet - an alphabetic system of phonetic notation based primarily on the Latin alphabet.
- An Introduction to IPA

[i] [ɔɪ]
[eɪ] [aʊ] [o]
[æ] [ju]
[oʊ] [ʒ]



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Vowel	Description	Example
[i]	forward vowel	as in <u>bee</u> t
[ɪ]	forward vowel	as in b <u>i</u> t
[e]	forward vowel	as in cha <u>u</u> tic
[eɪ]	diphthong	as in ba <u>i</u> t
[ɛ]	forward vowel	as in b <u>e</u> t
[æ]	diphthong	as in ba <u>a</u> t
[a]	forward vowel	as in B <u>o</u> ston (as spoken by New Englanders)
[aɪ]	diphthong	as in b <u>y</u>
[aʊ]	diphthong	as in hou <u>s</u> e
[u]	back vowel	as in bo <u>o</u> t
[ju]	diphthong	as in abu <u>s</u> e
[ʊ]	back vowel	as in bo <u>o</u> k



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Vowel	Description	Example
[o]	back vowel	as in <u>pillow</u>
[ou]	diphthong	as in <u>boat</u>
[ɔ]	back vowel	as in <u>awe</u>
[ɔɪ]	diphthong	as in <u>boy</u>
[ɑ]	back vowel	as in <u>father</u>
[ʌ]	central vowel, stressed	as in <u>bud</u>
[ə]	central vowel, unstressed (schwa)	as in <u>appeal</u>
[ɜː]	central vowel with r, stressed	as in <u>burr</u>
[ɚ]	central vowel with r, unstressed (hooked schwa)	as in <u>butter</u>
[ɜ]	central vowel, r-less	as in <u>bird</u>



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TRINITAS

EXCELLENCE IN SACRED CHORAL MUSIC

Like Abraham of Old

SATB

Genievieve Glen, OSB Ronald A. Matthews

Quickly (♩ = ca. 200)
Soprano *mf*

Alto

Tenor

Bass


mf Like

Like A - bra - ham of old, the cho - sen cou - ple brings The Child at God's be -
hest, to make an of - fer - ing With - in the tem - ple built up - on Mo - ri - ah's
height And filled with One un - seen ex - cept in clouds of light.

Text © 2002, 2003. The Benedictine Nuns of the Abbey of St. Walburga. Published by OCP, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.
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3

11 *3+2* *3+3(2)* *2+3*

Born

I - saac comes this Child as great - est of God's gifts, Born of a wom - an's

15 *3+2+2* Lifts *3+2+2* *3+2*

faith, who now her hands up - lifts To of - fer in his place all that the Law com -

19 *mf*

Com - mands. One

mands, But learns in - stead what more the love of God de - mands: *mf*

23 *2+2+3* *3+2+2*

of - fer - ing a - lone can break the law of sin: Her Child will take the place of all his hu - man

Tenors only

27 *3+2*

kin Up - on the mount of God where sac - ri - fice is made, And her own soul will feel the

Like Abraham of Old

Techniques for conducting a church choir

2

Restless Is the Heart

for Carrie McAndrew

Psalm 90

Bernadette Farrell

REFRAIN ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 50$)
(a tempo) *mp*

Soprano Alto

Rest - less is the heart — un - til it comes to rest in you. — All the

Tenor Bass

mp
(a tempo)

mf *rit. last time* 1-3 *p* to Verses **Final** *p* *Fine*

earth, all the earth shall re - mem - ber and re - turn — to our God. — God. —

VERSE 1 *mp*

1. Lord, — you have been our ref - uge through all time, from one gen - er -

mp

© 1989, Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

A full score and part for solo instrument in B \flat (clarinet) or C are available from the publisher, edition 70166.

Edition 9283-2 Restless Is the Heart

3

1. - a - tion to the next. be - fore the moun - tains were born, or the

1. earth brought forth, you are God, with - out be - gin - ning or — end. —

rit. *D.C.*

VERSE 2 *mp* [ə] not [aɪ] w/ diphthong [e] not [eɪ]

2. To your eyes a thou - sand years are like a day, no more than a

2. watch in the night. You sweep us a - way like a dream, like the

f

Restless Is the Heart

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4

molto rit. (a) D.C.

2. grass that springs green in the morn - ing, but fad - ed by night. ___

molto rit. progressively (quickenning in tempo)

VERSE 3

p *mp* *poco stringendo*

3. Make us know our life's short - ness, make us know our life's short - ness that

rit. *f* *a tempo*

3. we may gain true wis - dom of heart. In the morn - ing, the morn - ing

rit. *f* *a tempo*

3. fill us with your love. ___ *più f* D.C. al fine

3. fill ___ us. fill ___ us. fill us with your love. ___

più f

Restless Is the Heart



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2

Composed in honor of Dr. Don Briel for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, October 2013

May Christ Support Us

(A Prayer of Cardinal Newman)

Blessed John Henry Newman (1801-1890), alt. Michael Joncas

Very slow, rubato (♩ = ca. 75)

Soprano
Alto

May Christ sup - port us all the day

Tenor
Bass

long, till the shad - ows length - en, and the eve - ning

comes, and the bus - y world is hushed,

and the fe - ver of life is o - ver, and our

© 2013, Michael Joncas. Published by TRINITIAS, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.

This piece may be sung a whole step higher.
For smaller choirs, omit the cue-sized notes. See Composer Notes on page 4.

Edison 30130957

3

work is done.

Then in his mer - cy, then in his mer - cy may he
Then in his mer - cy, mer - cy, then in his mer - cy may he

give us a safe lodg - ing, and a ho - ly rest, and

peace at the last, and peace at the last, and

peace at the last.

mf *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

clip diphthong at the VERY END

May Christ Support Us

Techniques for conducting a church choir

2

Gaudete

English verses by Bob Hurd

Piae Cantiones, 1582
Arranged by Craig S. Kingsbury

REFRAIN: (♩ = 96-104)

Soprano
Alto

Gau - de - te, gau - de - te, Chri - stus est na - tus ex Ma - ri - a

Tenor
Bass

p

vir - gi - ne. Gau - de - te. Gau - de - te, gau - de - te, Chri - stus est

mf

na - tus ex Ma - ri - a vir - gi - ne. Gau - de - te.

VERSE 1: Solo (Baritone or Alto)

1. Tem - pus ad est gra - ti - ae hoc quod op - ta - ba - mus,
Na - ture mar - vels at the sight, an - gels sing the glo - ry:

1. car - mi - na lae - ti - ti - ae de - vo - te re - da - mus.
God be - comes a lit - tle child, shep - herds tell the sto - ry.

English verses © 1996, Bob Hurd. This arrangement © 1996, Craig S. Kingsbury. Published by OCP. All rights reserved.

Edition 30114238



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2

in memoriam: Arthur Williard

ALMA REDEMPTORIS MATER

Gregorian Antiphon Arranged by Robert Benson

Cantabile (♩ = 132-134)

Cello $2+2+3$ $3+2+2$ $2+3+2$ $2+3$ $3+2$ *mp*

[A]

6 Vlc. *mp*

Tenor/Bass *mp* $2+3$ $3+2+2$ *Al* *ma*

Piano *p*

10

Soprano/Alto *mp* $2+2+3$ *qua* *per* *vi* *a* *cae* *li*

T/B $2+3+3$ $2+3$ *Re* *dem* *pto* *ris* *Ma* *ter*

Piano *pp*

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Edition 30112704

3

14

S/A $2+2+3$ $3+2+2$ $2+2+3$ *por* *ta* *ma* *nes*, *et* *stel* *la* *ma*

Piano *mp*

18

[B]

S/A $2+3$ $3+2$ *ris*, *suc* *cur* *re* *ca* *den* *ti* *sur* *ge* *re* *qui*

T/B *mp*

Piano *pp*

22

$3+2$ $3+2$ *cu* *rat* *po* *pu* *lo* *Tu* *qua* *ge* *nu* *i*

Piano *mf*



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4

20 *3+2* *3+2* *2+3* *p*

sti, na - tu - ra mi - ran - te,

p

30 *mp* *f*

unis. *mp* *mf*

tu - um san - ctum - Ge - ni - to - rem: Vir - go

mp *mf*

33 *2+3* *2+2+3* *2+2+3* *mp*

pri - us ac po - ste - ri - us,

mp

5

36 *mf*

2+3 *mp* *cresc.* *3+3+2* *f*

Ga - bri - e - lis ab - o - re su - mens - il - lud A -

mp *cresc.* *f*

39 *rall.* *Adagio* *subdividi* *Tempo Primo*

f *3* *mp*

2+2+2 *rall.* *Adagio* *pp*

ve, pec - ca - to - rum mi - se - re - re.

rall. *pp*

mp *rall.* *pp*

42 *rit.*



Techniques for conducting a church choir


CONTEMPORARY SONGS OF FAITH

Tend the Ground

Assembly, SATB Choir, Keyboard, and Guitar

Inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* Curtis Stephan
Acc. by Scott Soper

INTRO (♩ = ca. 74)




The musical score is for an introduction in 4/4 time, marked with a tempo of approximately 74 beats per minute. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass clef provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes. Chord symbols are placed above the treble clef: Fm, Db, Ab, Eb, Fm, Db, Ab.

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Techniques for conducting a church choir

6

Tend the Ground (Guitar/Choral)

Inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* Curtis Stephan

INTRO (♩ = ca. 74)
Capo 1: (Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab (D) Eb (Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab (Kbd)

REFRAIN

Soprano (Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab (D) Eb (Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab
Alto
Tenor
Bass

We till the earth, we tend the ground, sow-ing hope and peace where none is

In self-less love God's life a-bounds. We till the ground. Love, life a-bounds. We till the

to Coda ⊕

to Verses (C) Db (D) Eb (G) Ab (to Verses)
Optional Interlude (C) Db (D) Eb

earth. we tend the ground. earth. we tend the

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7

(Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab (D) Eb (Em) Fm (C) Db (G) Ab (to Verses)

ground.

VERSES

Melody (Am) Bbm (D/F#) Eb/G (G) Ab

Harmony

1. As God pro-vides our ev-ery need, with grate-ful
2. All crea-tures share one com-mon home, one lov-ing
3. With o-pen hand our Lord has giv'n his life for
4. Where hard-ened hearts have turned to greed, tram-pling up-
5. On rock-y paths and trod-den roads, Lord, clear the
6. Let plows be forged from swords that kill. Let tools of
7. Let mer-cy fall on us like rain to clear the

(C) Db (D/F#) Eb/G (G) Ab (Am) Bbm (D/F#) Eb/G

1. hearts let us re-ceive these gifts of love, and make re-
2. God, one song of hope. The rocks cry out and prais-es
3. all that we might live. No great-er love is there than
4. on the fledg-ling seed. Help us to tend to oth-ers'
5. ground where thorns have grown. Give us the grace to fol-low
6. war be shaped to till the hard and ston-y
7. air and heal the pain. Where sin has bro-ken bonds of

(Em) Fm (F) Gb (Dsus4) Eb (D) D.S.

1. turn to bless the world, to bless the world. We till the
2. ring, rise up and sing, rise up and sing!
3. this, no great-er love, no great-er love.
4. needs, o-pen our eyes, o-pen our eyes.
5. you. Make straight the way, make straight the way.
6. ground. Lord, bring your peace, Lord, bring your peace.
7. love let mer-cy reign, let mer-cy reign.

Tend the Ground

Techniques for conducting a church choir

Tend the Ground
(Guitar/Vocal)

Inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* Curtis Stephan
Vocal arr. by Rick Modlin

INTRO (♩ = ca. 74)
Capo 1: (E_m) (C) (G) (D) (E_m) (C) (G)
F_m D_b A_b E_b F_m D_b A_b

REFRAIN
Melody (E_m) (C) (G) (C) (D/F#)
F_m D_b A_b D_b E_b/G

We till the earth, we tend the ground, sow-ing hope and peace where none is

Harmony (G) (A_m) (E_m)
A_b B_m F_m to Coda

found. In self-less love God's life a-bounds. We till the

to Verses (C) (D) (G) (to Verses)
D_b E_b A_b

Optional Interlude (C) (D) (E_m) (C)
D_b E_b F_m D_b

earth, we tend the ground. earth, we tend the ground.

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Handwritten notes:
3-pt. Sopranos/Basses
Tenors 8vb
Altos

TEND THE GROUND (Guitar/Vocal), pg. 2 of 3

(G) (D) (E_m) (C) (G)
A_b E_b F_m D_b A_b (to Verses)

VERSES
Melody (A_m) (D/F#) (G)
B_m E_b/G A_b

Harmony

- As God pro-vides our ev-ery need, with grate-ful
- All crea-tures share one com-mon home, one lov-ing
- With o-pen hand our Lord has giv'n his life for
- Where hard-ened hearts have turned to greed, tram-pling up-
- On rock-y paths and trod-den roads, Lord, clear the
- Let plows be forged from swords that kill. Let tools of
- Let mer-cy fall on us like rain to clear the

(C) (D/F#) (G) (A_m) (D/F#)
D_b E_b/G A_b B_m E_b/G

- hearts, let us re-ceive these gifts of love, and make re-
- God, one song of hope. The rocks cry out and prais-es
- all that we might live. No great-er love is there than
- on the fledg-ling seed. Help us to tend to oth-ers'
- ground where thorns have grown. Give us the grace to fol-low
- war be shaped to till and break the hard and ston-y
- air and heal the pain. Where sin has bro-ken bonds of

(E_m) (F) (D_{sus4}) (D)
F_m G_b E_bsus4 E_b D.S.

- turn to bless the world, to bless the world. We till the
- ring, rise up and sing, rise up and sing!
- this, no great-er love, no great-er love.
- needs, o-pen our eyes, o-pen our eyes.
- you, Make straight the way, make straight the way.
- ground, Lord, bring your peace, Lord, bring your peace.
- love let mer-cy reign, let mer-cy reign.



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CONTEMPORARY SONGS OF FAITH

The King Shall Come

Assembly, SATB Choir, Keyboard, and Guitar

Greek; tr. by John Brownlie, 1859–1925, alt.

Trevor Thomson
Keyboard acc. by Scott Goper

INTRO With gentle longing ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$)

C Fadd9

Keyboard



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Parts for Solo Instrument in C (30127337), Solo Instrument in B♭ (30127338), and Solo Instrument in E♭ (30127339) are available online. Visit ocp.org.

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The King Shall Come

(Guitar/Choral)

Greek; tr: by John Brownlie, 1859–1925, alt.

Trevor Thomson
Choral arr: by Rick Modlin

INTRO With gentle longing ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 63$)

VERSES

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A simplified 2-part Guitar-Vocal version (30127336) is available online. Visit ocp.org.

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The King Shall Come

Questions & Answers



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