

## The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra: Activity 2

### The Role of the Conductor

#### Teaching Objective

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of the conductor in an orchestra.

#### Materials/Resources

- A CD player (or computer)
- Document Projector (optional)
- Pencils (optional)
- Accompanying Youth Concert CD, Track 2

#### Vocabulary

Conductor – the person who directs a group of musicians

Baton – a stick used by a conductor to help direct the group

Tempo – the speed of the music

Meter – how beats are grouped in music

#### Pre-Assessment

Encourage a conversation regarding students' familiarity with bands or orchestras (live or recorded performances). If the school has a band and/or orchestra, ask the students if anyone in the class plays an instrument in one or both of these groups. Use the following questions to help guide the conversation:

- Who leads a band or orchestra?
- How do the musicians know the tempo (or speed) of the music?
- How do the musicians know when to start or stop playing?
- How do the musicians know when to play fast or slow, loud or soft?

#### Teaching Sequence

1. Tell the students that at the Dallas Symphony Orchestra Youth Concert, they will see a person standing in front of the orchestra directing the musicians. That person is the conductor. She communicates to the musicians when to begin and stop playing, when to play louder or softer, the tempo (or speed) of the music, and many other expressive details. Because she can't talk during the music performance, she will be using her hands, facial expressions, and a baton (or conducting stick) to help convey these important details to a large group.
2. Have the students look at the 2, 3, and 4-beat conducting patterns on pages 13-14 (you may project the patterns on an overhead projector, or make copies for each individual student). Invite them to trace the patterns in the air with their right hand. They may use a pencil as a baton. These beat groupings reflect the meter of the music.
3. Play the first few minutes of Mozart's overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (track 2 on the accompanying Youth Concert CD), and ask the students to listen closely. Then play it again, and have them actually conduct along with the music.
4. Ask your students to identify where the music is *piano* (or soft), and where it is *forte* (or loud). This is indicated by the symbols *p* and *f*. When conducting, conductors generally make larger hand gestures for loud music and smaller hand gestures for quiet music. Have your students conduct along with the recording one more time with this in mind.

#### Culminating Activity

Make sure your students know the songs "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and "Brother John," found on page 14. Have the class practice conducting the 3-beat ("My Country 'Tis of Thee") and 4-beat ("Brother John") patterns while singing the songs together as a class. Then invite interested students to come to the front of the room and conduct the rest of the group in one of these two songs. Encourage the conductor to experiment with beginning and stopping, making the song go faster or slower, louder or softer, or even more choppy (like a robot) or more smooth (like flowing water). Allow time for several students to try their hand at it, so that everyone can see what a difference a conductor can make.

#### Evaluation

Did student behaviors indicate a basic understanding of the role of the conductor in an orchestra?

#### Extension

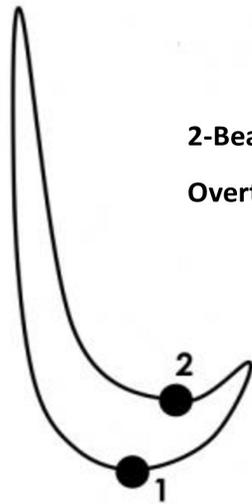
If your students are interested in learning more about what a conductor does and how they do it, please encourage them to write a letter to Maestra Canellakis, c/o the DSO Education Department, 2301 Flora Street, Suite 300, Dallas, TX 75201.

#### TEKS Connections

English/Language Arts: 110.14b(20B); 110.15b(18B); 110.16b(18B); 110.18b(17B)

Music: 117.112(1C,2A,2C,3B,3C,3E); 117.115(1C,2A,2C,3B,3C,3F); 117.18(1C,2A,2C,3B,3C,3F); 117.208(1C,2A,3F)

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2-Beat Conducting Pattern:

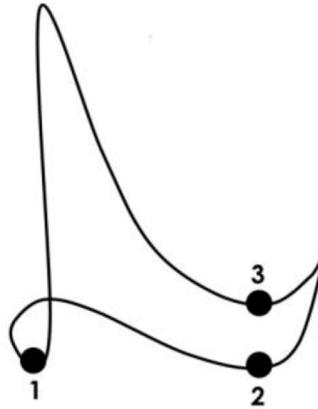
Overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*

**Presto**

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**3-Beat Conducting Pattern:**

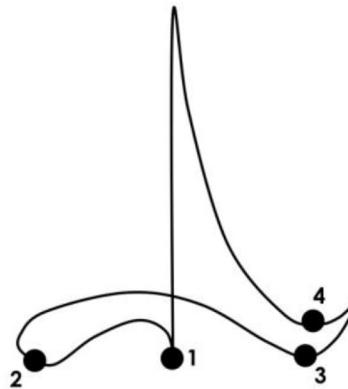
**"My Country, 'Tis of Thee"**



My coun - try, 'tis of thee, sweet land of li - ber - ty,  
 Of thee I sing. Land where my fa - thers died, Land of the  
 pil - grim's pride, From ev - ry moun - tain-side, Let free - dom ring!

**4-Beat Conducting Pattern:**

**"Are You Sleeping, Brother John?"**



Are you sleep - ing, are you sleep - ing, Bro - ther John? Bro - ther John?  
 Morn-ing bells are ring-ing, morn-ing bells are ring-ing. Ding, ding, dong! Ding, ding, dong!