

CONDUCTOR'S GESTURE AS SIGN AND SIGNIFICATION

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Abstract: *Like all arts, conducting is an art of the movement that comes from the inner being, from her life feeling. The conductor's gesture is associated with musical structures and feelings of which he is converted to sound perception. The conductor reveals the score content, store it in his interior, passes it through affectivity filter and creates an inner model on which he will act at outside as the conducting gesture full of significations. Without this charge, it would be inadequate and false.*

Keywords: *conducting, gesture, sign, signification.*

1. Introduction

Conducting practice is a discipline that seeks to base its own system of concepts and terms by which to define and to become autonomous in the artistic process.

Although it is a profession with a long history, art and documents on conducting technique are extremely rare, which leads us to the idea that the implications of knowledge act are directed unsuspected complex, even mysterious. Over the centuries the conductors have passed, some others, trade secrets in any way without coding gained experience.

Conducting springs lead us to distant antiquity, to the early artistic expression when, in its manifestations, man seeking media with others, in ways as diverse. The man used the *gesture* as a means of expression of both information and feelings or affects.

With the improvement of musical language, the conducting gesture has found new ways of expression. Always keeping the rank of fundamental human communication with the arm, with the hand, with the rod, with the cane (*virga regia*), with the baton, with the roll of paper, with the bow etc., the gesture is considered the primary means of driving assemblies made with arm movements.

2. Outer and inner elements of gestural expression

Therefore, the technical expression of the conductor is achieved primarily through movements of hands, without the involvement of the word. The hand – the first tool of man – is the one that can best express what is most difficult to express: mind-set, feeling, thought. Arsenal of conducting gestures is completed by two means: mimics (facial muscle movements)

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and pantomime (body movements). "Among the three basic means, **gesture** has the leading role plays He is able to express the full range of human feelings and emotions. [...] **Mimics** and **pantomime**, although of considerable importance in conducting process, is subordinated to gesture, their role being to help them in playing an affective-emotional work," [1] stated Nicolae Gâscă in his conducting treatise. Indeed, it should be considered that the face and body movements not be exaggerated, leading to grotesque and ridiculous, but to be determined by the content of the paper musical ideas. It requires, therefore, the adoption of the "expressive mimic"[2] , considered by Hermann Scherchen the second means of conducting expression or the "decent facial expression"[3], as the conductor Dorel Pascu-Rădulescu entitled it in his compendium on conducting technique.

Satisfying the conditions of a constituted semiotic system, with all the necessary elements of language, the gesture is the first language of man, with the richest load on the human experience transmission. An adequate research on gesture and especially on the conducting one, involves an approach on a broad horizon of culture and information. But in this paper we propose to use one of the basic functions of gesture in communication, that of *sign*, highlighting its role in conducting an ensemble that participate in the interpretive act.

Body attitude, gesture, must be transparent for spiritual, physical and musical qualities of the conductor. The gesture itself has only an operative value. Clear distinction must be made between operative value and the one of the gesture significance. Music itself is an area of significance; musical act is targeted, intended and organised in order to provide a meaning. In an interview taken more than

twenty years ago by Dan Scurtulescu, the conductor and phenomenologist Constantin Bugeanu, talking about his own system of thought on conductor's musical act, testified that there are three levels to achieve significance: *sign*, *meaning* and *significance* in itself. The three stages are into the concept of *becoming*. [4] Throughout human thinking, becoming occupied in a privileged place, because the discussion about the origin of things is in itself very exciting: things gets, turns, are born and disappear, and what we perceive around us affects our entire evolution.

In the music field, becoming is a process that takes place on two plans: the plan of consciousness (inner level) and the sound concrete (outer level). Music doesn't exist as object other than in formulations and ideas expressed to speech sounds. So music exists "as long as it becomes. At semiographic level (when it didn't become yet), the music remains a complex of immovable and inexpressive structures. Instead, in the regime of motion (the state of speech), the music reveals its expressive content and establish itself as a message of a communication act, using the specific acoustic correlations and determinations set and according to internal needs, " [5]

3. Conductor's gesture – from sign to signification

Hence, we may actually consider music as a kinetic art, movement being its foundation. We are dealing in this art with referential elements of movement: time (as the concept of duration) and space (expressed symbolically, polyphonic or stereo). In music, real act of movement leads to another act of movement, namely in the consciousness of the one who performs the musical act. The conductor is carrying out this exchange between interior and exterior. "Only the gesture which embodies the essentiality of the movement

is conductor gesture: the one that issue the movement key and builds the movement itself." [6] To understand the movement as becoming act, we must enter within consciousness (thought) and to determine the *mental model*, a so-called "action plan" of the conductor's approach.

Becoming of the mental project as concrete sounding takes place only in musical act and involves a gradual integration of the unconscious into consciousness, plus mind, feelings, intuition. Becoming is based on a process in which becoming structures succeed after different rules: some belonging to the score (becoming is provided by the score), other rules are designed by thinking and the most popular rules come from the feeling.

In becoming, emotions have an important role because they establish the link between the consciousness and the concrete, the present, and in the content, one meets state from conscious and subconscious. As mentioned, becoming takes place in two registers: interior - of being, and outside - of perceptibility. The conductor needs to master both, for which purpose it cultivates the appropriate availability: of living in the movement world with his own memories and a consistent relationship to the outside world that must be perceived as comprehensive as possible. Thus, when memory, consciousness recognizes the connections between the outward sign and the inner image formed in that mental project or model.

By analogy with sound becoming route, crossing gesture contains:

1. *Forecast gesture* - as conducting leading pulse and density
2. *Establishment of the attack* - at which time the mind plays an important role and coordinates the design on the outside, by the attack gesture, giving the significance of consciousness.

3. Making content through various gesture constructions. Here the conductor is considering the content of the consciousness and the intentional availabilities in relation to the created mental model.

Let's recall deeply the three levels of musical becoming.

The first level is based on the sign. Referential element is the score, whose "signs" – the notes, mediated by "naive" consciousness - as Husserl calls it, must be translated into sounds.

At intermediate level we are witnessing the development of a sense: beyond score signs, the act is born in conductor's consciousness in a semiotic movement. The consciousness is the one that acquires the meaning of becoming and the act, ahead of score signs, is achieved inside as the mental model.

The third level is the heuristic one, the creative act in which consciousness appears in plenary disclosure significance. This corresponds to making music in the form of discourse, when the conductor "shapes" the interpreters corresponding to a meaning. Eurhythmic movement appears in contemporary conducting as a rescue solution and a stop of certain thinking on the conductor's act. Without using eurhythmics, traditional methods of conducting would have the effect of exacerbation of gesturing at the expense of expression and plasticity. Conducting gesture would have become false and inappropriate. But eurhythmic movement appears like a way of protection of the conductor's gesture of sketchiness and conventionalism. Penetration into the essence of eurhythmy void a conducting gesture free of enthusiasm and dynamism, focused only on ensemble leading technique.

5. Conclusion

The role of gesture is to ensure development, flow, sequence and continuity of movement and to put it in order. As far as the gesture is only the original impulse product, one cannot speak of motion coherence. As sign, the gesture contains thoughts, ideas, feelings, states or desires symbolized by conventional movements. On the one hand gesture is identified with significant function, but on the other hand it represents an intermediary between signifier and signified.

Gestural movement understood as a sign gives us explanations on the quality of sound energy support structures, on the logical operations that the conductor regards for the speech sound coordination, on its degree of involvement in interpretative act and shows his skills playing expressive music content.

References

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