

# FUNDAMENTALS OF INSTRUMENTAL AND CHORAL CONDUCTING

SELİM GİRAY AND MICHAEL HANAWALT



ROUTLEDGE



# Fundamentals of Instrumental and Choral Conducting

Providing a thorough introduction to both choral and instrumental conducting, this textbook offers a complete package of teaching, study, and assessment materials to support a single-semester foundational conducting course.

The book is designed to address the needs of students and instructors in mixed-discipline classrooms, giving equal weight to the conducting skills and repertoire of instrumental and choral ensembles. The 22 chapters are intended to fit comfortably into a single-semester course with two weekly classes. The authors cover key topics including conducting body alignment, breathing, the conducting box, baton use, cutoffs, left-hand use, conducting patterns, conducting styles, conducting subdivisions, accents, syncopation, score preparation and score reading, transpositions and clef reading, ensemble familiarity, error detection, rehearsal planning, and rehearsal techniques.

This textbook and its accompanying supplemental materials are uniquely designed for the instructor to achieve an efficient and readily organized class, and for the students to receive essential fundamental conducting skills on both instrumental—including orchestral and band instruments—and choral ensembles. Addressing the conductor's role, basic conducting skills, makeup of instrumental and choral ensembles, and solutions to common issues, the text prepares all students to engage in higher-level conducting courses.

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Selim Giray and Michael Hanawalt

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**Dedicated to Dr. Craig Fuchs (May 29, 1962–June 8, 2024), Professor Emeritus, Former Director of Bands at Pittsburg State University**



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# Foreword

*Fundamentals of Instrumental and Choral Conducting*, co-authored by Dr. Selim Giray and Dr. Michael Hanawalt, presents a text encompassing necessary conducting fundamentals for all beginning conducting students, but just as importantly, it contains vital information for students developing skills associated specifically with choral and instrumental conducting. The book chapters are presented in a logical progression allowing proper development of conducting skills. Chapters 1–6 focus on an introduction to the physical body alignment, conducting patterns, use of the baton, terminology, score reading, and aspects of programming. Chapters 7–9 introduce the reader to instrumental setup and choir configuration, terminology, and application of conducting of varying dynamics. Chapters 10–16 focus on conducting tempo and meter changes, compound meters, preparatory beats, additional score study, rehearsal planning, and error detection. Chapters 17–22 offer a concentration on the left hand, style and phrasing, irregular meters, and other articulative matters. Many collegiate conducting curriculums combine all first-year conductors into one class, but lack a text that is appropriate to all students. This text is designed specifically to guide these students in developing solid fundamental skills in a logical manner, and at the same time focus on necessary matters beyond physical movement. I am certain students and teachers alike will enjoy using this text.

Dr. Donald Trott  
University of Mississippi

# Foreword

Does the world need another conducting textbook? After perusing the present volume authored by Drs. Giray and Hanawalt, the answer is a resounding “Yes!” The current range of choices is seemingly endless—and of varying degrees of quality and practicality. While watershed texts from such pedagogues as Max Rudolf, Elizabeth A. H. Green, William J. Finn, and Robert L. Garretson continue to illuminate and instruct, they do so within a paradigm that essentially separates the disciplines. *Fundamentals of Instrumental and Choral Conducting*, a visionary and groundbreaking accomplishment, illustrates the tremendous benefit provided by the transfer of salient aspects of practice and pedagogy between the instrumental and choral arts.

Giray and Hanawalt achieve a carefully considered balance with sensitivity and grace. While acknowledging and addressing techniques and pedagogy that distinguish the choral and instrumental genres, they present most effectively and compellingly the myriad skills and characteristics common to both areas. Moreover, the authors deftly highlight and underscore the many ways in which instrumental conductors may benefit from knowledge of the choral discipline and vice versa. In doing so, they have dealt a formidable blow to the silo mentality that has plagued music education in general, and conducting pedagogy in particular, for generations.

What further distinguishes *Fundamentals* is the courage and foresight to address challenges and opportunities unique to ensemble leadership in the twenty-first century. Conductors working today must weigh issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as related to ensemble leadership; this is one of the first pedagogical textbooks to attempt a frank and clear-eyed discussion of these topics. Giray and Hanawalt also encourage the reader to carefully consider a programming philosophy that includes underrepresented composers, a worldview that enables every ensemble member to be seen and represented in the literature performed.

Perhaps most importantly, Drs. Giray and Hanawalt bring to this project a proven track record of student-centered, process-oriented ensemble leadership and teaching. Having had the privilege of working collegially with both as faculty members at Wichita State University, I can enthusiastically and unequivocally attest to their all-embracing effectiveness in both concert hall and classroom. Dr. Giray, whose training reflects the tremendous discipline and tradition of his native Turkey as well as Florida State University, is one of the most conscientious and caring pedagogues I have ever observed, tailoring his work on

the podium and in the private studio to meet the needs of every student. Dr. Hanawalt revitalized and fortified our choral program in a dizzyingly brief period. He continues to motivate and inspire musicians young and old with incomparable ingenuity. Together, their tremendous artistry and humanity radiate from every page of this innovative and essential text.

Dr. Mark Laycock  
Wichita State University

# Preface

The purpose of this textbook is to serve as a primary resource to any college- and university-level Fundamentals of Conducting, Basic Conducting, or Beginning Conducting class. *Fundamentals of Instrumental and Choral Conducting* is intended to fit into a single regular semester and be utilized in full, without the necessity of any chapter omission. Toward that end, it comprises twenty-two chapters, which correspond with two hourly classes per week for a semester—which is in line with an expected one-credit course in a NASM-accredited music program that fulfills part of the expectations for a Bachelor of Music Education degree. This textbook and its accompanying supplemental materials are designed for the instructor to achieve an efficient and readily organized class, and for the students to receive essential fundamental conducting skills on both instrumental—including orchestral and band instruments—and choral ensembles. The instructor may utilize this textbook in a class designed for instrumental majors, choral majors, or in a mixed classroom of both instrumental and choral majors.

The authors presume that the instructor and students of the course have access to a music vendor with a selection of standard conducting batons—ultimately, it is the responsibility of students to purchase the required items. This course has been prepared with over forty years of combined teaching experience at the secondary and higher education levels, and professional performance experiences. This textbook was utilized at the University of Mississippi before it was published. The purpose of this book is to provide the instructor with the tools and aid required to face all eventualities of the student body: from a classroom of uninitiated music majors in conducting, to students ready for higher conducting concepts and focused content in their respective disciplines.

## Notes for the Instructor

It is necessary for each student to complete the practice and exercise materials presented in this text throughout the semester. As per your prerogative, you may supplement further practice and exercise materials in addition to those provided in this textbook. To that end, additional materials and sources are provided to you through Routledge's Download Hub for your consideration. This textbook has been designed to alternate between theoretical and practical aspects of conducting to help students build their stamina without causing undesirable tension. Theoretical and practical aspects of the course, and rotating tasks between left-hand and right-hand techniques are arranged with that interest in mind. The introduction and use of the baton is recommended for all students in the class;

however, if the instructor's choral-conducting teaching philosophy dictates otherwise, the choral students in the class can be taught without the baton. Since conducting involves breathing and use of the entire body, it is highly recommended to begin each class with breathing and stretching exercises (please see Instructor's Packet for specifics). It is helpful for students to stand up and stretch to alleviate any possible tension during rotation of tasks. Also, this textbook introduces conducting patterns starting with the four pattern, then moves onto two and three patterns. The conducting exercises comprise most accessible musical selections that are presented in a continuous loop by way of a repeat sign. At this formative stage of conducting, this arrangement of presentation is designed to give the instructor the opportunity to walk around the classroom and make corrections to the conducting stance or body alignment and beat pattern of individual students. The instrumentation of conducting exercises has been revised to accommodate a mixed class that comprises both instrumental and choral students. To that end, instrumental exercises have been transcribed to a four-part flex ensemble. The purpose of the flex ensemble is to allow all class members to participate in an impromptu class-ensemble, made of any combination of the following instruments: C (both strings and band instruments), B-flat, E-flat, and F instruments. For both the instrumental and the choral conducting exercises, an optional piano accompaniment is provided.

### **Notes for the Students**

Your instructor will present this course with the intention of preparing you for your continued conducting training in your corresponding area. Therefore, both the proper terminology and discipline focuses are applicable to your particular discipline. However, you will need to anticipate how to build upon the fundamental knowledge and skills we cover in this class to advanced conducting techniques in your area. As this is a competency-based course, it is up to each student to apply practice skills learned in-class, and apply those skills in individual practice time to build your conducting aptitude. The student must take initiative in becoming fully comfortable with each concept and skill presented in a class in order to build overall conducting competency successfully. To that end, in each chapter, conducting concepts of study will be presented in a single layer, and cumulatively those layers will be built upon in this text. The success of the student depends on one's self-confidence gained through the application of determined and methodical practice regimen as presented in this text, with your instructor's guidance throughout the semester.

# Acknowledgments

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# 1 Preparation for Conducting

## A) Introduction

Welcome! In this class, we will learn the essentials of instrumental and choral conducting with a heterogeneous approach to both disciplines. This course will prepare you with the fundamental knowledge and experience to conduct instrumental and choral ensembles at a basic level of proficiency. You will gain the understanding and ability to conduct an ensemble, as a future instrumental or choral teacher in a public school, or as a director of a private ensemble of religious or non-religious affiliation.

You should understand how the ensemble you conduct is structured, know its technical and musical objectives, and have general knowledge of the technical capabilities and limitations of its constituent instruments and voices. Whether or not you eventually assume the role of a teacher at a public school, a thorough understanding of instruments and voices will be essential for your career as a well-rounded pedagogue.

Regardless of whether you have any prior conducting experience, you must acquire the daily practice skills taught throughout this class. It is expected that you will practice conducting outside of class, alongside your major instrument or voice. The goal of this course is to provide you with learning strategies to gain conducting experience, therefore increasing your comfort level as a conductor. You may find it helpful to incorporate prior experiences from your discipline in your daily conducting practice regimen.

This book aims to teach conducting to future educators who are likely to conduct a student ensemble, with the goal of improving the conducting skill of every individual. A superior conducting ability can greatly enhance and complement a pedagogically sound approach to working with an ensemble, as can proficient classroom management skills, effective communication with students, and a sound philosophical understanding of teaching. Your overall maturity and understanding as a teacher will grow through gained experience and continued study. Similarly, your ability as an instrumentalist or vocalist will increase with dedicated practice. The approach to improving an individual's conducting skills is no different.

The students in this conducting class are likely of different backgrounds and have varied understanding of musical form, harmony, music history, as well as conducting experience. Given this context, this textbook presents its content to students with the goal of providing a sound fundamental basis, presuming little or no prior conducting knowledge. Each student is expected to progress throughout the semester and gain competency through in-class and outside-of-class work. Each student's active participation, earnest study of

materials ahead of class, and the establishment of a practice routine is imperative for a successful outcome. The instructor of the course may ask instrumentalists to bring their instruments to class to create a provisional classroom ensemble or join choral majors to participate in a similar classroom choir. This will help create a realistic ensemble conducting experience when in-class conducting is necessary.

Conducting presents a lifelong learning opportunity. You might accept this as a challenge to improve your conducting craft throughout your career. Since it is a lifelong pursuit, every student should establish—in addition to absorbing as much as possible in this class—a methodical approach to conducting as an ever-learning encounter. As it is a limitless pursuit, the more a person devotes to the craft, the more rewarding the experience becomes.

### **B) Address to Instrumental Majors**

This textbook is broken down to assist both instrumental and choral majors. Even within those general populations, every student will have a different background and varying degrees of experience. Whether your major is in strings, brass, woodwinds, or percussion, the “instrumental” label is likely to be further broken down to orchestral and band disciplines. Each student should seek to fortify less-familiar subjects presented in this class to improve one’s overall conducting knowledge and ability. By working with your instructor, you will strengthen any identified areas that require extra attention. For instance, some students in this class may lack experience in clef reading and transposition, while others may have innate familiarity of the instruments that require those proficiencies. Students are expected to improve their knowledge and ability in all studied areas, whether they are identified as areas of strength or ones that require additional study. The self-confidence required for conducting will be gained through increased knowledge and foreseeing of issues before they occur. With your instructor’s guidance and the help provided in this book, you will have all the tools necessary to conduct an instrumental ensemble.

### **C) Address to Choral Majors**

This textbook will provide the essential knowledge and skills to prepare you for choral conducting. The content this book presents is broken down to instrumental and choral disciplines, where you will find choral-specific perspectives, conducting materials, and applications. With your choral background, this textbook will help you build both your choral and instrumental conducting skills. Even though your career goals may lead you to conduct all-choral ensembles, it is likely you might be called upon to conduct an instrumental ensemble, or for an instrumental ensemble to join your future choir on a special occasion. Regardless, this class will help prepare you for any eventuality of conducting choral, instrumental, or combined ensembles. Both clef reading and transposition skills may be less comfortable for those without any such previous experience. However, all knowledge and skills gained in those areas will pay dividends when it comes to score reading and ensemble familiarity. With your instructor’s guidance, coupled with the contents of this book, you will gain skills necessary for proficiency as a choral conductor.

### *Address to All Conductors*

The concurrent study of both instrumental and choral conducting provides opportunities for learning a plurality of skills not always taught in either instrumental-specific or choral-specific conducting classes. It is the authors' hope that students view this unique opportunity as a privilege, as opposed to a distraction. There are numerous conducting techniques and skills that are eminently transferable between different types of ensembles. The increased awareness of various types of ensembles' needs can only help better prepare a conductor for the variety and breadth of future conducting situations. While there are skills in each medium that one can certainly gain, the authors ascribe to the theory that "good conducting is good conducting," and hope that this text can be in service to these ends, whatever a conductor's primary ensemble happens to be.

### **D) Fundamentals of Conducting**

This course will address the following list of conducting fundamentals, as well as relevant competencies required of a proficient conductor:

1. Conducting stance, or body alignment
2. Breathing
3. The conducting box
4. Baton use<sup>1</sup>
5. Cutoffs
6. Left-hand use and independency
7. Conducting patterns of simple, compound, and irregular meters
8. Conducting styles of legato, staccato, marcato, and tenuto
9. Common problems developing conductors encounter and their remedies
10. Conducting subdivisions, accents, and syncopation
11. Score preparation and score reading
12. Transpositions and clef reading
13. Ensemble familiarity
14. Error detection
15. Rehearsal planning and rehearsal techniques

### **E) Building Conducting Practice Skills**

As with both instrumental and vocal education in the studio setting, the conducting craft requires the same daily commitment to practice. Furthermore, an essential part of your education is learning how to prepare as a conductor, and an established daily regimen is a vital part of that training. The act of conducting requires the continual use of both hands and arms, as well as their independence. It takes determined and focused practice to attain and improve the use of both arms separately, and eventually together. If you devote the required effort and time to methodical outside-of-class practice, your increased comfort level in conducting will enable you to achieve your best during class and focus more on essential elements of conducting. The journey from the moment a concept is introduced in class to it becoming second nature is a long one, and it requires

sustained implementation into a student conductor's routine to bring it to fruition. This lengthy process takes much patience, determination, self-awareness, continuous observation, and corrective action. Additionally, conducting in front of the class may be a somewhat self-conscious, uncomfortable, or altogether unnerving prospect (presumably the members of this class are accomplished performers in their respective majors and conducting is an entirely new challenge). However, active participation in class, coupled with a focused practice regimen, is the proven route for you to improve your conducting and accomplish all objectives outlined by your instructor throughout the semester.

## F) Course Outline

We will cover the theory and applied portions of the material with a consecutive approach during our classes. This book is designed to help students build their conducting stamina throughout the semester by routinely switching between tasks. In addition, all of the tasks required of a conductor will be built by layers, so as to not overwhelm students while building the fundamental elements of the conducting stance and consistency of all components of the conducting pattern.

This course will help students build the knowledge and proficiency necessary to conduct a public-school ensemble. Toward that end, the students will be expected to demonstrate their grasp and competency in the following areas:

1. Knowledge in all components of conducting presented in this textbook
2. Awareness of the history and development of instrumental and choral ensembles, standard instruments, as well as instrument and voice classification within those ensembles
3. Ability to avoid—and when necessary, fix—common bad habits in your own conducting by establishing a consistent warmup, breathing, tension-free stance, and by exercising proper conducting practices
4. Both understanding and application of the three conducting planes as illustrated in the conducting box model
5. Baton grip and adjusted conducting box
6. Demonstrated competency of conducting patterns and styles, as applied to your discipline
7. Demonstrated capability of score reading and score preparation
8. Familiarity of ensembles in your discipline
9. Knowledge and practical competency of non-verbal communications in conducting
10. Programming knowledge of and the ability to conduct at the level of common graded repertoire in your discipline
11. Comprehension of pedagogically sound rehearsal planning strategies
12. Theoretical understanding of and demonstrated ability to negotiate dynamics, meter, and both gradual and sudden tempo changes
13. Practical application of holds and cues
14. Conducting musical character and phrasing

## **G) Course Requirements**

The expected class responsibilities are:

1. Attendance
2. Active involvement in class, as well as the demonstration of good peer teaching habits
3. The practicing of assigned conducting materials and exercises every day of the week, throughout the semester. There is no other way for conducting to become second-nature, as it involves complex motor skills. A minimum of thirty minutes of conducting practice a day is preferred. In other words, shorter, focused, and consistent practice sessions are preferred over many hours of practice crammed into one day.
4. Four Conducting Exams: The student will be graded on proper stance, breathing, and conducting habits built through the weeks of preparation. Correct right- and left-hand positions, conducting pattern, and overall facility are among the areas of significance (please see Conducting Exam Rubric for the exact criteria).
5. Completion of all assignments as outlined in this textbook, and additional assignments at the discretion of your instructor.
6. A Midterm Written Exam, Final Exam, and additional reports and quizzes will be given at the discretion of your instructor.

## **H) Baton Selection Criteria**

As baton use will be integral for portions of the conducting craft, students should acquire a quality baton for class use under the instructor's guidance. There are numerous options in acquiring such a baton, but one must first understand the handle shape and material, shaft size and material, and balance point. If the instructor is able to provide several examples of conducting batons to try in class, or if students have access to a local music store that carries a selection of batons, the selection process is somewhat straightforward. For the baton to fit—and to be approved by the instructor as an appropriate in-class baton—the student must select from available variables in batons:

1. Shaft size and material: Shaft or stick is made of wood (likely birch, maple, or other hardwoods), fiberglass, carbon fiber, or graphite. Fiberglass shafts are durable, but can form splinters with wear, particularly if struck on sharp edges like a music stand—a habit to be avoided for many reasons. The length of a baton can vary from nine to eighteen inches. The decision on the baton length depends somewhat on the conductor's preference and can be influenced by a person's height, arm length, and even ensemble size. The finish can range from natural wood to various paint colors, most preferably white for maximum visibility. An exaggerated baton length can cause it to be unwieldy and therefore may affect baton technique negatively. Ultimately, the baton should look like a natural extension of one's arm and therefore needs to be proportional to the arm length of the conductor. A good rule of thumb is to pretend one is curling a dumbbell, until the lower and upper arm form a 90-degree angle at the elbow. The hand can then be relaxed to where the fingers are extended. If a baton is placed with the handle in the crook of the elbow in this position, the tip

of the baton should reach near the knuckle second nearest the fingertip of the middle finger.

2. **Handle shape and material:** Handle shapes may vary from bulbous as a pear to slender as a teardrop, to an hourglass, or to a tapered cone. The handle may be smoothly tapered into the shaft, or it may have an edge or a ring at its termination point into the shaft. Inexpensive batons are likely to have a handle made of cork; more elaborate baton handles are likely made of hardwood with a pronounced grain pattern, decoratively painted, or made of a synthetic material like acrylic. The overall shape of the handle is significant as it has a direct influence on the baton hold, therefore it must be selected within the teaching philosophy of the instructor. One general rule of thumb is that conductors with larger hands will likely feel more comfortable with a handle that is larger or thicker. Ultimately, the comfort of the conductor with regards to how the baton feels in the hand is of significant importance.
3. **Weight, balance point, and other considerations:** Overall comfort, weight, and balance point of the baton are significant considerations when selecting one. If a conductor rehearses and performs for many hours each day, the weight, balance point, and any other seemingly insignificant features of the baton become increasingly important. Ideally, the baton should be weighted in a way that results in a balance point where the handle of the baton meets the shaft. An easy way to check for this balance is to hold the baton at this point on one's index finger. If the baton stays level, it is balanced!

The following are a few examples of conducting batons of cultural significance, spread through the last couple of centuries (Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).

### Assignment

1. Purchase the textbook and other items as requested by your instructor.



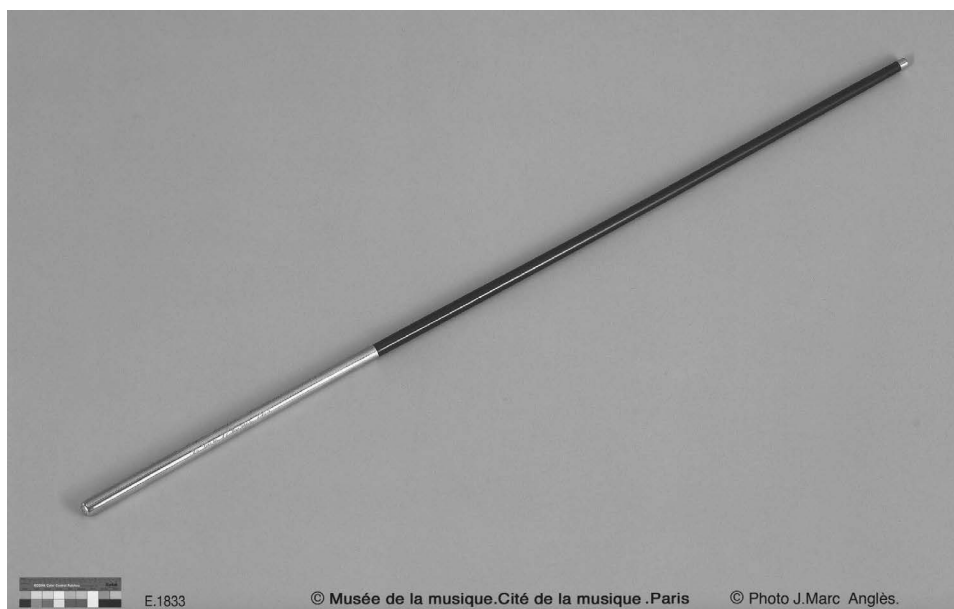
*Figure 1.1* Ignacy Jan Paderewski's Commemorative Baton, Presented on the Occasion of His Recital in Poznań in 1901.

Photo: Waldemar Kielichowski © National Institute of Music and Dance, the source of the photos: [www.batuty.instrumenty.edu.pl](http://www.batuty.instrumenty.edu.pl) and information, that the ownership of the baton is Theatre Museum, Teatr Wielki—Polish National Opera (or National Museum of Warsaw).



*Figure 1.2* Hector Berlioz's Baton.

Musée de la musique Collection/Photo by Jean-Marc Anglès; Reprinted by permission.



*Figure 1.3* A Conducting Baton Presented to Camille Saint-Saëns in Cairo on February 27, 1903.

Musée de la musique Collection/Photo by Jean-Marc Anglès; Reprinted by permission.