

Handout—Class 1: Leading Group Singing

Though the principles covered in these classes are general in nature and widely used by conductors of various training backgrounds, much of the terminology used in this class is closely aligned with the BYU school of conducting training. For more information on the BYU method, refer to the DVD series “Masterful Choral Conducting,” by Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall (as described online at creativeworks.byu.edu/mcc).

Body Language of Conducting:

- **Arm** generally rounded and open (imagine hugging a beach ball and then drop the left arm)
- **Hand** relaxed and slightly curved (as if palming a ball or preparing to shake hands)
- **Palm** rotated so as to be parallel to the floor
- **Wrist** relaxed and slightly cocked
- **Fingertips** are together and are the point of focus; should point directly at the singers
- **Conducting Field** is generally the area from the chin to the waist, and from the left side of the body to the outer reach of the fingertips to the right

Three Parts of Every Beat:

- **Preparation**—downward motion, shows WHEN to sing
- **Ictus** (say “ICK-toos”)—precisely at the bottom of the pattern, where “the BEAT” occurs in time
- **Rebound**—upward motion, shows HOW to sing (legato/marcato)

Use Tempo Markings in Hymnbook to Determine Beat Pattern

- The tempo marking indicates which note value gets the beat
- Beat pattern determined by number of beats (based on note value) per measure
- Hymn # 64, 106, 62, 99, 142, 158, 101, 221, 5, 97, 177, 207 as examples

The Preparatory Beat (“Bringing In” the Music):

- Includes the “clicked” **Ictus** and **Rebound** of the beat immediately prior to the beginning of the music
- Does *not* include the Preparation before the Ictus mentioned above

The Final Release (“Cutting Off” the Music at the End):

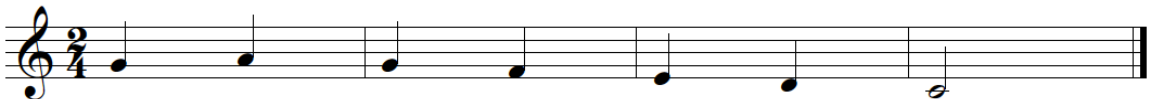
- Hold the final note (by lingering at the ictus) as long as desired
- When ready to release, *slowly* pull the hand straight up, then
- *Accelerate* downward into a “clicked” release

Class 1 Exercises—Beat Patterns, Preparatory Beats & Final Releases

Practice the following examples until comfortable with each. Remember to:

- ✓ Place the ictus of each beat down on the conducting plane (belly button-level)
- ✓ Give a **preparatory beat** by showing the *clicked* ictus of the beat before the music begins, followed by a smooth, even rebound
- ✓ After *holding* (lingering at the ictus of) the final note, give a **final release** (cutoff) gesture by first *slowly* pulling straight up and then *accelerating* downward into a *clicked* release

2-pattern:

(prep beat: 2) 

(prep beat: 1) 

3-pattern:

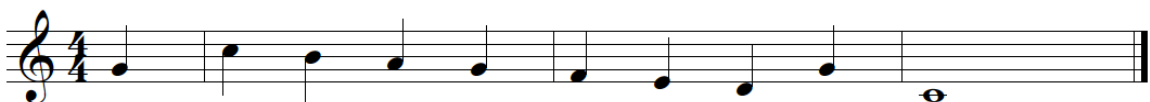
(prep beat: 3) 

(prep beat: 2) 

(prep beat: 1) 

4-pattern:

(prep beat: 4) 

(prep beat: 3) 

(prep beat: 2) 

(prep beat: 1) 