

The Orchestra at Work

For 1st-4th grades



Lesson 2 — *The Conductor as Leader*

Objective

Students will explore the role that a conductor plays in the orchestra and practice some of the basic skills necessary for being a conductor. These include using movement to demonstrate a steady beat, understanding and communicating basic tempos (fast and slow), dynamics (loud and quiet), meter (duple or triple) and quality of sound.

Suggested Materials

- Video of Tan Dun conducting - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMmcPBbz2Jg>
- Recording of Copland's Hoe-Down (audio links can be found at youtube.com/user/BfloPhilharmonic)
- Recording of Movement 4 from Bartok's Romanian Folk Dances (audio links can be found at youtube.com/user/BfloPhilharmonic)
- Recording of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 6, (audio links can be found at youtube.com/user/BfloPhilharmonic)
- Recording of Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, 4th movement, (audio links can be found at youtube.com/user/BfloPhilharmonic)
- Optional: classroom instruments

New York State Arts Standards

MU:Pr4.3.1a	MU:Pr4.3.2a	MU:Pr4.3.3a	MU:Pr4.3.4a
MU:Re7.2.1a	MU:Re7.2.2a	MU:Re7.2.3a	MU:Re7.2.4a
MU:Re8.1.1a	MU:Re8.1.2a	MU:Re8.1.3a	MU:Re8.1.4a
MU:Cn10.1.1d	MU:Cn10.1.2d	MU:Cn10.1.3d	MU:Cn10.1.4d

New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies Standards

- 1 - Career Development
- 2 – Integrated Learning

New York State English Language Arts & Literacy Standards

- Reading, Standard 7
- Speaking & Listening, Standard 1, 2 & 3
- Language, Standard 1 & 6

Procedure [These activities can be performed over several lessons if needed.]

Role of the conductor:

- 1) Introduce the role of the conductor with some discussion questions: How does the conductor communicate with the musicians during a concert? What skills do they use? What do you imagine they do before the concert in order to be ready?
- 2) Show the students a video of Tan Dun conducting a piece of his own music.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMmcPBbz2Jg>

What is the conductor in this video communicating to the musicians watching him? How is he doing this?

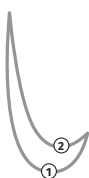
Look for:

- Beginnings and endings of sound
- Beat – steady or not
- Meter – duple or triple
- Dynamics – sudden or gradual changes in volume
- Quality – smooth, choppy, tender, surprising, etc.

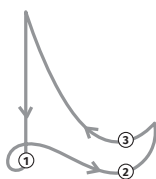
Lesson 2 — *The Conductor as Leader* (continued)

Conducting patterns and steady beat:

- 3) One of the basic things a conductor does is keep the beat for the musicians. The BPO has 73 musicians on stage playing together so the conductor helps them do this. Using *Hoe-Down* from Copland's *Rodeo* ask students to feel the duple beat in their bodies. Show students a basic duple conducting pattern. Can they fit this conducting pattern with the music by focusing their movement into their arm?



- 4) Play the 4th movement of Bartok's *Romanian Folk Dances* to practice feeling this beat. Ask them to try their duple conducting pattern. Does it fit the music? This piece is in triple meter. Teach them the triple conducting pattern and then ask them to fit this pattern with the music.



Tempo:

- 5) Now that students have practiced conducting a steady beat with the music, explain that a conductor can also show changes in tempo in one piece of music. Play Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No. 6* and ask students to listen carefully and adjust the speed of their conducting as the music moves along. Can they stay with the music?

Dynamics:

- 6) Conductors communicate dynamics through their conducting as well. How might a conductor do this? How did Tan Dun do this in the video they first watched? Play the opening of the 4th movement of Beethoven's 3rd Symphony. Ask students to try conducting along and match the size of their conducting pattern (large movement or small movements) with the volume of the music.

Extending the Learning:

- 7) Either with classroom instruments, or with a class song, have students take turns leading the group as the conductor. Ask the conductors to practice starting the group so that everyone starts together. Student conductors can try changing the tempo or the dynamics as they are conducting. Ask the performers to watch carefully and follow their conductor. Be sure to demonstrate leading these changes before the students try it out for themselves.

Is it easy or hard to communicate without speaking?
What other situations require us to communicate without speaking?