

WHAT IS THE CONDUCTOR DOING UP THERE???



The conductor has many purposes; s/he is:

- ♪ Keeping the beat/tempo
- ♪ Indicating changes to the tempo and style
- ♪ Remind you of things like changes in dynamics (loud/soft), entrances, paying attention to listening for balance
- ♪ Interpreting the music - it isn't all about what is written on the page!
- ♪ Helping the group do things together, like cut-offs, ritard/accelerando, coming in after a pause
- ♪ Providing the audience with a visual cue to what is happening in the music (yes, that is part of it!).
- ♪ Making faces at the players to make them chuckle!

So, the waving of arms in the air isn't just aerobic exercise; it has a purpose- it shows all of the above!

Indicating where we are in the measure (keeping the beat) is a very important part of each conductor's job. Beat one, is always the very first thing of the measure, and is always indicated by the "downbeat", which is literally, the downward motion. That always happens on beat one. See the patterns below. (The left side of each example shows the basic movement, the right side shows the more florid movement of most conductors.)

The "ictus" is a stopping of the motion of the hand or baton, and indicates where each beat actually falls. Imagine the mime whose hand hits a wall and is stopped.

