

**“ANÁLISIS PARA
DIRECTORES.
DE LA PARTITURA
A LOS GESTOS”**

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ANALYSIS FOR CONDUCTORS: FROM SCORE TO GESTURES

ABSTRACT

In this article the whys, the hows, and the whens of the analysis applied to orchestral and choral conducting are described. To further deepen into didactics of the analysis applied to conducting, I present firstly the pairing of technique-performance from the conductor's point of view, with special mention to the analysis-gesture relationship. Secondly, three types of gestural functions related to three different models of analysis are described: to) descriptive function and catalyst of the indications of the musical text; (b) preventive function - anticipation of the changes-; and (c) interpretive function. Thirdly, different analytical methods that can provide the information needed to conduct a piece competently, including textual analysis, process analysis, aural analysis with its multiple layers, and psycho-perceptive and phenomenological analysis, among others, are described. All these analytical methods can be related in the process of understanding music and both technique (gestures) and interpretation are based on their results. In order to illustrate the complexity of the task, an approach to the analysis of the score and its sequencing process is provided, together with a list of complementary analytical tools especially useful for conductors. Finally, a methodological model is given as a guidance to tackle the analysis of the score from the conductor's perspective, at different stages of its activity (study, rehearsals and performance).

KEYWORDS

Analytical Methods, Analysis-gesture Relationship, Gestural Functions, Phenomenological Analysis

RESUMEN

En este artículo se describen los por qué, cómo y cuándo del análisis aplicado a la dirección coral e instrumental. Para profundizar en la didáctica del análisis aplicado a la dirección, presento en primer lugar el binomio técnica-interpretación desde el punto de vista del director, con una mención especial a la relación análisis-gesto. En segundo lugar, se describen tres tipos de funciones gestuales relacionadas con tres modelos diferentes de análisis: a) función descriptiva y catalizadora de las indicaciones del texto musical; (b) función preventiva - anticipación de los cambios-; y (c) función interpretativa. En tercer lugar, se describen diferentes métodos analíticos que proporcionan la información necesaria para dirigir una pieza musical de manera competente, incluidos el análisis textual, el análisis de procesos, el análisis auditivo con sus múltiples capas, el análisis psico-perceptivo y fenomenológico, entre otros. Todos estos métodos analíticos pueden relacionarse en el proceso de comprensión de la música y tanto la técnica (gestos) como la interpretación se basan en sus resultados. Con el fin de ilustrar la complejidad de la tarea, se proporciona un enfoque práctico para el análisis de la partitura y su proceso de secuenciación, junto con un listado de herramientas analíticas complementarias especialmente útiles en dirección. Finalmente, se proporciona un modelo metodológico como guía para abordar el análisis de la partitura desde la perspectiva del director/a, en diferentes etapas de su actividad (estudio, ensayos y concierto).

PALABRAS CLAVE

Métodos Analíticos, Relación Análisis-gesto, Funciones del Gesto, Análisis Fenomenológico

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INTRODUCTION

Conducting is musical interpretation which is communicated through gestures to a group of musicians who materialize the sound. If we accept that a conductor is an interpreter before any other consideration, it seems appropriate to believe that musical analysis constitutes a research tool equal in importance and use for any interpreter, either instrumental or vocal (Author, 2008).

If musical analysis is the cornerstone for every musician to base his/her performance decisions, the same applies to the conductor but with the additional responsibility of needing to coordinate different instruments/voices which implies an exhaustive knowledge not only of one part or role, but of all of the components in the score. This holistic view of music, which surpasses the partial view an instrumentalist has from his/her partitura, is undoubtedly the great difference between an individual perfor-

mer and the one who is responsible for a broader group of individuals.

Part of the charisma and magical halo surrounding conductors arises from the "power" they have which, to a great extent, is due to managing musical events from a global perspective. The conductor's score has all of the musical data whereas an individual member of an orchestra, band or choir only has the portion of the text covering his/her individual performance. It is the responsibility of the conductor to know the musical piece from all possible angles and to decide the performance guidelines to follow. Only a comprehensive analysis of the text will allow the conductor to make musical decisions and plan technical strategies in order to conduct the work with any guarantee. Thus, the key to transmitting his/her directions to the musicians is literally in his/her hands.

Technique and performance: music conducting specialty binomial

One of the greatest challenges for anyone who aspires to conduct is to manage to communicate - using body language- musical messages that can be incredibly distinct, from the general suggestion of a sound atmosphere to how short a staccato sound must be. This capacity to communicate musical messages by using gestures requires training through conducting techniques. There are many conducting techniques and many ways of addressing their study, but all of them have one thing in common, the use of body language and more specifically the use of hands to communicate and coordinate sound events within a music performance. In this sense, it would be logical to believe that the acquisition of a good gesturing techniques must be a priority in the training a conductor, and so it is.

The problems appear when all of the learner's attention is centered on the technique, and the need to transmit a musical idea is pushed into the background (sometimes even left behind as a token idea). In other words, the learner must show ability in the techniques but - once they have been learned- the real challenge that lies from an artistic and professional point of view is how to interpret music and how to coordinate and communicate this through gestures. It is precisely in this area where the greatest problem in the academic world of conducting lies. The greater part of students end up by becoming skilled in given gestures agreed upon with their teachers as a consequence of work carried out on determined musical pieces during their studies; other carry out perfect imitations -many ti-

mes so out of context that they become grotesque caricatures of prominent conductors. A great majority of learners practice gestures in front of a mirror (without music or what is even worse – moving to the tune of a recording) which result in a deaf dance where the music is in the background or even not present.

The great problem in musical conducting training is that developing gesture skills exclusively does not guarantee success in conducting nor does it provide self-sufficiency once the training period is concluded. The most important and essential idea in conducting training is to understand what the conductor wants to obtain from the musicians in order for the final sound product to coincide with his/her vision

or interpretation of the music. There is no reason for gestures if they do not communicate musical criteria. And this is where analysis, as an essential work tool, comes into play for the learner during his/her training and obviously, the rest of his/her professional life.

Gestures must always be at the service of music and never the other way around. When the gesture is separate from the music there is no interpretative action and on the other hand, when the conductor interprets music but is unable to transmit this, there is no clear message to the musician. Both of these situations is equally bad. When conducting, interpretation and technique go hand in hand and may not be separate.

Analysis – Gesture relationship

One could say that the job of the conductor is to translate the analysis of the musical piece into gestures. Gestures should portray both the musical parameters in the sheet music as well as their interpretative analysis in a communicative and fluid manner. Body language used in conducting may be classified in three large blocks:

a) Descriptive and Catalytic functions of specific instructions in the text

A great part of the gestures used in conducting are a collection of translations or descriptions of basic analytical parameters taken straight from the musical text. Therefore, when conducting, a great number of movements are used to describe (using hands or baton) syntactic and morphological elements in the score: rhythm, tempo, phrasing, dynamics, agogic changes... It seems obvious that if the score indicates piano, the conductor will use an attitude that indicates that nuance (generally with smaller gestures) but we ask ourselves if this is interpreting the score because with said gesture the conductor is only emphasizing what is written in the score, which the musicians have in their sheet music anyway and therefore there is no need for a reminder. In these cases, the gestures by the conductor are mere reminders and descriptors of what appears in the text. Even in these cases, the conductor acts as catalyst for the sound construct: the musician has piano written in his/her *particella* but does not know in which context (syntactic, stylistic, tone, etc.) and it is the context which the conductor must interpret, value, measure and communicate with his/her gesture.

b) Gesture anticipation: pre-emptive purpose in musical events

The role of gestures described so far actually never happens in real time because the conductor must anticipate his/her gestures in order to pre-empt the musicians of all the changes with enough time in order to obtain a precise and unanimous response at the correct time. This continuous preemption forces conducting to constantly think of what is immediately subsequent and requires a twofold auditory attitude: listening to the music in real time and anticipating the subsequent music with gestures. This is perhaps the most complex of the conductors' tasks.

For example: one is conducting a passage in legato and pp, tracing a long phrasing, with a light instrumental texture, the melody in charge of the woodwind higher section based on a harmonic rhythm long and sustained in the string section. All this passage has a progressive accelerando and a rhythmic crescendo, together with an increase of the instrumental texture (organic crescendo), dynamic crescendo and harmonic rhythm increasingly complex while the melodic line dissolves, deconstructed by passing through different orchestral sections, ending in a chord for tutti in ff and resting finally on a dramatic pause.

To conduct a passage of these characteristics implies the conductor must be aware of the final moment in order to direct the previous music and graduate all of the changes that take place in a logical and coherent manner. The conductors' gestures must precisely pre-empt the changes in an anticipatory and gradual manner. The conductor must listen to the sounds being produced with each change and adapt his/her gesture to the needs that follow so as to reach the final passage and obtain the sound reference in mind. Let us say that there are three types of sound models the conductor must keep in mind: what he/she is hearing at each moment and what he/she wants to hear immediately afterwards which is in itself related to the desired sound map at the end of the road.

c) Interpretative role

The conductor, as an interpreter, puts all of his body at the service of the music so as to transmit a whole range of aspects and details related to his/her personal and artistic vision of the music. This interpretation, or reconstruction if one prefers this term, depends directly on the score analysis. It is not only transmitting the information in the text with gestures, we are talking about matters that are not found in the text but have been derived from the in-depth study of the work from different angles: analysis of the melody, the harmony, the rhythm, the metrics, historical, stylistic, aesthetic, sociological and auditory context in conjunction with procedural, hermeneutic, phenomenological, historicist, psycho-perceptive...

Very important and defining matters arise from the analysis such as the choice of tempi, maintenance of understandable syntax, hierarchizing sound planes, architectural view of the work, formal coherence, type of articulations, character of the music, level of emphasis of the different parameters, quality and quantity of sound, etc.

This type of analysis leading to a series of well based interpretative criteria is previous to the task of technical preparation because interpretative decisions condition the gestures to be used. In other words, the technique employed to conduct every musical part of a work depends on the previous analysis.

Despite the previous assertion, it is very likely that the analytical conclusions reached during the study and preparation of the score may be subject to change in the actual moment of conducting. It is common for a conductor to mark the score with certain instructions to use with the group only to find that in practice some sound variables make them useless. The time of performance, the type of musicians in

the group (amateurs, professionals, students), the stage, acoustics, type of auditorium, motivation, mood, are only some of the variables that can affect the performance. The conductor must be sensitive to these aspects and flexible in adapting his/her previous analysis to the circumstance of the moment itself.

From all of the above it is also understood that conducting means adapting the imagined sound to the circumstances and specific context of each performance. The conductors' gestures, if predetermined without taking into account the sounds that are actually produced when the gestures are made, would represent gestures that are not adapted to the needs of each moment. This is why one cannot rehearse a predetermined gesture, nor its expanse, nor sequence in time in a preempted and taken out of context manner. Similarly, it is understood that rehearsing with another conductors gestures is not useful. To conduct is to continuously change our own premises according to what we are hearing.

DIFFERENT ANALYTICAL METHODS APPLIED TO CONDUCTING

Musical performance, due to its own nature, is not something tangible and measurable. Any attempt to objectify it by using a sole parameter leading to a universal interpretation, would be very difficult. What can be done is to come closer to its nature through the object of its analysis, which could be the score, the sound performance, the sound performance for the composer when creating the piece, the conductor of a certain performance, or the experience of a listener. Any of these points of view is equally valid and adequate to analyze any work. The only thing that seems evident is that there is no one valid or definitive analysis. All of the perspectives contribute to the enrichment of music and the conductor uses all of them to make artistic and technical decisions.

1 TEXT ANALYSIS

The result is the explanation and determination of the morphological and syntactical elements that form the work, how they combine together and their function within the ensemble. The processes used in this analysis are normally empirical and systematic (recount of recurring parameters and their variables, segmentation, reduction, combination, etc.) For this type of text analysis one can resort to different types of analysis: formal and functional, schenkerian, neo-schenkerian, semiotics, musical style or others. The final objective is to understand the internal coherence in the construction of a work by means of the inter-relationship between all of its elements.

2 PROCEDURAL ANALYSIS

In this type of analysis the work is conceived as a dynamic object which is built along its historical occurrence, that is to say, as a process and not as a fixed text for all performances. From this perspective, analysis centers on the performance, the reception by the listener and the contextual setting of both. This type of hermeneutical analysis pursues the meaning of the work through its history: music is kept alive through its performance and as long as it continues to be performed, it continues being built and completed. Currently there is a tendency to reject analyses based exclusively on a positivist idea of the work of music: the idea of the score as something autonomous, closed and complete has changed to be considered as a process that undergoes continuous change that is transformed and completed with each performance. This idea allows the interpreter to bring personal perspective to the musical creation which become part of the historical body of the work and which serve as reference for future performances.

3 AUDITORY ANALYSIS

This auditory analysis takes place live and may differ from the sound perception (internal listening) that the conductor had imagined internally during preparations. Therefore, this listening analysis uses the imaginary “virtual” sound created in the conductor’s mind as the reference. The comparison between what he/she hears when conducting and the preconceived idea will give rise to many deviations and coincidences. If deviations arise, they require immediate reaction in order to bring back the performance to the planned path.

4 PSYCHO-PERCEPTIVE ANALYSIS

Psycho-perceptive analysis concentrates more on how the music is perceived by the listener than on the text, because music doesn’t exist if you cannot hear it. Moreover, in the specific case of conducting, there are many auditory perceptions: that of the conductor, that of each of the musicians of the orchestra he is directing, and in the last instance, but the most important of all, the public who the music is being played for. Each of these receptors process the sound in a specific way, but the element which should rule in the psycho-perceptive analysis for the conductor is the communication of a musical message which must work well and be understandable especially to the audience.

5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

References to the phenomenological analysis are common with regards to conducting, especially concerning the maestro Celibidache. It must first be made clear that the phenomenological analysis, as understood from a Husserlian point of view, is a type of “science of experience” (Lambert, 2006). Celibidache uses the same Husserlian term “phenomenology” to refer to his way of seeing, or seeing what is there (Zelle, 1996). Celibidache rejects the idea of the conductor as interpreter because in his opinion, he does not interpret anything, but actually faces the musical reality in its ultimate essence, and assumes it. His is the search of the transcendental truth, more than the provocation of sensations (beauty of sound, elegance, color, grace...). This is why, in his opinion, the conductor will only feel fully satisfied if someone, upon hearing the interpretation, says “this is”, in other words, he or she has felt the presence of truth.



Besides Celibidache’s personal thoughts, and from a strictly musical point of view, the object of the phenomenological study is not the score, but the sensitive experience of music in the listener’s consciousness. In this sense the phenomenological attitude applied to music is a mode of analysis related to psycho perception, with some subtle nuances. The phenomenological analysis is centered on factors such as time and space from the viewpoint of perception. The phenomenological description of musical events is based on the subjective experience of the listener, hence is distanced from the search of objectivity of other types of analysis.

AN APPROXIMATION TO SCORE ANALYSIS FROM THE CONDUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

The score is our first object of analysis and the only objective element we have in order to establish our interpretative premises and consequently, our technical performance. Score analysis is the epicenter of the entire process of studying and preparing required for conducting (Author, 2008). We will describe the score analysis and its sequences from the moment it falls into the conductor's hands (See figure 1).

1. GLOBAL VISION

The first thing is to look through the entire work. This is the first approach to the score. This seemingly innocent act gives out important details such as the general format, number of movements (if more than one), instrumentation and number of musicians, total length, tempo, general dynamics, overall technical difficulty, cadenzas/solos, end of the composition or approximate duration.

After this first contact, we revise global aspects such as:

- Tempo. Metronomic indication
- Beginning rhythm. Metric changes
- Beginning tone. Key signature changes
- General instrumentation
- Number of movements; character, tempo, beat and tone for each
- Changes in instrumentation
- Instrumental solos, chamber music and tutti passages
- Technically difficult or complex passages from the textural point of view in the different sections
- Range of dynamics

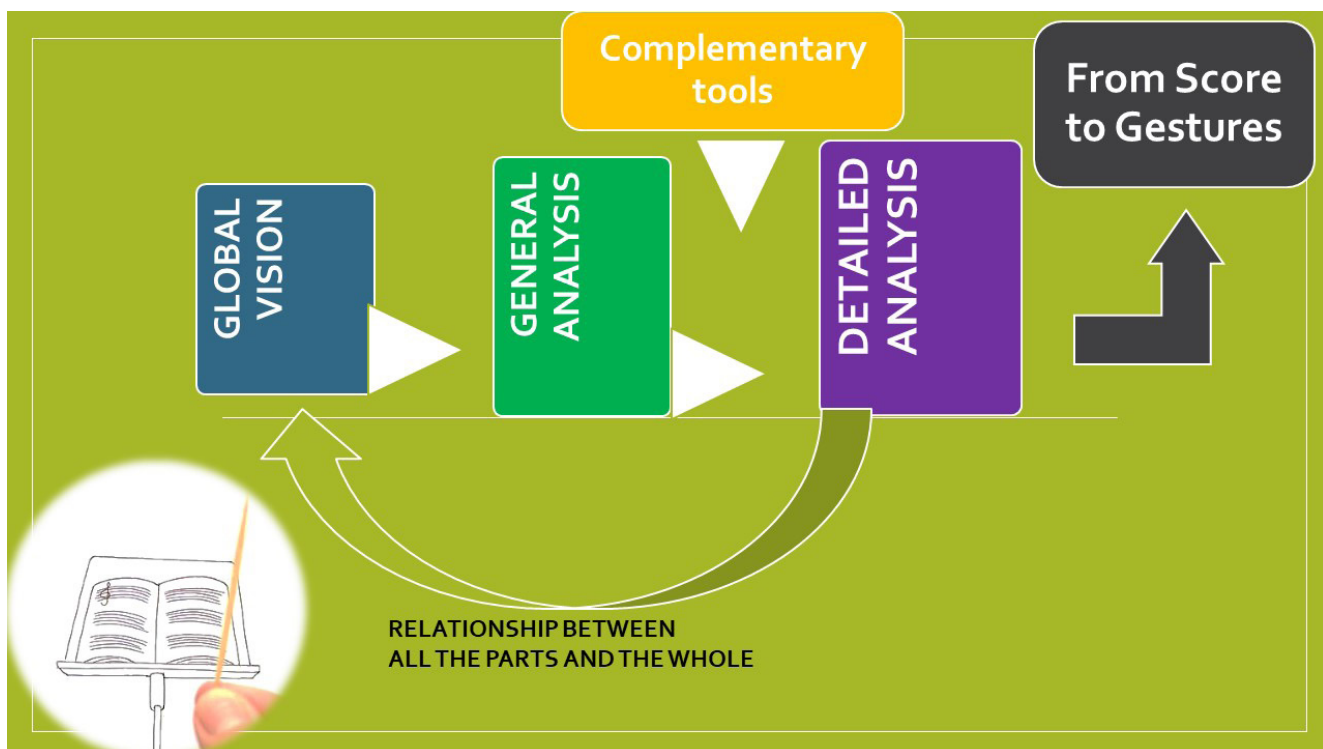


Figure 1. Steps of the score analysis from the conductor's perspective. Own elaboration

2. GENERAL ANALYSIS

- Formal general and individual movement analysis: macroscopic analysis of the work and of each of its movements
- Structural analysis of the sections and their purpose
- General rhythmic and metric structure. Main rhythm motifs. Relevant metric rhythm changes. Crescendos and diminuendos. Tension and relaxation points. Polyrhythms, iso-rhythms, contrasts, sections with free rhythms etc.
- Harmonic analysis. Modulation. Cadences. Harmonic rhythm
- Melodic analysis. Main intervalllic. Melodic inflexions. Main and secondary themes. Melodic conducting. Highlight. Structure. Melodic texture. Iso-melos.

3. DETAILED ANALYSIS

- Phraseological analysis: phrases and semi-phrases
- Phrasing, repose and breathing
- Articulation
- Dynamic range and sequencing
- Agogic changes
- Timbre texture
- Relevant entries due to complexity or musical content

4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALL THE PARTS AND THE WHOLE

Integration of all the previous data for the service of performance. Some aspects that should be used as reference are as follows:

- Music direction
- Characteristics of the piece and contrasts within.
- Establishment of the general tempo and graduation of the agogical changes related to it.
- Dynamic graduation of the sections related to the whole.
- Formal cohesion elements: leitmotifs, repetition of motifs and ideas, constructive symmetry or asymmetry, guiding themes (melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, timbre, etc.)
- Hierarchizing of structures according to their function within the work.
- Assembly of the timbre combinations to define the color of the music and its variations.
- Relationship between the music and the stylistic and aesthetic context.

OTHER COMPLEMENTARY ANALYTICAL TOOLS

- Written references: regarding the style, aesthetics, context (historical, political, geographical, etc.) of the composer and the work itself.
- Literary references: in works related to literary texts involving a script or libretto.
- Plastics arts references: in the case of works composed with extra-musical budgets: a painting, an artist, a sculpture, a color, a geometric structure, a mathematical concept, etc.
- Visual references: which allow the immersion in a certain atmosphere or which encourage an approach to the music budget of the work, (e.g. in the case of music for cinema, incidental music, etc.)
- Musical references: from other work by the same composer, of the same period of time, similar or different organic characteristics, different genres...
- Cross references from other composers: analysis of works within the same genre by different composers in different periods of time.

- Sound registries: interesting especially for procedural analysis of the work to be conducted to have access to different recordings of the same work so as to make a comparative analysis. What is never recommended is to “conduct” these recordings. The generic recommendation is to listen to different versions once the score has been analyzed. Never Before.
- Videos: of different performances of the same work.
- Piano reduction: this is a valuable aid in analyzing and sounding concrete passages, melodies, harmonic links and, in general, everything we cannot listen to in a fluid manner.
- Score markings: it is common for conductors to mark scores with brief notes that allow them to rapidly visualize the most relevant aspect in each sheet, from the conducting point of view. This task requires a previously set hierarchy of the important matters that need to be translated into gestures.

METHODOLOGY PROPOSAL FOR CONDUCTORS

PRIOR TO THE FIRST REHEARSAL

1. Score analysis
2. Score marking
3. Piano reduction
4. Contextualize
5. Listening of recordings and comparative study
6. Review and analysis of additional information
7. Decision taking about technical aspects

DURING REHEARSALS AND CONCERTS

- Continuous auditory analysis
- Control of gestures in their catalyzing, preemptive and interpretative
- During rehearsals, phenomenological, auditory and psycho-perceptive analysis of the sound and its possible impact on the listener
- During the concert, flexibility in adapting and changing any previously set technical aspects to the actual sound reality

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