

USE OF A BATON*

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Abstract

This module discusses the use of a baton when conducting choirs.

1 USE OF A BATON

Every conductor should learn to conduct with a baton whether one is used for all performances or not. Choral conductors will find that a 12" to 14" baton is desirable for most situations. A longer baton may be warranted for conducting festival choruses or performances of large choruses and orchestra.

Although fewer choral conductors seem to use a baton than instrumental conductors, there is no reason why a baton should not be used for choral conducting. It is perfectly acceptable to conduct accompanied or unaccompanied repertoire with a baton. The conductor who does not use a baton regularly will find that the use of a baton will tend to force him toward better conducting habits. Unnecessary gestures made with the hands are impossible with a baton. Usually the conducting technique improves considerably by the use of a baton.

Conductors are also encouraged to alternate between the use of the hands and the baton during rehearsals. Some compositions will seem most comfortable with a baton and the conductor will want to continue its use into the performance. The conductor will find that Renaissance scores are best conducted without a baton. The music of the Renaissance is not metered and our modern conducting gestures are not as appropriate for this music.

Many choral conductors use the baton when conducting works that involve instruments with voices. The addition of instruments alone does not necessarily warrant the use of a baton any more than the absence of instruments denies the use of the baton. The decision is a personal one but this author recommends using a baton.

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