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## CONDUCTOR'S GESTURE AS AN OBJECT OF SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

**Objective.** *The article investigates the background and the mechanism of transforming a gesture-sign into a gesture-image in conducting art. The methodology of the work. The article uses comparative, aesthetic, cultural, musicological methods in their unity. The scientific novelty of the article is expressed in revealing the semiological aspects of the conductor's gesture in*

the specifics of musical and linguistic parameters. Conducting language is considered from the point of view of its unit analysis – gesture-sign – on the basis of the unity of the musical performance and semiology interpretive principles. **Conclusions.** Conducting art, as an independent type of musical performance, embodies in the interpretation process the highest degree of generalization, abstraction, and direction from the material to the ideal. The initiation of a single complex process of translating musical meaning into a whole collective of instrumentalist interpreters for the purpose of the resulting “new interpretation” requires specific means of communication with the latter, which leads to the creation of a specific, but universally understandable language for conducting. Conducting gestures, symbolizing the timbre and sound images in their dynamics, in the chronotopic process of the formation of musical thought, ideas, turn the technical signs-means of conducting technology into the performing conducting composition text, and the gestures-signs – into gestures-images. The specificity here is the secondary nature of sound production and sound science, which the conductor forms indirectly using professional sign language. At the same time, the interpretative (ideational) and technological (embodied in musical instrumentalism) aspects of the performance come from the conductors, they are directed and corrected by them, developing their own technology of “sounding” the hands, their own language of conducting. It is on this basis that “composer’s language” of the score is translated into the conductor sign language and again – into the joint “performing text” of the orchestra musicians.

**Key words:** gesture, sign, symbol, semiotics, conducting gesture, conducting language, conductor.

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#### **Диригентський жест як об’єкт семіотичного аналізу**

**Мета роботи.** У статті досліджуються передумови та механізм перетворення жесту-знаку на жест-образ у диригентському мистецтві. **Методологія дослідження.** У статті використовуються компаративний, естетико-культурологічний, музикознавчий методи в їх єдності. **Наукова новизна** статті виражається у виявленні семіологічних аспектів диригентського жесту у специфіці музично-мовних параметрів. Мова диригування розглядається з точки зору аналізу його одиниці – знака-жесту – на основі єдності інтерпретативних принципів музичного виконавства і семіології. **Висновки.** Диригентське мистецтво, як самостійний вид музичного виконавства, втілює в інтерпретаційному процесі найвищу ступінь узагальнення, абстрагування і спрямування з матеріального до ідеального. Ініціація єдиного складного процесу трансляції музичного смислу цілим колективом інтерпретаторів-інструменталістів із метою результатуючої «нової інтерпретації» вимагає специфічних засобів комунікації з останніми, що призводить до створення специфічної, але універсально зрозумілої оркестрантам мови диригування. Диригентські жести, символізуючи темброво-звукові образи в їх динаміці, в хронотопічному процесі становлення музичної

думки, ідеї перетворюють технічні знаки-засоби диригентської техніки на виконавський диригентський текст твору, а жести-знаки – на жести-образи. Специфіку тут становить вторинність звукоутворення і ведення звуку, які диригент формує опосередковано, використовуючи професійну жестову мову. При цьому інтерпретативна (ідеаційна) і технологічна (матеріалізована в музичному інструменталізмі) сторони виконання виходять із диригентських установок, направляються і корегуються ними, виробляючи власну технологію «звучання» рук, власну мову диригування. Саме на такій основі здійснюється «переклад» композиторської мови партитури на диригентську мову жестів і знову – на спільний «виконавський текст» музикантів оркестру.

**Ключові слова:** жест, знак, символ, семиотики, диригентський жест, мова диригування, диригент.

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#### **Дирижерский жест как объект семиотического анализа**

**Цель работы.** В статье исследуются предпосылки и механизм превращения жеста-знака в жест-образ в дирижерском искусстве. **Методология исследования.** В статье используются компаративный, эстетико-культурологический, музыковедческий методы в их единстве. **Научная новизна** статьи выражается в выявлении семиологических аспектов дирижерского жеста в специфике музыкально-языковых параметров. Язык дирижирования рассматривается с точки зрения анализа его единицы – знака-жеста – на основе единства интерпретативных принципов музыкального исполнительства и семиологии. **Выводы.** Дирижерское искусство, как самостоятельный вид музыкального исполнительства, воплощает в интерпретационном процессе наивысшую степень обобщения, абстрагирования и направления от материального к идеальному. Инициация единого сложного процесса трансляции музыкального смысла целым коллективом интерпретаторов-инструменталистов в целях результирующей «новой интерпретации» требует специфических средств коммуникации с последними, что приводит к созданию специфического, но универсально понятного оркестрантам языка дирижирования. Дирижерские жесты, символизируя темброво-звуковые образы в их динамике, в хронотопическом процессе становления музыкальной мысли, идеи превращают технические знаки-средства дирижерской техники в исполнительский дирижерский текст произведения, а жесты-знаки – в жесты-образы. Специфику здесь составляет вторичность звукообразования и звуковедения, которые дирижер формирует опосредованно, используя профессиональный жестовый язык. При этом интерпретативная (идеациональная) и технологическая (овеществленная в музыкальном инструментализме) стороны исполнения исходят из дирижерских установок, направляются и коррегируются ими, вырабатывая собственную технологию «звучания» рук, собственный язык дирижирования. Именно на такой основе

осуществляется «перевод» композиторского языка партитуры на дирижерский язык жестов и снова – на совместный «исполнительский текст» музыкантов оркестра.

**Ключевые слова:** жест, знак, символ, семиотика, дирижерский жест, язык дирижирования, дирижер.

**Relevance of the topic of work.** Orchestral conducting, as a special kind of performing art (with its own technique and technology, as well as interpretative aspects), finally formed only in the XIX century, when, in European music, first of all, opera art did not just build up, but revolutionized its position (with the need to control the entire complex opera “machine” – singers, choir, orchestra); secondly, when instrumental creativity in its collective forms tested by practice not only strengthened in its autonomy, but more actively demonstrated its own, non-verbal means of expressing a “pure” idea, first of all, in a symphony – as the highest level of the musical hierarchy, in confirmation of that the instrumental culture itself is music as such; thirdly, when the complication of the opera and orchestral (symphonic, chamber, wind) musical language and texture required a single coordinating metro-rhythmic, cognitive, emotional and volitional center; and finally, fourthly, what is very important, when a new type of professional musical activity – solo concert performance – was being approved and, at the same time, a new type of interpretive musician appeared – an artist of other compositions.

Of course, the prerequisites for a “paradoxical” conducting profession (in which the complex of performing activities do not include the direct processes of sound production and sound studies), together with its technical and technological parameters, in particular, conducting gestures – have evolved over the centuries in the temple choral tradition. However, from a simple control-correction of modal and intonational, chronotopic, ensemble-textured, dynamic elements of music, a specific performing art of interpretation (albeit not yet formulated terminologically) has grown. In this format, conducting began to form only in the XIX century. This process almost coincided with the development of interpretation as an independent art, demonstrating the degree of generalization that was incompatible with other interpretative arts, a kind of “ideal” vector of the latter. All this implies the existence of a special interpretation process that is understandable to the participants, effective for achieving the goal of generalizing

meanings, a conditional language (conducting gestures), it means – a system of signs and symbols of the communicative performing process (in relation to both the orchestra / orchestra performers, and the listeners), aimed at achieving interpretative tasks.

Having gone the way from its formation from the second half of the XIX century to the status of one of the most important areas of musicology and the theory of performance of the XX century, the theory of musical interpretation studies the variety of performing schools, aesthetic principles, language and style parameters in combination with the highest achievements of performing techniques and technology. Therefore, since the last third of the XX century, the theory of musical interpretation has been in one way or another in contact with a developing science – semiology, the principles and methods of which allow a deeper analysis of the communicative aspects of the musical (non-verbal, first of all) message (musical thought) of the performer – the listener, and in our case, the conductor – to the collective of performers and, through them, to the listener. The semiotic aspect here is enhanced by the gestural nature of conductor communication, one of the “closest to nature semiotics of a man” [4, p. 178]. Thus, the problems of this work are an actual direction of musicological thought. **The aim of the work** is to investigate the prerequisites and the mechanism of transformation of a gesture-sign into a gesture-image in the conducting art.

**Presenting the main material.** Gesture and facial expressions (which have become the main technical means of conducting) are defined by scientists as the most natural semiotic signs of a person due to their belonging, as an “effectively figurative filling”, to such “languages of mankind as ritual, dance, acting” [4, p. 178]. G. Kreidlin, following A. Kendon, indicates that the word “gesture” was used to denote “**the correct non-verbal (bodily) behavior** of the speaker during the speech, that is, how the speaker should use the capabilities of his body to influence listeners” [2, p. 34]. With the exception of the composition of the necessary specific musical parameters (musical chronotope, articulatory and stroke, timbre, dynamic, relief and textural indicators), this definition also reflects the conductor’s specifics, especially in terms of “impact”. All this, of course, implies specific significant movements (gestures) of the hands, body and face – that is, in fact, all that relates to the term “gesture”.

There are a number of parallels between the sign language and other types of languages (for example, verbal). The deep processes

of human activity as a whole, obviously, have some common root associated with the cognitive processes of this activity on an intuitive level, when the body “picks up” and “calculates” the forms of movements, their strength, tension, direction, etc. All of them are associated with recognizable sign systems of information transfer – emotional, concrete, technical, professional, etc., which provides the possibility of variant multiplicity of individual interpretations while maintaining some universal sign parameters of information (in our case, music – strokes, dynamics, combination of textured lines, timbres, sound quality, metro-rhythmic figures, directional movement, etc., reflected in the conductor’s gesture). Given the currently developed system of conducting education, methodology, and performance traditions, conductors use individualized forms of performing movements, the “conducting language” that arose under the intuitive influence of instrumental forms of movement, every day, etc. For example, the imitating gesture of E. Svetlanov, imitating vibrato strings in his left hand, is well known to fans. By the way, in the late 1990s, Svetlanov, speaking to students and teachers of the Odessa Conservatory during his tour, said that he never selects conducting gestures on purpose, in front of a mirror, that they are born directly in the process of interpretation, work with the orchestra. Although, no doubt, he possessed a brilliant conducting technique after training in the class of opera and symphonic conducting of A. V. Gauk at the Moscow Conservatory.

Such a position (according to G. Kreidlin) can testify to the common deep (subconscious) root of various languages in humans (as well as the syncretism of folk art):

– the translation of meanings can be expressed: only with gestures (for example, a finger pressed to the lips means a gesture of silence, which sometimes the conductors also use, making the orchestra somewhat exaggerated that the level of dynamic volume should be minimal); only with words (in life it’s quite rare, used only in moments of officialdom; in the conducting work this way of communication is not encouraged, but in a concert situation it is simply impossible) or by combining both, their mutual accompaniment and complement (this is the most common way of communication, in which emphasis is enhanced, the significance of meaning, the desire to necessarily achieve a result; the conductor uses this method in the rehearsal process);

– gestural behavior of people (as well as other language systems) is generally subject to changes in accordance with changing

sociocultural conditions, traditions, customs, situations, era, national characteristics, etc. It is worth noting that the conducting technique also undergoes changes in general due to changing epochal, musical and linguistic, genre and stylistic, individual-style aspects (for example, conducting the representatives of the romantic school, according to the descriptions, was distinguished by great expression, visible effect, and range of movements – concert; the famous Leningrad school of the XX century in the person of E. Mravinsky – conciseness and, at the same time, philosophical depth of reading);

– gestures are mainly symbolic signs, making up the “lexicon” of body language. Conducting gestures, symbolizing timbre and sound images in their dynamics, in the chronotopic process of the formation of musical thought, ideas, turn technical signs-means into a conducting text;

– many gestures of body language can be translated into another language (verbal, for example), while the problems of such translation correspond to similar ones, for example, when translating from one verbal national language to another. It is on this basis that “composer’s language” of the score is translated into the conductor sign language and again – into the joint “performing text” of the orchestra musicians.

The gesture itself is not yet a unit of communication; it becomes such only when it is endowed with a “common” meaning for the parties of communication, that is, understandable to deciphering such a sign by the plan of expression and the plan of content. F. Nietzsche points out that “language is formed through the closest and most ordinary unity of a special kind of symbolic facial expressions and sound” [3, p. 239]. And although in life the unit of gestural representation and the unit of verbal meaning, although closely related, are (to a certain extent) mutually impenetrable, then in conducting art the gesture and musical sound (in all its forms, from technology to concept) are synthesized in a specific way, initiating birth of the conductor’s text score. In this sense, the conductor’s gesture has the value of that “primitiveness”, communicative immediacy, “pure meaning” that the verbum-sign does not possess (except for its use in poetry and literature). The latter “socialized communication, things and people, making them a “commodity”, introducing them into a complex socio-economic circulation and introducing them into a complex system of ideological and mythological relations” [6, p. 3]. We consider



the “language of conducting” from the point of view of analyzing its unit – the conducting gesture, which, due to the “extremeness” of music as semiotics – according to the “richness and diversity of the content that it is able to express” (N. Mechkovskaya [4, p. 339]) – differs from gestures of the human body in general. It differs (except for a special sign – “grid”, diagrams, aucts, methods of removal, fermata, strokes) with unprecedented depth, power of “sound” and, at the same time, fine detail with infinite details of feelings, penetrating psychophysiological force (including impact on deep subconscious spheres).

The conducting language, having a simple (compared to instrumental or vocal) technique, characterizes (compared to other semiotics) a high level of formal (structural) complexity – the diversity and grouping of the original sounds and ways of organizing them, the number of hierarchically interconnected levels of the score, conceptualization of meanings on all levels of musical form (motives, phrases, periods, sections of the form) of the whole space of orchestral texture (vertical, horizontal, depth).

One of the most mysterious performing arts – the conducting – like the others must undoubtedly have the integrity of the art technique, manifested in the organic “interconnection of gesture and intonation generated by a single emotion” [5, p. 151]. Only such an approach provides the desired artistic result, captures both the orchestra and the listener. In contrast to the instrumentalist performer, the conductor’s gestures are symbolic. That means that they appear as “signs endowed with all the organicity of the myth and the inexhaustible polysemy of the image” [1, p. 156]. Perhaps in its most “pure” form this can be observed in the symphony “I Hear ... Silence” by S. Gubaidullina, when the culmination of the sounding music is silence, filled with the conductor’s rhythmic, articulated intonation – the conductor’s gesture-symbol. The “structure of the symbol itself is aimed at immersing each particular phenomenon in the element of the “initial” being and giving through this phenomenon a holistic image of the world.

Here lies the affinity between symbol and myth; a symbol is a myth, “removed” (in the Hegelian sense) by cultural development, deduced from identity with itself and realized in its discrepancy with its own meaning” [1, p. 156].

The artistic language of conducting is multidimensionality, creating a rhythmic polyphony of timing, pulsation, imitation of timbres and dominating all of this cantilena, inescapable, if not



endless, which is the secret of plasticity and bodily organization of the conductor-performer. Mastering the gestures of figurative expressiveness directly depends on the degree of the conductor's creative imagination and imaginative thinking, so the development process cannot fit into certain time frames, it can continue throughout the period of the conductor's creative activity.

**Conclusions.** The process of forming conducting art as an independent type of musical performance coincided with the development of solo concert art and interpretation theory, embodying in the interpretation process itself the highest (so far, in any case) degree of generalization, abstraction and direction from material to ideal. The initiation of a single (not just total) complex process of transmitting musical meaning by a whole team of instrumentalist interpreters for the purpose of the resulting “new interpretation” requires specific means of communication with the latter. This leads to the creation of a specific, but universally understandable language for conductors.

Conducting gestures, symbolizing the timbre and sound images in their dynamics, in the chronotopic process of musical thought and ideas formation, turn the technical signs-means of conducting technology into the performing conductor's composition text, and the gestures-signs into gestures-images. The specificity here is the secondary nature of sound production and sound science, which the conductor forms indirectly using professional sign language. At the same time, the interpretative (ideational) and technological (embodied in musical instrumentalism) aspects of the performance come from the conductors; they are directed and corrected by them, developing their own technology of “sounding” the hands, their own language of conducting. It is on this basis that “composer's language” of the score is translated into the conductor sign language and again – into the joint “performing text” of the orchestra musicians.

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