

The Choral Conductor as Bard in Motion

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Abstract

Expressive, poetic conducting can be elusive, even after extensive technical studies. Choral music involves the intricate interplay between human breath, sound, and movement. Hence, it is on the premise of movement studies that catalysts for expressive choral conducting are considered in the article. Choral conducting, as art and technique, is examined through three lenses: history, philosophy, and art (dance). Specifically, historical cheironomy is examined in the context of “movement as music.” Susanne K. Langer’s philosophy of music functions as a paradigm in the discussion of “music as movement.” Finally, the dance theory and pedagogical principles of Martha Graham (Graham Technique®) are applied to choral conducting. Through an historical, philosophical, and artistic understanding of movement and music, *poetry through motion*, i.e., expressive choral conducting comes into focus.

Movement as Music: Cheironomy

Since the earliest civilizations, music and movement have been closely linked. The interaction between music, movement in dance, and movement in worship was, arguably, more fluid in the distant past than it is today, since music and dance are studied and fostered

separately as art forms, and liturgical studies often do not examine movement in ritual or worship. During ancient civilizations, e.g. ancient Egypt, movement functioned alongside music as a guide to communal musical expression in worship.

The earliest systems of music representation through movement had a liturgical purpose. The “rise and fall of the voice and the curves made by the voice in producing a motive” eventually became symbolized by gestures, in order to guide the singing of the community.¹ These hand signs, or cheironomy, illustrated the music spatially and kinesthetically. The cheironomy of ancient Egyptian, Jewish, and Byzantine communities contain detailed musical information such as intervals, pitch groups, and ‘cadences’ or endings, to name a few. Abraham Idelsohn states:

¹ Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover, 1929, 1967, 1992), 67.

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The earliest system was the notation of the rise and fall of the voice and the curves made by the voice in producing a motive. These were ear-marks. With the ear-marks the ‘hand-signs,’ in Greek cheironomia, made by the teacher or musical leader to indicate the rise and fall of the voice, were developed among the ancient nations. We notice this custom in ancient Egypt, shown on the wall-pictures of the pyramids. The Talmud gives evidence of the custom of using finger-motions in the air in Palestine and Babylonia in the beginning of the Common Era.²

Susanne Haïk-Vantoura was one of the first to offer a musicological basis for the *te’amim* (melodic ‘accents’ in the Masoretic Texts³) as guides to cheironomy and chant. From this tenet, Haïk-Vantoura constructed an entire system of cantillation based on the *te’amim*, and applied it to chanting the Torah and Tenach.⁴

According to Joshua R. Jacobson, the hand-signs (cheironomy) “predate the graphic symbols, which represent the melodies of the *te’amim*”,⁵ and the antiquity of cheironomy is confirmed by Rabbi Nachman (c. 350 C.E.), who gave instruction that the right hand should always be kept clean, as it

² Ibid. Elliot Galkin also comments on cheironomy in ancient Israel: “There is also a vital tradition of cheironomy in the performance of Hebrew liturgical music, in existence since biblical times...”. Elliot Galkin, *History of Orchestral Conducting: Theory and Practice*, (Pendragon Press: 1989), 243.

³ Masoretic Texts are the Hebrew Scriptures recorded by Jewish scribes known as the Masoretes, c. 1-10 C.E. The oldest complete source for the Masoretic Text dates from 1009 C.E. For more information on the Masoretic Text and the Proto-Masoretic Texts, see Emanuel Tov, *Text Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, second revised edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

⁴ Susanne Haik-Vantoura, *The Music of the Bible Revealed: The Deciphering of a Millenary Notation* (Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press, 1991).

⁵ Joshua R. Jacobson, *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Art of Cantillation*, second expanded edition (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2017), 3.

performs the sacred task of cantillation.⁶ Oral tradition and practice predates cheironomy, which predates the written, graphic notation of *te’amim*.

According to David C. Mitchell, the Masoretic Texts and *te’amim* actually suggest an even earlier derivation than the fourth century C.E., namely, the time period of ancient Israel:

...the Rabbinic sages who preceded Natronai and Sa’adya agree with one voice that the *te’amim* originated with the writers of the Bible books and were systematized by Ezra. They were aware, in their own day, that there were cheironomic gestures and cantillational symbols associated with the Torah...Finally, cantillation marks per se are of great antiquity. They appear in Mesopotamian texts of the second millennium BC, in Greek poetic texts, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There can therefore be no objection to a temple-period origin for the *te’amim* on the basis of the history of musical notation. Indeed, one is struck by how the Masoretic *te’amim* resemble the symbols of 1,000 or more years before their own time.⁷

The first century Christians, who shaped the early Roman church, were Jewish. Hence, a discussion could proceed on the premise that the music and liturgy of the earliest synagogues and churches developed through reciprocity.⁸ Praxis aside, when considering graphic notation that symbolizes cheironomy, there is, to date,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David C. Mitchell, *The Songs of Ascents: Psalms 120 to 134 in the Worship of Jerusalem’s Temples* (Newton Mearns, Scotland: Campbell Publications, 2015), 136. See also David C. Mitchell, “Prolegomena to the Masoretic *te’amim*”, available on Academia.edu.

⁸ See Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: Liturgical Parallels in Synagogue and Early Church* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

no scholarly support for cheironomy in the early Western church. David Hiley states:

Cheironomic systems as commonly understood actually specify the melodic intervals to be sung, and...there is no evidence that Western chant notation was linked to any method of this sort. Even literary references to cantors conducting with hand movements are extremely sparse. The theory that chant notation—or at least the St. Gall or Laon neumes usually invoked in this context—depicts cantorial hand gestures has therefore no concrete support either from what is known of cheironomy in other contexts (the music of other cultures, modern Western systems such as the Kodaly method) or from contemporary documentation. This does not mean to say that it is erroneous, only that it cannot be proven.⁹

Thus, it is necessary to consider a contemporaneous Christian culture of antiquity: Byzantium.¹⁰

By the time music and liturgy became established in the Byzantine empire (3rd–11th centuries C.E.), chant was guided by the “law of the hand” or “hand ballet”—essentially, “cheironomia.”¹¹ Neil K. Moran states, “Byzantine music treatises do not neglect to discuss the ‘hand ballet’ although

⁹ David Hiley, *Western Plainchant: A Handbook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 370. See also John Arthur Smith, *Music in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Routledge: 2016).

¹⁰ The commonly cited and documentable work of the Monks of Solesmes in cheironomy originates from the eleventh century, according to Willi Apel (*Gregorian Chant*, p. 417). David Hiley does not concur with this idea. The *Liber usualis*, as it exists today, was first edited and printed by the Monks of Solesmes in 1896.

¹¹ Neil K. Moran states, “An essential aspect of Byzantine choral music is the cheironomia or the art of directing a choir by means of movements of the hand.” Neil K. Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 38.

the information is by nature often vague and metaphorical to our ears, since the manuals were written for choristers already well-versed in the art of singing.”¹² Hand signs showed the worshippers where to move the voice (melodies and intervals), as well as how to move (expressive devices, vocal embellishments).

Lorenzo Tardo (1883–1967), an Arberesh¹³ monk and important source on Byzantine chant of the 9th–15th centuries, stated, “The treatises bear witness to the agility of the choir director when they assert that his hand must move as if it had sprouted wings and flutter from within and without.”¹⁴ Tardo also comments, “The voice and hand were considered to be inseparably bound in the production of the chant for ‘at the same time as the voice of the chanter began to sing there also appeared the cheironomy in that the cheironomy represented the melody.”¹⁵

Given the central role of the choir director in bringing together the congregation and choir as one community, cheironomy held a critical function. The Evergetis Codex, a 12th century record of the liturgical practices of a Constantinople community, mentions soloist and congregation singing with cheironomy, and Moran states, “It can be assumed that the coordination between the professional singers and the congregation was achieved by means of the cheironomy.” Additionally, there are descriptions of a “choirmaster in the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople who taught psalmody with conductor’s movements with his hands.”¹⁶

¹² Ibid, 41.

¹³ Italo-Albanian descent, centered in southern Italy

¹⁴ Lorenzo Tardo, *L’Antica Melurgia Bizantina*, Vol. 13 of *Collezione Meridionale* (Italy: S. Nilo, 1938), 191, 213, as quoted in Moran, 42.

¹⁵ Tardo, 226, as quoted in Moran, 42.

¹⁶ Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, 40.

Interestingly, a philosophical intersection exists between cheironomy, conducting, music, and dance. Moran states: “In connection with Balsamon’s ‘hand ballet’ it might be added that the Byzantine ‘neumology’ even possesses a sign which is derived etymologically from the word ‘dance’, namely the choreuma.”¹⁷ Theodore Balsamon (c.1140–1199) was the principal author and compiler of Byzantine canon law, and his writings provide significant historical information on the decrees and liturgical praxis of the 12th century Byzantine church.

Moran states:

The Byzantine cheironomy is thus to be differentiated from the modern conception of a director’s function in that the cheironomy is neither a circumscription of the course of a melody with movements of the hand nor an artistic waving of the hands and arms. It was rather an exact science for the indication of specific musical intervals, of melodic figures and of marks of expression. As such it was an indispensable facet of Byzantine choral practice. The isolated references in literary works and the silent representations in frescoes, icons and miniatures are seemingly our sole witnesses for this now lost art.¹⁸

Although cheironomy differs from modern conducting in that it shows primarily intervallic relationships as well as some expressive features, the common denominator is *a conductor who guides through movement*.

¹⁷ Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, 42–43.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 46.

Movement is at the heart of worship and ritual. Non-verbal elements of ritual—such as davening rocking, bending the knees and bowing as well as lifting the heels during parts of Jewish liturgy, prostration, genuflecting and kneeling during Christian prayers—have deep symbolic significance for the individual and for the community. Cheironomic movement in worship also holds deep significance, since the *gestures carry the breath of the community through song*—one breath, one song, one community. Through the collective breath, texts—i.e., prayers, creeds, praises—travel from the heart and mind, and into the world of sound.

Music as Movement: Tonal Motion

Sound is motion. Philosopher Susanne K. Langer (1895–1985) states, “The elements of music are moving forms of sound.”¹⁹ Another angle through Langer’s philosophical lens reveals music as the quintessential art of virtual motion.²⁰ These concepts relate to Roger Sessions’ (1896–1985) observation that “...the basic ingredient of music is not so much sound as movement...”²¹ Sessions clarifies his point:

I would even go a step farther, and say that music is significant for us as human beings principally because it embodies movement of a specifically human type that goes to the roots of our being and takes shape in the inner gestures which embody our deepest and most intimate responses. This is of itself

¹⁹ Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 109.

²⁰ Tone Roald and Johannes Lang, eds. *Art and Identity: Essays on the Creation of Mind* (Amsterdam, New York: Editions Rodopi V.P.: 2013), 31.

²¹ Roger Sessions, *Musical Experience of Composer, Performer, Listener* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 19.

not yet art; it is not yet even language. But it is the material of which musical art is made, and to which musical art gives significance. If we appreciate these facts, we can understand more readily why music is the art of sound.²²

According to Sessions, sound, by its very nature, embodies movement in time. It is never static, but “invariably impermanent; it either ceases or changes.”²³

To take musical motion a step further in its interaction with conducting, consider the idea of motion within a line of music. Conductors shape phrases and move lines. How is this accomplished?

The imaginary motion is something we hear in a melody when we hear it tonally. Similarly, real sounds cannot be endowed with a will to move, nor can they pull other sounds. Tonal motion, will (the *Tonwille* in Heinrich Schenker’s terms), and gravity are not the attributes of real sounds, but rather metaphors that describe our experience of tonal music, what we imaginatively hear in it. To a certain extent, we may choose from among these metaphors. We may, for instance, think of a sound as wanting to go somewhere, or as being pulled in some direction. But some use of metaphors of this sort, metaphors of motion, direction tension, relaxation, gravitation, goals strived for and achieved, and so forth, is inescapable if we want to describe the experience of hearing music tonally. As Eduard Hanslick famously put it: ‘The content of music is tonally moving forms.’ (*Der Inhalt der Musik sind tönend bewegte Formen.*)²⁴

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 20.

²⁴ Karol Berger, *Theory of Art* (New York, Oxford: Oxford

This notion of inherent motion in music provides a powerful philosophical connection between the physical act of conducting and the essence of music. Conducting stands at the intersection of sound (or tonal motion), kinesthetic movement, and musical creation in real time. The philosophical idea of music as tonal motion could be the path to experiencing music as movement and movement as music.

Langer offers an apt summary: “Such motion is the essence of music; a motion of forms that are not visible, but are given to the ear instead of the eye.”²⁵ These forms of musical motion given to the ear also carry emotion, via the delivery of musical and textual poetry. Langer describes music as the “‘tonal analogue of emotive life’ ...in which patterns of feeling are what are experienced most directly in music, and in art generally.”²⁶ As a conductor moves, syncretism emerges—comprised of the composer’s ideas, poet’s thoughts, conductor’s perspective. Indeed, Langer’s insight is noteworthy: “Musical duration is an image of what might be termed ‘lived’ or ‘experienced’ time...”²⁷

Langer’s philosophy of music as tonal motion provides a premise for expressive conducting studies beyond a technique of appropriate patterns and symbolic physical gestures. If sound is motion, and movements represent and generate sound, then this inter-dependence could be at the core of *choral sound*. The well-known idea, expressed over three decades ago by Abraham

University Press, 2000), 32. Langer’s comment on Hanslick is as follows: Eduard Hanslick denoted them rightly: ‘*tönend bewegte Formen*’—‘sounding forms in motion.’ (Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 109)

²⁵ Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 107.

²⁶ Roald and Lang, eds. *Art and Identity: Essays on the Creation of Mind*, 31.

²⁷ Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 109.

Kaplan and reiterated by Liz Garnett,²⁸ lives on: “The single element that most affects the eventual sound quality of a chorus in performance... is the actual conducting technique or physical movements of the conductor.”²⁹

Movement Philosophy: The Dance Theory of Martha Graham

The choral conductor as a ‘bard in motion’—one who is poetically expressive through movement—needs a movement philosophy that connects the musical page to lived time and space. The innovative and ground-breaking work of Martha Graham (1894–1991) offers a direct and unified, yet multi-faceted approach for conductors. As a dancer, choreographer, educator, collaborator, and the founder of the Martha Graham Dance Company, Graham was one of the most profound artists of the twentieth century.

One of her lifelong tenets, “Movement doesn’t lie,” distills her dance philosophy, i.e., “Either a performance is honest, or it’s not.”³⁰ An honest performance reflects the inner life of the dancer, or conductor, in the moment. As such, if movements are micro-managed to the degree that imagination is bound by canned gestures designed to conjure up emotions, expressive impact greatly diminishes.

²⁸ Liz Garnett, *Choral Conducting and the Construction of Meaning: Gesture, Voice, Identity* (London/New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.

²⁹ Abraham Kaplan, *Choral Conducting* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985), 18.

³⁰ Marian Horosko, *Martha Graham: The Evolution of Her Dance Theory and Training*, revised edition (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 1.

Graham created a modern dance technique based on the seamless connection between emotion and breath. She believed that emotions ride on the breath.³¹ Human emotions change the very nature of the breath, i.e., we breathe differently when laughing, or joyful, as opposed to grieving, frightened, or anxious. Although yogalike breathing was introduced into the classrooms of Western dance at the turn of the twentieth century, Graham was the first to develop breath with the contraction and release principle into a basis of movement in her new dance form.³²

As conductors, there are unlimited nuances of breath possible, informed by shades of emotion contained in the texts and subtexts, not to mention the musical rhetoric formed by phrasing, texture, articulation, dynamics, and diacritical markings. As such, breath is multi-faceted and malleable, serving the imagination and the aural concept. s

This emotion-breath connection is also summarized by Roger Sessions in his discussion of a musical phrase:

Nevertheless, a melodic motif or phrase is in essence and origin a vocal gesture; it is a vocal movement with a clearly defined and therefore clearly expressed profile. And, one final point, it too is sensitive to infinitely delicate nuances of tension and relaxation, as these are embodied in the breathing which animates the vocal gesture and shapes its contours. Thus, agitated breathing will be reflected in agitated melodic and rhythmic movement; or conversely, sharp, irregular accents, or successive violent contrasts in pitch will call forth subconscious associations

³¹ Janet Eilber, artistic director of the Martha Graham Dance Company, interview with the author, July 14, 2017.

³² Horosko, *Martha Graham*, x.

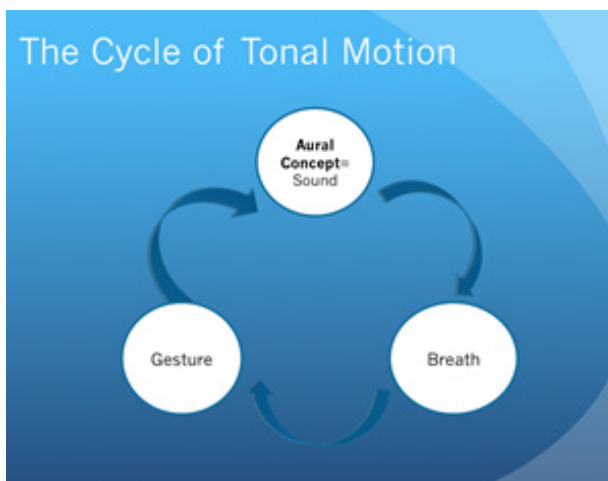
suggesting the kind of agitation which produces violent or irregular breathing, just as quieter melodic movement will evoke a more serene response.³³

Dance Theory and Choral Conducting

The Cycle of Tonal Motion

This response to human breath, i.e., choral sound, is the continuous by-product of a cycle that is repeated, moment by moment, in conducting. Consider the Cycle of Tonal Motion shown in figure 1, which begins with ‘internal’ sound, or aural concept.

Figure 1.



Aural Concept as Virtual Sound

Sound (internal sound) is the guide, and sound (audible choral sound) is the ultimate test of the effectiveness of gestures. If the conductor is able to determine the sound in the inner ear first,

before trying to perfect the gesture, expressivity greatly increases, and the resulting choral sound also reflects the specificity of aural concept. The conductor’s aural concept of the phrase, the color, tone, or balance of the chord, the peak of the phrase, the line, etc., informs the breath. The breath propels the gesture. In summary, *gestures are initiated by sound/aural concept, and propelled by breath.*

Breath as Link

Maximum expressivity is experienced when *aural concept informs breath, breath propels gesture, and gesture produces the conceptualized and ‘breathalized’ sound.* This is very different from starting with gestures alone, e.g., learning the correct patterns or physical indications for crescendo and decrescendo. This order in the Cycle of Tonal Motion not only results in more expressive conducting that is faithful to the conductor’s unique aural concepts, but it also produces more varied choral sound between compositions. In this way, it offers potential to perform choral music in more compelling ways, where each work has a unique color, texture, balance—and where not all works on the concert program have similar choral tone. Is it not inspiring to hear choral music with a colorful tonal palette, rather than merely shades of one color?

The cyclic nature of the process is significant. The cycle is seamless, from beat to beat, phrase to phrase. As such, rebounds are critical and hold an enormous amount of expressive musical information. The movement quality of the space between beats contributes to choral color, line, and nuance, to name a few.

³³ Roger Sessions, *Musical Experience*, 19.

Aural concept can be described as virtual or internal sound, or the Edwin E. Gordon term ‘audiation.’ Gordon, originator of Music Learning Theory, first coined the term ‘audiate’ c. 1976 and defines it as follows: “Audiation takes place when one hears music through recall or creation (the sound not being physically present) and infers musical meaning as compared to aural perception where one listens to music actually being performed.”³⁴ Audiation is “hearing music in the mind with understanding.”³⁵

Audiation determines the *types of breath used* while conducting (or singing, or playing the piano, etc.). For example, a *mezzo-piano tranquillo* breath is different from a *piano misterioso* breath or a *mezzo-forte dolce* breath or a *forte maestoso* breath. Audiation provides the impetus for the specificity of breaths we take as performers. The more detailed and nuanced our audiation, the more musically informed and specific the breath.

Breath is the vehicle for line, and line carries the story. It is impossible to show or feel line in music unless we experience it first in the breath. Roger Sessions asks, “What, for instance is a so-called ‘musical phrase’ if not the portion of music that must be performed, so to speak, without letting go, or figuratively, in a single breath?”³⁶ For Sessions, a melodic phrase or motif is, in essence and origin, a vocal gesture—sounded on the breath.

³⁴ Edwin E. Gordon, *Tonal and Rhythm Patterns: An Objective Analysis* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1976), 7. Cf. Edwin E. Gordon, *Rhythm: Contrasting the Implications of Audiation and Notation, second edition* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009).

³⁵ See The Gordon Institute for Music Learning (GIML) at www.giml.org

³⁶ Roger Sessions, *Musical Experience*, 13.

Clearly, this is not the first time in history that conducting has been discussed with regard to breath, or musical intention. Over the years, conductors and authors of conducting texts have mentioned all of these elements, separately or in some type of combination.³⁷ Lingering questions are “How does breathing with intention produce expressive conducting?”; “How does awareness of the spiritual power of the breath help me to move expressively?”; “How does one embody the music?” Consider how the Cycle of Tonal Motion, above, provides a flexible yet direct pathway from the musical score, or intention or ideas, to expressive movement. As a conductor becomes comfortable with the continually renewing Cycle of Tonal Motion (renewing in the sense that beats combine into phrases, and phrases are inter-related as part of a larger design), other elements of Graham Technique® such as alignment, core, and center, contribute to a rich foundation for both expressive movement and formation of choral sound.

Alignment

In Graham Technique®, alignment is achieved by “leveraging the earth.”³⁸ This leveraging straightens the spine naturally. Straightening does not happen by pulling up or by thinking of the image of a string pulling the top of the head. The spine is straightened by feeling the body’s weight leveraged against the ground. When alignment is ideal, there is equilibrium, allowing for both strength and flexibility. When

³⁷ James Jordan, Sonya Garfinkle, Janet Yamron, eds. *Lighting a Candle: The Writings and Wisdom of Elaine Brown* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2014). See also James Jordan, with Mark Moliterno and Nova Thomas, *The Musician’s Breath: The Role of Breathing in Human Expression* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2011); Nancy Romita and Allegra Romita, *Functional Awareness: Anatomy in Action for Dancers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³⁸ Janet Eilber, artistic director of the Martha Graham Dance Company, interview with the author, July 14, 2017.

alignment is ideal, the body moves and flows holistically; no limb or joint operates in isolation from the others. An analogous image is a baton, as it is naturally aligned; there could never be any inadvertent bending at the tip. Yet, choral conductors often lead with the wrist, causing a bend in the line and ultimately, loss of alignment with the center of gravity and core. This lack of alignment ultimately results in loss of clarity, loss of ability to show seamless musical lines, and will impact choral tone.

Core

Expressive movement is also generated by a strong connection to the core. In Graham Technique®, the torso/core is the motor, and it directs the extremities.³⁹ Likewise, in conducting, the core should activate first, before arms and hands begin to move. This activation of the core is one of the most abstract, yet profoundly differentiating aspects of a holistic approach to expressive conducting. In Graham Technique®, synergy of emotion and core breath is reflected in kinesthetic energy through the “contraction and release” principle. Contraction is the result of exhalation, and release is the product of inhalation.⁴⁰ When conductors can experience this core-breath connection, the core becomes activated and vital. It is remarkable to observe and hear the difference in choral intonation and color. Finally, as a result of core activation, the core breath becomes the fuel for the motor. *Core breath, informed by the virtual sound or aural concept, becomes the living link between emotions, imagination, movement, and sound.*

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Energy expands outward on the inhalation.” (Janet Eilber). This expansion creates a feeling of openness and freedom that initiates ease for phrasing, among other expressive elements.

Choreutics

If we consider sound, motion, and emotion as isomorphic,⁴¹ choreutics plays an important part. Rudolf Laban (1879–1958), modern dance choreographer and theorist, defines choreutics as follows: “The art, or the science, dealing with the analysis and synthesis of movement, we call ‘choreutics.’ Through its investigation and various exercises choreutics attempts to stop the progress of disintegrating into disunity.”⁴² Disunity of movement may be viewed as movements that are not expressively integrated or holistic.

Laban’s theories of unified movement were foundational to the work of movement analyst Warren Lamb (1923–2014), who distilled the connections between movement analysis and cognitive processes in the landmark volume, *Posture and Gesture*.⁴³ Lamb’s work has major implications for expressive conducting in differentiating postural versus gestural movement. The concept of posture usually assumes some degree of coordination or tone through all parts of the body, i.e., the expressive quality of movement impacts the entire body to various degrees, rather than only an isolated limb.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Reinhard Steinberg, ed., *Music and the Mind Machine: The Psychophysiology and psychopathology of the Sense of Music*, (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1995), 36.

⁴² Rudolf Laban, *Choreutics*, 2nd ed., Lisa Ullmann, ed. (Hampshire, UK: Dance Books Ltd., 2011), 8.

⁴³ Warren Lamb, *Posture and Gesture*, 2nd ed., Eden Davies and Dick McCaw, eds., (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2015).

⁴⁴ Ibid. Cf. Helen Payne, ed., *Dance Movement Therapy: Theory and Practice* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003) vis à vis posture-gesture and posture-gesture merging (PGM).

Center

Holistic or integrated movement is in line with Martha Graham's ideas on "center."⁴⁵ In Graham Technique®, control comes from center. Dancer Dudley Williams states: "Energy has to come from the center of the body and go right through the top of the head."⁴⁶ "Center" for choral conductors is a combination of center of gravity awareness plus core activation. In this perspective, center does not have mystical significance, but a purely physical one. Kinesthetic energy flows from center.

As choral conductors develop and refine movement language to reflect the multi-faceted world of choral music, it can be tempting to delineate 'moves' that are beautiful, or compelling, or powerful. Janet Eilber, artistic director of the Martha Graham Company, states: "It's much

⁴⁵ Martha Graham: "Always return to center." Horosko, *Martha Graham*, 237.

⁴⁶ Dudley Williams (1908–1987) taught Graham Technique at the Alvin Ailey School, NYC, and was an East Harlem prodigy and leading dancer of the 20th century. Quoted in Horosko, *Martha Graham*, 120.

easier to demand perfection of the physical shapes—to place an arm where it belongs—rather than to understand a reason for moving it. That becomes imitation instead of an experience."⁴⁷ It is impossible to expressively mimic another conductor since the impetus for the movement ultimately begins in the imagination. Eilber states, "The physical moves are rehearsed until they become subservient to the inner scenario, which drives the role and literally moves you. Neither Martha's technique or her theater can be complete without this total physical and emotional dedication to the moment."⁴⁸

No two moments are exactly alike; no two performances of the same composition with the same conductor and same ensemble are exactly alike. As artists, we live in each new moment as unique. Conducting requires emotional fearlessness, an expressive nakedness. As we refine our movement vocabulary to be able to say what we say in more nuanced ways, we evolve, we move,...existentially as well as physically. This is the experience of the bard in motion.

⁴⁷ Horosko, *Martha Graham*, 148.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 149.

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