

Conduction.

Conduction is a system of simple signals that can be used with a group of improvising musicians in order to give some particular shape without the use of printed music.

The basic signals are given to all or some of the players. They are then conducted in with a clear downbeat at the appropriate moment. Thus the conductor might indicate three players by pointing at them, then indicate 'sustain' and 'pitch/low'. At the next downbeat these players then play low sustained notes until signalled to stop by a 'stop' signal.

Some basic signals.

Down Beat: With baton or left hand to indicate the moment when a particular change should be implemented.

Stop (don't play): Left hand facing individual, indicated group or whole ensemble.

Sustain (chord or continuous tone): left hand extended, palm up, one finger of right hand laid across the palm. Followed by down beat.

Short (short, stab note): thumb and forefinger of left hand held up as if to indicate a small amount. This can be followed by holding up one, two or more fingers to indicate the number of short notes. Each one is then conducted in with a separate downbeat.

Pitch (high or low): left index finger pointing on an imaginary scale from head level (high) to below waist (low). This can be given in combination with sustain or short.

Dynamic (loud or soft): Raising the palms up for loud, down for soft. There is immediate response to this gesture, with no down beat.

Time (pulse): If you want one or more people to play 'in time' point to the wrist as if to a clock and then hold up two fingers for a 2/4 pulse, three for 3/4, four for 4/4 etc. Conduct in with a downbeat and indicate the pulse rate with the left hand if desired.

Mock (or imitate): If you want a player to imitate or follow the ideas of another. The conductor will point to the left ear, then to the player or area of sound to be mocked. This is followed by a down beat.

Eric Morecombe: Conductor selects members of the group and imitates waving glasses on his nose. On the down beat all indicated do something completely different to what they had been doing to that point.

Original conduction system invented by Butch Morris