

# **ESSENTIALS IN CONDUCTING**

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Essentials in Conducting by Karl Wilson Gehrrens

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**KARL WILSON GEHRKENS**

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IN CONDUCTING**



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CONDUCTING

BY

KARL WILSON GEHRKENS

PROFESSOR OF SCHOOL MUSIC  
OBERLIN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

AUTHOR OF "MUSIC NOTATION AND TERMINOLOGY,"

"FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC,"

"HANDBOOK OF MUSICAL TERMS," ETC.

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**ROBERT C. BEDFORD**

*for many years*

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**TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE**

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## PREFACE

IN putting out this little book, the author is well aware of the fact that many musicians feel that conductors, like poets and teachers, are "born and not made"; but his experience in training supervisors of music has led him to feel that, although only the elementary phases of conducting can be taught, such instruction is nevertheless quite worth while, and is often surprisingly effective in its results. He has also come to believe that even the musical genius may profit by the experience of others and may thus be enabled to do effective work as a conductor more quickly than if he relied wholly upon his native ability.

The book is of course planned especially with the amateur in view, and the author, in writing it, has had in mind his own fruitless search for information upon the subject of conducting when he was just beginning his career as a teacher; and he has tried to say to the amateur of today those things that he himself so sorely needed to know at that time, and had to find out by blundering experience.

It should perhaps be stated that although the writer has himself had considerable experience in conducting, the material here presented is rather the result of observing and analyzing the work of others than an account of his own methods. In preparation for his task, the author has observed many of the better-known conductors in this country, both in rehearsal and in public performance, during a period of some twelve years, and the book represents an attempt to put into simple language and practical form the ideas gathered from

this observation. It is hoped that as a result of reading these pages the amateur may not only have become more fully informed concerning those practical phases of conducting about which he has probably been seeking light, but may be inspired to further reading and additional music study in preparation for the larger aspects of the work.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the material assistance rendered him by Professor John Ross Frampton, of the Iowa State Teachers College, and Professor Osbourne McConathy, of Northwestern University, both of whom have read the book in manuscript and have given invaluable suggestions. He wishes also to acknowledge his very large debt to Professor George Dickinson, of Vassar College, who has read the material both in manuscript and in proof, and to whose pointed comments and criticisms many improvements both in material and in arrangement are due.

K. W. G.

OBERLIN, OHIO

*June, 1918*

# *Essentials in Conducting*

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**DEFINITION** The word "conducting" as used in a musical sense now ordinarily refers to the activities of an orchestra or chorus leader who stands before a group of performers and gives his entire time and effort to directing their playing or singing, to the end that a musically effective ensemble performance may result.

This is accomplished by means of certain conventional movements of a slender stick called a *baton* (usually held in the right hand), as well as through such changes of facial expression, bodily posture, *et cetera*, as will convey to the singers or players the conductor's wishes concerning the rendition of the music.

Conducting in this sense involves the responsibility of having the music performed at the correct tempo, with appropriate dynamic effects, with precise attacks and releases, and in a fitting spirit. This in turn implies that many details have been worked out in rehearsal, these including such items as making certain that all performers sing or play the correct tones in the correct rhythm; insisting upon accurate pronunciation and skilful enunciation of the words in vocal music; indicating logical and musical phrasing; correcting mistakes in breathing or bowing; and, in general, stimulating orchestra or chorus to produce a tasteful rendition