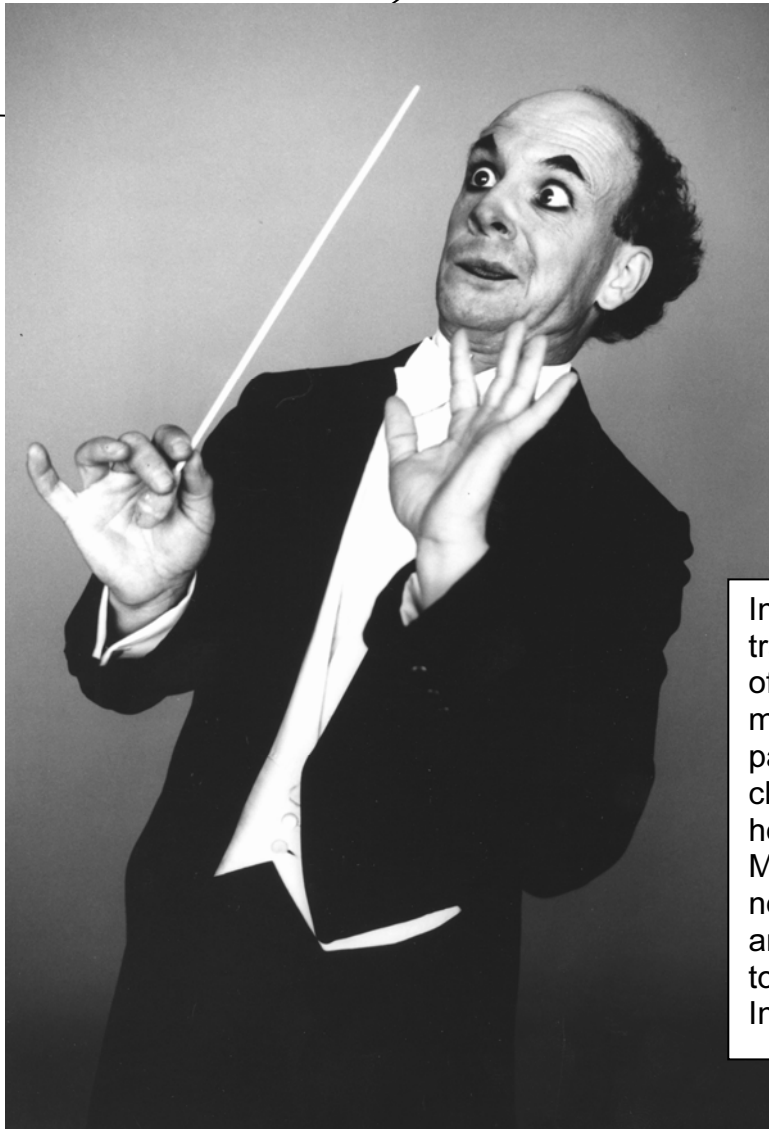




The Smithsonian Associates

Discovery Theater

presents



The Mad Maestro *Mark Jaster*

Inspired by the clown, mime, and foolery traditions of many cultures, Mark Jaster's offbeat blend of humor, movement, live music, sly surprises, and audience participation has delighted adults and children around the world. Jaster, who honed his craft under master teachers Marcel Marceau and Etienne Decroux, now teaches others through workshops and residencies. In 2004, he was chosen to represent the U.S. at the Philadelphia International Children's Festival.

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Guenter and Siewchen Yong Sommer

*Discovery Theater Artistic Director: Roberta Gasbarre
Handout Text & Layout: Anne Stewart O'Donnell*

(202) 357-1500 • disc-th@tsa.si.edu • www.DiscoveryTheater.org

What is a Conductor?

A conductor is a very special kind of musician. He doesn't play an instrument himself—instead, he keeps a large group of other musicians **playing together**. It's the conductor who decides how fast or slow the music should go, and who should play loud or soft, and when. Because the conductor is in charge, he is often given the title of **maestro**—Italian for “master” of the orchestra.



It's up to the conductor to shape the “feeling” of a piece of music. The most basic part of this job is to show the other players what the **beat** should be. Many modern conductors use a white stick, or **baton**, to beat time. Others simply use their hands. Hundreds of years ago, in France, conductors used a long pole, banging the end on the ground to indicate the beat. One early conductor held rolled-up pieces of paper, one in each hand, and waved them to lead his musicians.

Questions: Why do you think many conductors use some object to beat time? What do you see in the room right now that YOU could use to lead an orchestra?

Try this: Body Language

A conductor **can't shout out instructions** in the middle of a piece of music. Instead, without speaking a word, he uses his whole body to show the orchestra how they should play. **Big movements** of the baton say, “Play loud!” **Small movements** say, “Shhh, quietly!” The way the conductor stands or sways, and even the expressions on his face, tell the musicians what emotion to put into the music.

Mark Jaster is a **mime**—a performer who **tells stories without speaking**. Like a conductor, he uses **his movements, his face, and his eyes** to communicate.

Now, you be the maestro. Play a recording of a favorite piece of orchestral music. Pretend you have the musicians right there in front of you—and that they won't know how to play unless you show them. Put your body whole body into it—not just your arms! (**Question:** How is a conductor different from a dancer, who also moves to the music?)

Mime It! Tell your friends what you did today—**without speaking!** Use your face, the way you move, your posture. Show them not only what you did, but also **how you felt** about it!

More Musical Madness

♪ **Arturo's Baton**, by Syd Hoff. “Without my little stick,” says the famous conductor, “I could never conduct.” But one morning, the baton is gone! A tale about finding self-confidence for ages 4-8.

♪ **A Very Young Musician**, by Jill Krementz. This photo-essay explores the musical world as 10-year-old trumpeter Josh Broder goes to Interlochen music camp and meets his hero, Wynton Marsalis. Ages 8-12.

♪ **www.nyphilkids.org**. The official kid's site of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra includes a composer's gallery, “lab” for making your own instruments, puzzles, quizzes, & games, “meet the musicians,” and more.

♪ **The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra**, by Benjamin Britten. Available in many recordings, this catchy classical piece features all the instruments, playing one at a time and in sections.