

5 Tips for a successful *Conduct Us* activity



Who hasn't waved their arms dramatically to a symphony playing on the radio? *Conduct Us* is a simple and effective engagement activity for choirs, orchestras, symphonies and bands that allows the public to bring this fantasy to life! During a *Conduct Us* activity, the public is invited to pick up a baton for a once-in-a-lifetime chance to lead a live ensemble.

Take a look at the following 5 tips to ensure that both your musicians and public participants get the most out of this unique opportunity!

1. Select your music wisely

Consider choosing a selection from a recent recording or from your fall season of concerts to promote ticket sales.

Think carefully about the piece that you choose to perform, since your musicians will have to perform it under different circumstances than they normally do! Ask yourself – is your music:

- **Something your musicians can sing/play at a drastically slower or faster tempo?** You never know how fast or slow your guest conductors will go!
- **Something with lots of tricky conducting bits?** Pieces with drastic tempo changes, time changes, or full-bar rests are not advisable as they might confuse your guest conductors.
- **Something that your musicians know well?** They will have to watch the guest conductors frequently, so make sure they can look up from their music!
- **Something that will be well-known to the audience?** Both guest conductors and crowds will get excited when they hear a familiar piece of music.

2. Prepare your musicians

Make sure that your musicians are all set for this fun and participatory activity:

- **Practice beforehand being led by someone who *isn't* a conductor.** Give your musicians a chance to get used to following a conductor who doesn't keep to traditional form and isn't familiar with the music.
- **Encourage musicians to really pay attention to the conductor's gestures.** Exaggerate the dynamics, as this will effectively communicate how a conductor has great power over how the music sounds.
- **Designate a musician who can act as an ensemble leader.** If the conductor is really difficult to follow, it is good to have someone in the ensemble that all the other musicians can look to for interpretation of the conductor's tempo and dynamics.

3. Pick a good location and time

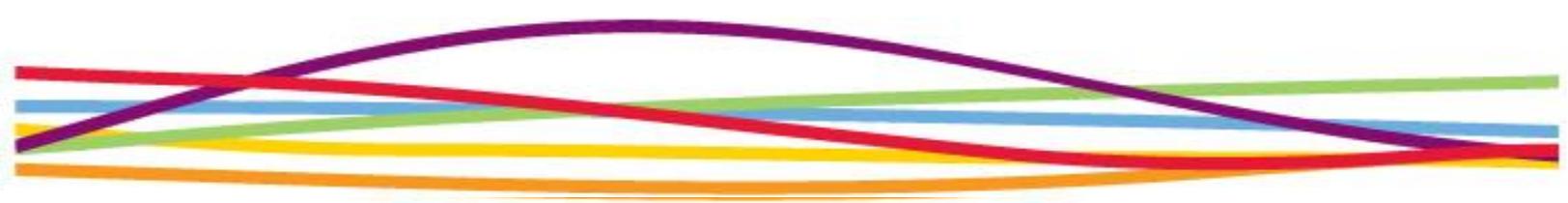
You will want to stage your *Conduct Us* activity in a public, accessible space with a lot of foot traffic. Consider the following when choosing a location and time:

- **Go to where the people are!** Take your ensemble to public places like libraries, farmer's markets, community centres, and malls to find an audience that is already assembled.
- **Indoors or Outdoors?** While an outdoor location might attract many passers-by, have a plan if it rains – musicians don't like to play or sing while wet or cold!
- **Choose a time when people are out and about.** Maximize your chances of engaging the public.

4. Be part of a hub location

Conduct Us works well when combined with other Culture Days activities. Create or join an activity hub in your community to:

- **Capitalize on an existing audience.** Join your community's Culture Days hub to reach out to a wider audience. People are drawn to hubs where they can sample multiple different activities.
- **Cross-promote your collective activities for greater impact.** Register all of the activities in your hub on the Culture Days website with a common identifier i.e., Downtown Hub: *Conduct Us*, Downtown Hub: Origami Workshop. Use the Sun Life Bright Spots scheduler online tool to create a customized brochure for the activities in your hub.



- **Partner with other *Conduct Us* activities in your area.** Use the same location and rotate ensembles on a half-hour schedule.

5. Think about your activity set-up

To make sure your *Conduct Us* activity runs smoothly, remember the following:

- **Set up a conductor's podium.** Provide a music stand for the guest conductors and place the Culture Days [Conduct Us](#) sign on it. Sometimes the sign is all you need for people to step up to the challenge.
- **Have a baton ready.** People love to tap it, and having a tool in their hand might make them feel more comfortable – attach it to the podium to make sure no one walks away with it!
- **Think about how you want to organize participants.** Do you want it to be an impromptu activity where people just walk up, or does it make more sense to have a queue or sign-up sheet?
- **Pair *Conduct Us* with another participatory activity.** After *Conduct Us* segue into another musical activity like an instrument petting zoo, or lead the crowd in some vocal warm-ups and get them to sing along with your choir. There are lots of ways to engage the crowd who has assembled for *Conduct Us*!

[Conduct Us](#) is the brainchild of Improv Everywhere, a New York City-based collective that causes scenes of chaos and joy in public places. Created in August of 2001 by Charlie Todd, [Improv Everywhere](#) has executed over 100 missions involving tens of thousands of participants.

Conduct Us was the signature 5th anniversary event for Ontario Culture Days in 2014, during which 17 *Conduct Us* events were presented across the province.

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