

# Conduct Your Life with a Healthy Heart



## *What Do Autumn Leaves, 60s Bra Burners, and Orchestra Conductors Have in Common? Read On!*



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Another autumn has made it to our doorstep, and with it clearer skies, and all the wonders of a changing season, along with its chores, and pumpkin everything! As we harvest our end-of-summer bounty, we ready our gardens for a long winter's rest. These chores, like raking leaves, stacking firewood, and cleaning out the garden, are very healthy for your heart. Since everyone can benefit from a healthy heart, especially into our later years, I decided to look into it.

Simply put, here's how it works: Our cells collectively make up organs; each organ has a meridian (energy pathway) that flows through it. Movement creates that energy and the heart meridian moves through the arms. So, moving the arms produces an energized and healthy heart—think swimming, dancing, power walking, sweeping, and Chi Gong. You get the idea.

Several years ago, a report came out that orchestra conductors live long, healthy lives, well into their eighties and nineties. Their longevity was attributed to constant exposure to classical music and the movement of their arms while conducting. To conduct an orchestra, they keep their arms up, extended, and in constant motion. These conditions place an additional load on the heart muscle. Due to the smaller blood vessels in the arms, even under normal circumstances, the heart must work 2½ to 3 times harder to pump blood through the arms than through the legs.

Additionally, with arms elevated and muscles requiring more oxygen, the heart must pump harder to push the oxygenated blood uphill as the veins drain extra blood down to the heart. We know from other studies that to strengthen the heart muscle, you have to increase your pulse rate at least 20 beats per minute over your resting pulse rate. Conducting an orchestra can raise the pulse rate to over 100 beats a minute, which makes it an excellent exercise for strengthening the heart. Certainly, conductors'

passion for, exposure to, and love of music play a role, but exercise so specific to the heart muscle is key to their longevity.

By conducting music at home, you too can enjoy the same benefits. It's easy—grab a stick or wand, play some classical music, and get started! Practically anyone can do this, regardless of the current condition of their health. Start slowly, then gradually work up to 3 to 4 30-minute sessions a week. You'll see that just being able to hold your arms up and out for that long is a great upper-body exercise. And when you combine it with a lower-body exercise, such as walking, you will get a simple, fun, and balanced workout.

Most people are surprised to learn that wearing a bra can have a negative effect on the upper body and its health.

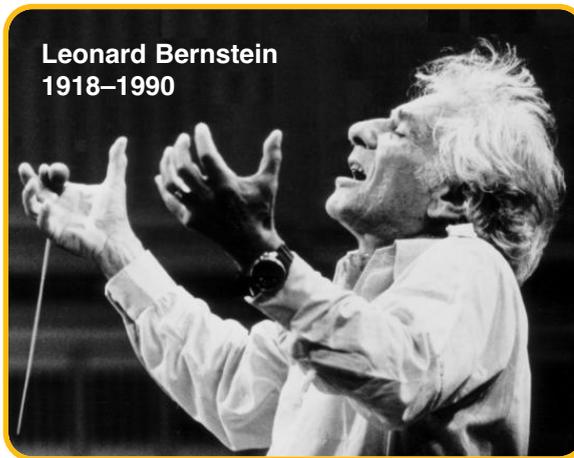
It cuts off circulation, lymph flow, energy, oxygen, and nutrients to the chest. If you wear a bra 12–14 hours a day, it tends to increase the hormone prolactin, which decreases circulation to the breast tissue and impedes your body's natural removal of toxic fluids that can become trapped in the breast's sack-like lymph nodes. These glands make up the largest mass of lymph

nodes in the upper body's lymphatic system.

The connection between bras and the development of breast cancer was reinforced in the study conducted on the Fiji Island. In 1997, medical anthropologist Sidney Singer compared the incidence of breast cancer in Fiji. Half of the women wore bras and the other half went without. The diet, environment and lifestyles of both groups were the same. Singer discovered that those who wore bras had the same rate of breast cancer as American women. Those who went braless experienced practically no breast cancer whatsoever.

So, women, get those arms moving! Remove your bra, at least during sleep. A gentle massage in the armpit areas to enhance lymphatic drainage will certainly help. Dry skin brushing is also an excellent approach.

To summarize, enjoy autumn's bountiful harvest and chores, move those arms, remove the bra whenever you can, and conduct your life with a healthy heart. ■



Leonard Bernstein  
1918–1990