CONDUCTING.

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Chapter One: Background studies.

Conducting is a post-graduate activity. Indeed, it is difficult to see how a performance art that directs tempi, dynamics and phrasing without making a sound could be anything else. For one person to tell a hundred trained musicians how to play a Brahms symphony they've already performed a hundred times before would seem an act of bravado bordering on folly.

It is for this reason that the conductor should be as well-educated a musician as the rest of the orchestra, gifted with considerable powers of leadership and proficient in at least one instrument.

Which one?

As the ambition to conduct usually comes towards the end of student life when a musician is already committed to his or her main instrument, forecasting which one might further that ambition is like prescribing for an illness that hasn't yet happened.

In the past, conductors have been mainly pianists or organists and there is little doubt that the ability to sight-read full scores at the instrument and to be an accomplished accompanist should put one on a fast-track to becoming an opera conductor.

On the other hand, a string player would grow up understanding the subtleties of the largest group of players in the orchestra and would learn the repertoire through actually playing it. So would a wind player, of course, and they might find they have time to practise seriously a second instrument. The piano, perhaps?

In a game of pros and cons, however, let us not lose sight of the most important aadvantage of all - to be a natural, born musician.

What other abilities should a conductor acquire?

1. The ability to transpose from Bb, A, F,D and Eb, and read the four 'C' clefs.
2. To learn the characteristics of all the orchestral instruments - compass, strong & weak registers and the technical problems specific to each.
3. To become familiar with a large section of the symphonic repertoire - perhaps several hundred works - an exercise that never stops!
4. To learn how to rehearse convincingly and to develop a good ear for pitch and intonation, timbre and balance.
5. Finally, to have talent!

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NOW GO OVER TO THE VIDEO TO LEARN THE INTERNATIONALLY-ACCEPTED SYSTEM OF BEATING TIME AND TO UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE BEHIND THE BEATS.

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Chapter Two: Conducting the music.

Imagine a situation where you have given the up-beat, the orchestra has started and you now vacate the rostrum to listen to the sound from the body of the hall. Does the orchestra stop or collapse? Not in the least - it carries on playing quite as well as before, if not better because everyone is now listening harder to

each other.

This sobering thought strikes you as you make your way back to the rostrum. Surely there must be other contributions you can offer over and above beating time, which the orchestra doesn't seem to need anyway?

Indeed there are, and one of them may be called 'conducting the music'.

As a simple example, look at Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, first movement, between bars 164 & 184.

To conduct this as a normal three-four, with the natural stress on each first beat, would be to contradict Beethoven's sforzandi which so relentlessly pound away at every second beat. Surely our job must be to re-inforce these by conducting them: 'one TWO three, one TWO three'?

There is a similar passage in the first movement of Brahms' Second Symphony, bars 136 to 152, where again the violins and the celli and basses both demand to be phrased from the second beat, while the clarinets, horns and violas need a strong first beat on which to rest their syncopations. Here, you may decide to emphasize the second beat phrasing with your right hand while your left gives a strong first beat for the syncopations. Alternatively, you may decide that the syncopations can look after themselves and concentrate on the violins and basses. .

In both these examples the meaning is clear and obvious. When it is less so, it is the conductor's job to reveal the phrasing he thinks the composer wants and to find the best way to indicate it.

If orchestras wish to say something nice about a conductor, they may say 'He has a clear beat', or ' He makes music', but rarely both. Nevertheless 'both' should be his aim - to achieve the second without sacrificing the first.

A conductor who concentrates on the beats in a bar can actually obscure the music by over-riding those elements that make it what it is. Nor is it enough merely to <u>reflect</u> them - they must be <u>guided</u> in order to make their full effect. Without that guidance, even an experienced orchestra may well give them only token significance - it is this mutual recognition by conductor and orchestra as to what is needed that makes the music live.

Another of the means by which a conductor can achieve this is close to the heart of all music-making....

Chapter Three: Sub-divisions.

Turn to the slow movement of Beethoven's 6th Symphony (The Pastorale). Although this is in twelve-eight, it will only flow limpidly when it is conducted in 4. (I have played it when conducted in 12 and can vouch for the fact that it sounds unbearably heavy and 'plodding'.) On the other hand, the twelve-eight introduction to Stravinsky's 'Firebird' Suite <u>needs</u> 12 firm beats to a bar in order to maintain the sinister tension, and indeed the ensemble.

Both these ways of treating twelve-eight are clearly indicated by the composer's metronome-marks (Beethoven's is Dotted-crotchet = 50, and Stravinsky's is Quaver = 108) but this will not always be the case. Often, the MM or tempo indications give little indication whether one should sub-divide or not and only the music itself -

its style, content and density - will suggest the appropriate solution.

Nowadays, there is a tendency to conduct in larger rather than smaller units (ie. in 3 rather than 6, 2 rather than 4 etc.) In the past, this might have led to uncertain ensemble, but standards are higher today and the more natural flow of the music when it is allowed to 'breathe' more than compensates.

An excellent piece with which to study sub-divisions is Debussy's 'L'apres midi d'un faun', for in order to achieve clarity and yet allow the music flexibility, one needs quite a lot of them:

At the beginning, raise your hands merely to let the audience know that the piece is starting (!) and thereafter until bar 4 do no more than gently 'place' each dotted crotchet beat, following the solo flute. From there, and throughout this work, the main beats should be 'placed' with great clarity whilst the quavers, when needed, can be marked with the tiniest of sub-divisions from the wrist - perhaps as little as an inch each.

You may well feel the need to move forward slightly five bars before Fig.2, in which case you will go into three there, returning to the quaver beat for the 'retenu' just before Fig.2 itself. The quaver beat should now stay for some while, until you return to three for the 'En animant' at Fig 4. The music then stays in three for some while, although you may feel the need to go into six 4 bars before Fig. 6 and again 6 bars before Fig 8.

Debussy's 'Mouvement du debut' is in four, and confusingly, 'Un peu plus anime' is in eight (Debussy here means the beat is faster!) Those two tempi are then repeated (Fig 9 back to four and

five bars later in eight.)

You will probably want to be in twelve at Fig.10 and again two bars after Fig.12 although Fig 12 itself is in four(!), as are the last three bars.

By sub-dividions such as this, you have been conducting the music of 'L'apres', guiding it rather than merely following it.

Your own decisions may well be different from mine, but I hope that the problems have been exposed.

Here are some others for you to think about, not all of them sub-divisions:

'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik'. (1st mov.) In two or four?

'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik'. (2nd mov.) Beat a whole bar or not?

Symphony 5 Beethoven. (1st mov.) A separate beat for bar 4 or not?

Overture 'Zauberflote'. Introduction in four or eight?

Overture 'Zauberflote'. Allegro in two or four?

Symphony 4 Brahms (1st mov). Beat whole bar or not?

Symphony 9 Schubert (1st mov).Introduction in two or four?

Symphony 3 Beethoven (1st mov). Beat three in first 2 bars or not?

Symphony 97 Haydn(1st mov). Introduction in three or six?

'Pictures' Moussorgsky/Ravel. 'Great Gate' (Fig 115.) In three or one?

Overture 'Egmont'.Beethoven. (Allegro) In three or one?

'Siegfried Idyll' Wagner. (Fig 11) In three or one?

St Anthony Variations Brahms. (Var 8) In three 3 or one?

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Remember that not to sub-divide can ruin a technically difficult passage as surely as unnecessary sub-divisions can spoil a long cantabile melody. Before making decisions, therefore, look

carefully at the whole movement and try to avoid too much dodging about from one to the other. There is another solution on the video which I call 'The Half-way House.'

Chapter Four: Dangerous Corners

Every instrument has its well-known trouble-spots, reprinted in every orchestral study manual - moments when you have to take your life in your hands.

Here, then, are some for conductors!

Perhaps the best-known is the opening of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. Here, the up-beat is crucial and,for once, it should not be in tempo(!)

Instead, it should be slow and full of tension, as if you were lifting a ton weight. When you have screwed it up, unleash it like a whip-lash onto the quaver rest and you are immediately 'in tempo'. It is from the space between bars 1 and 2 that the orchestra will take your tempo, so give your beat plenty of forward momentum.

Once you are on the pause, you must wait long enough for the strings to change their bows so that they can get back to the heel for the second group of quavers. Here, the third down beat must have the same force as the first, so allow your hand to drift upwards during the first pause so that no further up-beat is necessary before you whip the beat down again. (Remember to 'mark' the extra bar before the second pause.)

Personally, I make no 'cut-off' after the first pause, but I do after the second so that the 'piano' entry of the second violins can be clearly heard. Make the cut-off after the second pause quite

big so that you end up 'high' in order that your 'piano' down-beat for the second violins will be clear.

An opening with a similar problem to Beethoven's 5th is Strauss's 'Don Juan'. Again we need an up-beat of great intensity yet not 'in tempo', and like the Beethoven, with no suggestion of a 'click' on which an inexperienced player might be tempted to play.

The knocks on the door of the temple that open Mozart's 'Zauberflote' Overture are not easy, although I recall Dr Klemperer making them seem so at Covent Garden. They should be pesante but not forceful, and please note that the pauses are on the rests, not on the notes, and that this introduction is in four and not eight.

Having taken off the first chord on the third beat, wait for the pause and then raise your hands for the upbeat to the next bar. On the way down, indicate the semi-quaver up-beat with a 'stop' beat. This is a sort of 'double-down' beat, and its essence is that it has no rebound as most beats do, the hand continuing on its way once it has marked the semi-quaver.

(Incidentally, this beat can best be made clear by imagining it in the 'Blue Danube' Waltz: '123. 1 stop-1 stop-1 stop-123. 1 stop-1 stop-1 stop-123 - und so weiter'!)

It is a versastile beat and one for which you will find all sorts of uses - but beware - never allow it to rebound!

The repertoire may be said to be full of awkward passages - far too many to quote now - but here are two of the most often played:

Beethoven Symphony 8; Finale, bars 279 - 282. (Conduct it as if the pause was on the bar-line)

Brahms Symphony 1; Finale, bars 20 -30.(Be prepared to put a comma on the bar-line at the end of bar 19 for the strings to recover after the pizzicatos and then sub-divide for the

ensuing semi-quavers).

In all these 'dangerous corners', remember the safety-first maxim: as long as your hands remain absolutely still, NO-ONE will play!

Chapter Five. How good is a good ear?

There is little doubt that the more developed your ear, the better conductor you will make. All musicians take aural training classes at their conservatoire, but, important though these are, their usefulness is circumscribed because they always take place at the piano. This may matter little to those blessed (or cursed!) with perfect pitch, but for most of us, the recognition of pitch has as much to do with timbre as with the actual note.

I always had perfect pitch for the sound of my first instrument, the cello, and nearly perfect pitch for my second, the oboe. Recognising that this must have had more to do with timbre than pitch, I made up my mind to train myself at concerts by listening acutely to one instrument for a whole movement, no matter how unimportant its parts might become.

This is difficult to do for any length of time, but it is a useful way of lodging the various timbres in the memory, and it certainly improves one's ear.

The $1000 question is: How good is a conductor's ear *supposed* to be?

There is no doubt that Pierre Boulez' reputation was based largely on his immaculate ear, nor that many conductors have netaphorically fallen flat on their faces through their inability to spot a wrong note in a difficult score.

Perhaps one could say that it is essential for a conductor to pinpoint wrong notes in anything up to and including the late Romantics and hopefully further into the twentieth century. However, wrong notes are few and far between in these days of rising standards and nowadays the conductor is more usually called upon to correct doubtful intonation.

With the woodwind or brass, this may arise because the player is too near the sound or because players are loth to say anything that might imply criticism of a colleague.

'Leave it to the conductor' is at the back of most players' minds, and it is the conductor's job to make it better with the minimum of blame or fuss. If the cause is not immediately apparent, it may help to start with the extremes of compass (piccolo and bassoon) and work inwards, even though in the end, the trouble may prove to be the difference in timbre between the clarinets and oboes.

With the brass, check the first trumpet and first trombone, and suggest that they work outward to the rest of their sections. Leave the horns till last and then insert them in the middle. It is, of course, the players themselves who will be making these miniscule adjustments - the most helpful thing you can do is to start a dialogue within the sections.

The strings present a different problem. The section principal will probably be the better placed to hear what's causing trouble than the conductor - he probably knows if someone is playing the passage on a different string, or inserting an open string or a harmonic. There is a good deal to be said for giving the double-basses a separate 'A' at the beginning of the rehearsal,

for it is often difficult to hear one so low down, especially if the rest of the strings are tuning up or playing bits of the Mendelssohn(!).

Attention should also be given to making sure the timps are in tune with the basses and vice versa. In 20th century scores, keep your ears open for the xlophone and piccolo and the clarinets and vibraphone for the same reason.

Again, listen to the contra-bassoon and basses in something like the opening of Shostakovitch 10, which also has some cruelly exposed passges for the upper woodwind in the scherzo: piccolo, Eb clarinet, oboes and clarinets in unison??

Chapter Six. How long is a crotchet?

This has often been discussed and has received so many varied answers that I feel impelled to give one myself: 'A note should fill the space between it and the next note or rest.'

That seems straightforward enough, but what should one do with the first note of Beethoven's 7th Symphony, which begins with a tutti crotchet surmounted by a dot?

Throughout one's career, one will be faced with problems such as this and eventually you may well decide that every composer has his own idiosyncratic way of writing and that only by getting to know his style really well can you find any acceptable solutions.

The best I can do here is to alert you to some of the problems, give you my ideas and leave it to you to work out your own.

In the case of Beethoven's dots above the notes, I believe he means to shorten the notes, so I halve their value. To tell

a hundred players that the crotchets 'should be short' seems to me a recipe for untidyness, whereas making a short crotchet into a full-length quaver is at least clear.

The vivace of the first movement of same symphony presents a most intriguing problem of a different sort, containing as it does no less than four types of dotted rhythm: 1. With no dots surmounting the notes.2.With the semi-quaver and last quaver surmounted by a dot. 3.With a semiquaver rest in place of a rhythmic dot. 4. With a dot surmounting every note.

Frankly, it is almost impossible satisfactorily to differentiate between 2 & 4, but one can certainly differentiate between 1 & 3 and possibly 2 as well and it is essential to the impact of the movement that one does so.

After this example, is it possible to suggest that Beethoven was careless with his dots? The opening tune in the second movement of the same symphony shows how telling is the difference he makes between quavers surmounted with dots and crotchets surmounted by dots and slurs.

Brahms also uses dots and slurs together - the woodwind chords at the opening of his 4th Symphony, for instance - and nearly always these should be interpreted as lines. Another of Brahms' trade-marks is his habit of ending a slow movement with a wind chord on top and a string pizzicato on the final beat. Should the wind come off later than the string pizz or with it? Again, you must decide, and a knowledge of Brahms' habits of writing will be more help than anything else.

Schubert's over-large accents also need special attention. Almost

certainly, these are genuine accents, not diminuendi, although it is easy to confuse the two.

Often, these things are a matter of period - if one considers a Mahler Symphony with its plethora of dots, lines and accents and then a Mozart or Haydn with hardly any, one realises how easy it would be to transfer 20th century habits to 18th century scores by adding pencilled directions that achieve little more than drive the orchestra mad with added paper-work.

I remember putting a line and a dot over a note once and Gareth Morris, the distinguished flautist, saying:'Oh, you mean play it as though it had nothing over it!'

To see the effect of altering or marking up a composer's music for the sake of clarity, one need look no further than Mahler's editions of the Schumann symphonies. Everything sounds suddenly crystal-clear and transparent: melodic lines. hitherto half-hidden, emerge and subsidiary parts are drawn to our attention, yet the music has ceased to sound like Schumann!

However, there is no doubt in my mind that the length of notes is of seminal importance, particularly the final note of a phrase. All too often one hears these notes metaphorically kicked out of the way as soon as they've been played rather than being treated with the same respect that we reserve for first notes.

Chapter Seven. Is a baton really necessary?

I can only think of one answer to this question : 'Learn to conduct with a baton and you can do two things: learn to conduct without one and you can do only one!'

Although it's true that it is marginally easier to conduct without one, there are occasions when it's urgently needed - in the opera pit, for instance - and personally I see it as an essential part of a conductor's equipment. For a year, I worked without one myself in an effort to get rid of a shoulder-pain, and I found it an interesting experiment. Looking back, I think my conducting lost some of its incisiveness and yet gained little in expressive content. Thus, I was glad to get back to it and since then I have come to regard it as a friend rather than as an obstacle. In fact, nowadays I find I can use it as a geuinely expressive instrument - something I probably learnt from Barbirolli. To see him encouraging the strings to produce a fine sound through the use of his baton alone is an experience not to be forgotten.

In this connection, bear in mind that it is worth while experimenting with several types of baton before settling on one that really suits you. Don't be tempted by a short one; a long baton can be much more expressive if it is well-balanced. Nor should you despise the plastic baton - these can be as good as a wooden one if carefully balanced.

Now let us examine ways in which the baton can help reflect the music and perhaps do more than that. For instance, if one has a broad mezzo-forte string tune, the beat should become more horizontal. Indeed, you can often suggest an actual bowing or style of bowing by imitating with the stick the action of the bow-arm.

Speaking generally, the brass need a more incisive beat than the horns, and for brass sforzandi - perhaps in the slow movement of Sibelius 2nd - you should bring down the stick so hard that it

actually stops dead for a moment before moving on.

At this point, it may be worth while devoting a little time to the geography of the beats - that is, the different 'frames' in which you conduct. For the brass, horns and timps, you will need to bring the baton a little above shoulder-height, whereas for the flutes and oboes, come down to about chest level and then stay there for the strings. Whenever possible, conduct to the back of the strings, where it is more difficult to play and where the less experienced players often find themselves. When you turn to the back of the celli, however, remember that this means you are also conducting the basses(!)

With the orchestra occupying such a wide area, directional conducting is essential, but rather than moving your whole body around, a great deal can be achieved by keeping your feet still and moving only the upper part.

Chapter Eight. Observing the MM.

Every conductor should train himself to be able to reproduce a metronome-mark to within 10 fast degrees or 5 slow degrees without reference to the machine, and I know of no more pleasurable way of practising this than by playing 'The Metronome Game' with friends. Not only will you learn your MM, but you will also discover whether you are a 'fast' or 'slow conductor - in other words, if you are faced with reproducing MM 132, are you more inclined to hit 136 or 128?

Perhaps the most important MM are those that Beethoven gave his symphonies, publishing the results in the local paper. For a long while they were considered wildly inaccurate, but nowadays

conductors are more willing to take them seriously. Only eleven are uncomfortable, usually because they feel too fast, but the remainder seem quite natural to us today. Certainly one cannot afford to ignore them. I have a feeling that Beethoven often went to his second subjects when he was searching for a tempo, from which he would emerge rather more quickly than he realised.

Always be prepared to sing or play a piece at the MM specified, because even if you decide to do it differently later, you'll be able to judge how far you've gone in your decision to over-ride the original.

Of the composers who did not MM their music, there is a list headed by Brahms, Wagner, Schubert, Richard Strauss and Mahler, but oddly enough, not Tchaikovsky or Berlioz. Be particularly careful with Bartok - he not only used MM but he also timed his sections so as to take account of his ritenutos and accelerandi.

Chapter Nine. Conducting from memory.

Luckily, the old saw: 'No, I don't memorise - I can read music' is no longer able to raise a smile, but even so it seems to me that fewer people conduct from memory now than was the case fifty years ago, even though there is so much to recommend it. For one thing, it leaves your eyes free to look at the orchestra and contact is greatly improved.

However, it is important to know what we mean by 'conducting from memory'. When I was a student, a member of the conducting class refused to conduct anything until he could write out the whole score from memory. How many people can do that? He couldn't, and he ended his days as a brush salesman - perhaps a more useful profession

than music, but not one he had originally envisaged.

I memorised everthing except concerti for about fifteen years and I'm sure I conducted the better for it. For one thing, I spent twice as much time on my scores, consequently getting to know them better, and the freedom from having to turn over the pages is liberating in itself.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to pose a question: 'What is meant by memorising?' and to follow it up with another: 'When you're reading from a score, how much do you see?'

If you're reading at the speed of the music, you see what you need to see: for instance, if you're following a melodic line you see that, surrounded by the rest of the score in the periphery of your vision. That is exactly what I see if I conduct from memory. I see, in my mind's eye and also in my ear, as much of the score as I would if it was open in front of me.

This means that I find myself 'playing' the orchestra as if it was an instrument. When the first flute has a solo, I look at him and the score becomes the first flautist.

Nor is there any more hiding behind the score. You are occupied solely with the orchestra and they know that you see only them, yet with the score occupying your mind. It goes without saying, of course, that you must never make a mistake, otherwise the orchestra will never trust you again!

How does one memorise? I have been asked this often, and I fear that the answer is terribly dull: 'Learn the first 4 bars, then the second 4 bars, then the first 8 bars and so on through the piece.' I was trained to memorise by my cello professor(my uncle,

Frank Leonard) who insisted that I not only play my concerti from memory, but that I read at the same time from a book placed on my music stand: 'Just to make sure nothing can put you off'.

Chapter Ten. Re-writing the masters.

No, we never do that! The autograph score is the word of god and the best Urtext edition you can find is what we work from.

In spite of that, Weingartner edited Beethoven's brass and horn parts for valve instruments, Mahler re-scored Schumann's symphonies and Mozart rescored Handel's 'Messiah'.

We are not concerned here with arrangements like Ravel's orchestration of Moussorgsky's 'Pictures', nor with alternative endings like Bartok's 'Concerto for Orchestra' or Stravinsky's concert ending to 'Petrouchka'.

What does concern us are alterations inserted for greater effect or misprints that remain misprints because no-one is sure if they're meant or not. (For instance, bar 3 of the Minore of the slow movment of the 'Eroica' where the grace-notes differ from the beginning.) 'One plays what Beethoven wrote,' said Erich Kleiber, looking at me threateningly.

But should one?

What about bar 155 of 'Leonora' Overture where the violas and seconds are printed a bar earlier than in the corresponding passage at bar 440?

This is only one example of many where the recapitulation differs from the exposition, but are these interesting vagaries of the creative mind or typographical errors that need ironing out?

Stokowsky used pencilled slurs in Brahms 4th Symphony where he wanted the chords in one bar to die gently away under the next, and he said he got the idea from hearing Debussy playing the piano!

So many mistakes, improvements, errors of judgement. lapses of taste, musicological ineptitude - conductors bump into them all from time to time and have to come to a decision about them in the peace and quiet of their own study. NOT, however, by trying them out in rehearsal!

Chapter Eleven. Recordings?

Unless you are an ex-orchestral player who knows the 'sound' of most scores before he begins studying them, the temptation to listen to a recording is almost overwhelming. Nevertheless, I I usually find that I can tell at once if a student has prepared a score from a recording - there is something 'second-hand' about his reading that prompts me to ask 'Whose recording is that from?'

However, one must not ask every student to re-invent the wheel and recordings are there to be listened to. My advice is that first of all you should do all your hard work on the score without the benefit of a recording, so that when you do play one, you will be bringing an informed mind to bear on the subject.

One further point: the re-issues of early performances conducted either by the composers themselves, or 'within earshot' of the composer's lives, have some authority about them that can well be used as documentary evidence.

Finally, if you are conducting a new, non-tonal work there may be a great deal to be said for listening to a recording first

since there must often seem little hope that it can be 'heard' straight from the score.

Chapter Twelve. Scores and how to treat them.

Fortunate the conductor who doesn't need to mark his scores. Fortunate the Librarian who hires out material and receives them back as clean as a whistle.

If both these happy events are rare, we can at least remember a couple of Golden Rules: never mark a score with crayon or ink and be sparing with the marks you do make.

'Be mean with your marks,' as Stravinsky once said about notes, because they nearly always obey the law of diminishing returns - in other words, the more marks you make, the more you'll imagine you need them.

The ideal, of course, is to buy your own scores. This saves you so much time when next you come back to the work, even if you've changed your mind about most of it. Building up your own score library is a long and expensive business, but don't give up the idea without a struggle - Dover Edition is cheapest and best, but with the drawback that one gets three or four symphonies in one volume, which makes it difficult to use on the rostrum where one needs to be able to whip over pages with the minimum if fuss.

Otherwise, one must rely on the second-hand market for Full Scores or the larger music-shops for Miniatures. If you buy second-hand, you may find yourself working from some very strange editions in which the rehearsal figures do not relate to the parts the orchestra will be using. A call to the Librarian can

ascertain this, but if this is the case, you MUST get to your rehearsal early enough to put in all the rehearsal figures from the orchestral parts, otherwise, once the rehearsal has begun, you'll be up the creek without a paddle.

While we're on the subject of rehearsal figures and the counting of bars at rehearsal, may I insert a few words of warning? 'Ten after A' means that you are assuming the letter A to be on the bar-line and that the first bar at A counts as 'one'.

If you want to start on an up-beat. just announce 'The up-beat to A' and do NOT say' One bar before A but only play the up-beat'!

Personally, I am not a good advocate for the Clean Score Brigade because, when I'm learning a new work, I often put vertical lines to indicate sections and then rub them out as I come to a closer knowledge of the structure.

Chapter Thirteen. The importance of singing.

Never undervalue the importance of singing when learning your scores, by which I mean singing each part. It is more valuable, although also more time-consuming, than playing them on the piano because it is more immediate and personal and because you can more easily articulate slurred and detached notes.

To sing all the parts of even a Mozart Symphony will take you about a couple of hours and you will have learned more about the work than you imagined possible. Furthermore, in correcting your own mistakes, you'll be able to say, should one appear later in the orchestra: 'Ah, yes - I remember that one.'

The objection, 'I can't sing' is soon disposed of. What you are concerned with is articulation, slurs and dots, dynamics, hairpins, sforzandos and hurrying or dragging, and all these things you can learn perfectly well even with the worst voice in the world.

A reminder: when working on a concerto, always make sure that you also sing the solo part - it may have confusing melodic lines that go across the beat (Schumann Piano Concerto!)

There is one further bonus about singing - it is ideal for indicating phrasing. You can try out various versions of the same phrase better by singing than by any other means because it really is the most natural thing in the world.

Chapter Fourteen. Rehearsing.

At the outset of his career, the conductor is quite likely to find himself the least experienced and possibly the youngest person on the platform.

In a period when all the world loves a democrat, he finds himself, however unwillingly, cast in the role of a dictator.

The Russians saw this in the early years of the revolution when they founded their first conductorless orchestra. It was also their last because the idea of a hundred musicians trying to run a rehearsal with no-one to say, 'Let's go from 6 after L' was too like the recent revolution to be funny. This sort of thing may work with a chamber orchestra of 17, but there it stops.

In this situation, the player-conductor may have the advantage over the pianist-conductor in that he is only too familiar with the ambience of the rehearsal room, although one must accept that it's

not always easy to rehearse one's old colleagues.

In order to minimise the general stress-factor, I would advise the young conductor to arrive at the rehearsal before anyone except the cleaners, and occupy the rostrum. Fiddle around with the stand until it's the right height for you, put your scores on it and start work, checking up on any worrying bits and making a note of those sections that you think might need work.

As the orchestra gradually assembles, give a few nods to old friends, if you have any left, and shake hands with the leader.

If you're new to the orchestra, it's a good idea to play through something first so that you can get used to each other. I always remember my first rehearsal with the Halle when Martin Milner, the then leader, got up and said quietly to me, 'If you want us to play ON the beat, just tell us. We're so used to playing behind it for JB that we do it automatically.' That sort of help is absolutely invaluable.

There are so many different sorts of rehearsal, from the half-an-hour's 'touch-up' before the show, to the German Haupt-probe when you are allowed to rehearse with no official time-limit.

Very often, especially in Britain, it is felt that the last rehearsal is hardly more than a run-through, perhaps even omitting the more straightforward sections; but be careful, if the rehearsals have been in another place, to allow time to get used to the acoustic of the concert-hall.

Always check details with the management when conducting an orchestra for the first time - ask how long the rehearsals are, if they are in a different hall from the concert-hall and when

you could get into the concert-hall, when the soloist is arriving and even how long the breaks last.

You would be strongly advised, as a guest-conductor, never to change an orchestra's seating arrangements - no orchestra in the world can adapt immediately to changes of that sort.

When you need to talk in rehearsal try to use idiosyncratic language - an imaginative phrase has more impact than a dull one and if you have a sense of humour, don't be afraid to use it. Enjoyable rehearsals are twice as useful as dull ones.

Make everything you say sound important so that you keep the orchestra listening to you rather than discussing what colour they're going to paint the bathroom.

Keep the pace of the rehearsal going - if you work on something with the strings, switch over to the woodwind or brass next so that the ball is kept rolling. Don't give too many explanations. Usually the orchestra knows what's wrong as well as you do and understands what you're trying to do without your spelling it out.

Discussions about solos are best dealt by a quiet word with the player concerned, but when you rehearse the strings, rehearse the whole section - you are not allowed to isolate one or two players.

When you've rehearsed a passage, get it right, not nearly right, and then leave it alone. If it's still wrong when next it comes round, don't flog a dead horse. Think about it and then discuss it with the section principal.

If the sound of the orchestra is not the sound that you had in your head you will need to act fast - decide why, what would make it better, how to express this in words and finally how best to rehearse it

This may sound simplistic, but when it's a matter of putting your thoughts into the language of hairpins, accents and length of notes it's not always easy to decide what will work when you're on the spot. The answer, of course, is to give the piece more work at home so that you can second-guess what might go wrong and have the solution ready.

During this homework, string bowings must occupy an important place. If the work is standard repertoire, like a Beethoven symphony, the orchestra will have their own parts already bowed and it would be dangerous to change them too much. If you are doing a little-known Haydn or Mozart, however, you should either bow the parts yourself or enlist the help of your concert-master. Before bowing them, however, put in any dots, lines and hairpins that you need because your bowings will have to reflect these.

There is nothing more exhilarating than a good rehearsal and nothing more depressing than one that is going badly. If you are unfortunate enough to hit a bad patch, remember that the most important thing is to keep your contact with the orchestra. Relax for a moment and change your posture or perhaps sit down on a rehearsal chair for a while so that you change your centre of gravity before continuing.

It is most important for the inexperienced cvonductor to attend other conductor's rehearsals if you can, not only the final rehearsal, but some of the earlier ones. It would be necessary to approach the management for permission to do this.

The art of rehearsing is very different from that of concertising. In rehearsal you must distance yourself from the

impact of the music so that you can listen analytically; when you conduct the concert you should feel that you are embarking on a voyage of discovery, and, whilst not contradicting those things you've rehearsed, try to achieve a freshness of approach.

Finally, a word about sectional rehearsals: only certain types of work really benefit from these but they can have a further bonus, offering the chance for the members of the section to discuss problems that they would hesitate to raise except within the confines of their own group.

When conducting woodwind or brass sectionals, discard the baton and sit down, so that is is made clear that this is a 'family' occasion, and indeed, it is an admirable opportunity to get to know your players better. With string sectionals, one is better using the rostrum and a baton because of numbers. This is your opportunity to discover more about the section - how pianissimo they can play, how light a spiccato they can produce, how pesante a forte. For some pieces you might even seek the concert-master's advice about the possibility of having a string quintet rehearsal first.

Chapter Fifteen. The Music Director

Comparing a guest-conductor with a Music Director is like comparing an affaire with a marriage. As a Music Director, you will have two persona to develop - your relationship with the orchestra is still the most important, but there will now be your relationship with the Board. As both the orchestra and the Board will have been responsible for your appointment, you will start off as everyone's favourite and it will be your job to keep

it that way, not by becoming too familiar with either, but by building up a reputation for fairness with both.

If you are unfortunate enough to have to dimiss a member of the orchestra, make sure that the panel of judges contains a preponderance of orchestral members, with oerhaps, one member of of the Board and yourself. Often, this will be laid down in Union Rules, but the conductor's position is so crucial in such situations that some prefer not to have this responsibility and actually have it written out of their contracts.

Also in rehearsal, your job will differ from the guest-conductor. You will get to know your players intimately as musicians and I fear they will get to know you equally well!

Remember that no conductor is good at everything. Sooner or later in your career you will have to decide the sort of music you are best at, and when you are offered something about which you feel doubtful, have the strength of mind to turn it down.

Chapter Sixteen. Concerto & Theatre work.

When you are starting on your career, this could be the most important part of your work. Usually one's soloist is already a well-established name and if you do a superb job as an accompanist and give the work sufficient rehearsal time, they will go away singing your praises in whichever international venue they next find themselves.

Perhaps the most important aspect of concerto work is to develop a marked difference in style between solo and tutti. Just as the orchestra must retreat to a neat, well-balanced accompanying

style, so it must seize the initiative in the tuttis and literally 'take over' from the soloist. This is sometimes not easy because the orchestra, having been playing 'piano' for the last 64 bars may find it requires a great deal of effort to become suddenly assertive. When there is a solo part with no accompaniment at all, don't forget to put down gentle 'marker' down-beats for each bar that passes unless you announce in good time that the next down-beat will be for the following tutti.

One should always ask for a short rehearsal with your soloist alone even if you to do no more than listen and mark up any problem sections.

For works where you must do a great deal of tricky following, my advice is to allow the beats to 'float' upwards while you wait for the moment when you can flick one down on the following beat. This enables you to accomodate as many complications as the soloist cares to give you and the same primcipal can be adopted for tutti entries after an extended run.

When accompanying the voice, give a somewhat firmer beat than you would for an instrumentalist, for the voice needs the feel of a solid tempo on which it can sit.

Try to make sure that you and the soloist have comfortable positions where you can see both each other and the front desk of the first violins as well. This is not always easy with piano concerti because you must stand 'inside' the piano which means that the first violins and celli are liable to be somewhere behind you.

You will have to learn an entirely different type of conducting if you have to 'conduct' during operatic piano\production

rehearsals. Here, your job will be to help the cast feel musically secure while they're trying to remember their moves and, in many cases, their words and music as well.

At this stage, your job will be to *speak* the first few words of each character's next entry just before they are due to sing it. This will not only remind them of the words but also, oddly enough, of the music. You should then hold your hand up like a traffic policeman until you indicate the actual cue with a tiny 'point'. For this sort of work, it is a help to learn the work from memory because of the difficulty of carrying a vocal score around with you while you are giving cues. Try to have a rehearsal with the repitateur pianist before work starts, otherwise you will have to adopt his tempi later on or upset the cast by changing half of them.

Although this is not 'conducting', it is a very special and intriguing art and one about which there is a great deal to learn.

When you and the cast arrive at the orchestral rehearsals, make absolutely sure that your tempi are no different from those you have already rehearsed with piano, otherwise chaos will result. Don't forget, either, that you will have a totally different orchestral layout when you get to the pit, so try to reproduce this at your rehearsals, if you can.

Once you begin the stage rehearsals, remember that your beat will have to be higher so that it is clearly visible from the stage and that your eyes will have to be up there as well. In the main, only occasional glances down at the orchestra will be possible.

The same is true of conducting for ballet. Here, you will be

working with dancers who have little understanding of music although they are usually entirely at its mercy. For the conductor, there are basically two
type of ballet - the 'story' ballet in which the stage follows the music and the 'follow' ballet which is exactly the opposite.

In the finest companies, individual requests for tempo changes are not encouraged unless they have gone through the Ballet Master. This is most important, otherwise a change for one person may jeopodise another, but dancers are the kindliest of people and a co-operative conductor is all they demand from life.

Chapter Seventeen. Getting started.

This is not easy. We have said that conducting nust be a post-graduate exercise, and therefore we must assume that the aspiring conductor already has student friends and colleagues. It is to them that he must now turn.

Hire a church, plan a chamber orchestral concert including one contemporary work, find a cheap printer and begin licking stamps.

Then, already committed to the concert, begin persuading friends and colleagues to give you three rehearsals and a concert for nothing.

This can be done.

It will not be the first time that your F&Cs have been asked to give their services and if they like you and think you may be good, they'll agree. Of course, the first orchestra you book will bear little resemblance to the one that finally gives the concert, because

little resemblance to the one that finally gives the concert, because this player and that will gradually fill up their diary with paid engagements, but eventually your orchestra of substitutes will get through it and might actually sound quite good.

The composer of the contemporary work and your soloist will bring in their coterie of friends for an audience and with your parents and brothers and sisters and boy and girl friends, the audience will be reasonable and thus, too, will be the amount of money you lose.

Repeat this procedure about fifteen times over the next two years and you will have enough minor press reviews to enable your CV to be acceptable to the numerous competitions and\or master-classes for which you must now apply.

Memorise your scores and be talented and already you will be taken seriously as a contender for the ranks of conductors looking for work, which is better than being a contender for the ranks of people who would like to conduct but haven't got started yet.

There are doubtless easier ways of achieving these results, but, short of winning the lottery, I don't know what they are.

The time has now come when you can begin writing to the Eastern Bloc countries or indeed, any country with non-negotiable currency, for a guest appearance. Although this will not be easy, persistence should win through. If you can also achieve an agent, the task will be made easier and word may even begin to get around that you have talent.

From this time on, your job will be to avoid the many pit-falls that can open up across your path. Most of these have already been

exposed earlier in this short book, but reading about them and meeting them head-on are two different things.

Your strength will come from belonging to a profession that is surely one of the most big-hearted in the world - a brotherhood whose members know that, whatever their differences, they share more common ground with each other than they do with anyone else.

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