

**CONDUCTING THROUGH THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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16 May 2018

In contemporary popular culture, the role of the orchestral conductor is nothing short of an enigma. Popularized of late are productions like Amazon's series *Mozart in the Jungle* with the obviously Gustavo Dudamel-inspired conductor portrayed by actor Gael García Bernal, and there are not one but two upcoming films about the life and career of the storied American conductor Leonard Bernstein. Bernstein, to be portrayed by A-listers Bradley Cooper in one film and Jake Gyllenhaall in the other, would undoubtedly relish this latest renaissance as the centenary of his birth approaches in August. Yet, despite these and many other portrayals of my profession, the role of the orchestral conductor remains something of a mystery to most. And, regrettably, even those in my own position, nearing the end of decades of academic study in my field, are woefully ill-informed about the origins and evolution of our profession. As such, this research paper is far from merely an intellectual exercise nor academic curiosity, but rather endeavors to illustrate meaningful insights for the contemporary understanding and performance of countless orchestral and operatic works, particularly that of the mid-late nineteenth century. For decades now we have seen a profusion of interest and study into performance practice of prior eras, particularly that of the late-Renaissance through to the beginnings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, only very recently has there begun to be serious, thorough, and sustained interest by music researchers and performers into performance practice of the nineteenth century. There is a great deal that we as performers take for granted about how, for example, Brahms' symphonies were performed in his own time. This research paper is an effort to help close this gap in knowledge and awareness. Over the forthcoming pages will be summarized (briefly, and from multiple well-documented sources) the origins of the conductor's role in the ancient past through to the emergence of the modern conception of the *orchestral conductor* as it first appeared in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then will be documented the writings and opinions of the most prominent

conductors of the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century including those of Hector Berlioz, Felix Mendelssohn, and Richard Wagner. This study into the establishment of the orchestral conductor's role will be brought to a close by highlighting the generation of conductors that directly followed Richard Wagner – the very first who made a profession solely as orchestral conductors (as opposed to composer-conductors like Berlioz, Mendelssohn, and Wagner). Lastly, I will attempt to demonstrate how this line of research is made all the more relevant by bringing it to bear on a standard work of the era, in this case Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Op. 125, detailing how conductors of the era approached and interpreted the work.

### **Cheironomy in the Ancient World**

The term *cheironomy* refers to the practice of using hand symbols to guide and direct musical performance. Music direction of this kind is hardly a recent innovation in the history of man. Indeed, very compelling evidence of the use of cheironomy dates to the ancient Egyptians of 2700 B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> As practiced, cheironomy was a “substitute for notation”, and the leader/cantor would use a system of hand symbols to guide musicians in performance. So too is there evidence of cheironomy in ancient Greece. Musicologist Edith Gerson-Kiwi, in her description of cheironomy in the New Grove Dictionary of Music makes lengthy reference to an account from a priest named Jacobus Goar (1601-1653) who was a scholar of Greek religious ritual and had described musical direction in a manner not at all dissimilar to choral conductors of our own time<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott W. Galkin. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. (Pendragon Press, 1988) 240-243

The *Domestikos*, who could be seen by all, directed the singers with the movements of his right hand and with certain gestures: raising, lowering, extending, contracting, or putting together his fingers, and instead of the musical signs he formed the various melodic groups and the inflections of the voice in the air. And everyone watched the leader of the choir attentively and followed, as one might say, the structure of the whole composition.

This final sentence in particular is noteworthy as it describes, in essence, precisely the primary function of the modern day conductor: to provide for a performance which conveys a cohesive and persuasive conception of a musical work as a whole. In this we have empirical evidence that music as we experience it in modern Western culture is, to at least some degree, *not* a unique or recent form of human experience or expression, nor is the direction of musical performance. Further, this is not at all an isolated example of musical leadership being described in terms we would not be surprised to find in a modern conducting textbook. For example, in his text *Tractatus de musica*, the thirteenth century monk Hélie Salomonis described the role of a choral director as follows<sup>3</sup>:

...has to know everything about the music to be sung. He beats time with his hand on the book and gives the cues and tests to the singers. If one of them sings incorrectly, he whispers into his ear, 'You are too loud, too soft, your tones are wrong,' as the case may be, but so that the others do not hear it. Sometimes he must support them with his own voice if he sees that they are lost.

One could hardly describe with greater accuracy the typical actions of a modern day choral director, especially in the case of non-professional choirs. In fact, if there is any discrepancy

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 243

<sup>3</sup> H. C. Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*. (Simon and Schuster, 1968.) 25-26

here between a choral director of the thirteenth century and today, it may only be that they were far more sensitive to the individual egos of their musicians 800 years ago, for it is not at all uncommon today for a director to correct musicians in front of their colleagues.

We have described already aspects of modern musical direction which can be found analogous to practices observed in the ancient world, namely providing for proper execution of tones (intonation), accuracy/ensemble, balance (“too loud, too soft”), and even perhaps with regards to conveying a holistic conception of a given work of music. What about the beating of time? For over a century now, there has been a near unanimous consensus about the patterns orchestral directors use to *beat time*. Again, we do indeed find that this is far from unique to nineteenth and twentieth century notions of keeping time in musical performance. Schonberg makes tangential reference to the beating of time in the sixteenth century, providing evidence as follows in his *The Great Conductors* (1968), “In 1583, Vincenzo Galilei, father of the astronomer, mentions in his *Dialogo* that the ancient Greeks did not beat time ‘as is customary now’.”<sup>4</sup> However, Galkin catalogues a far more direct reference to time beating, dating back to ancient Greece of 709 B.C.E., in his *A History of Orchestral Conducting*, which states in no uncertain terms the manner in which good ensemble is managed in musical performance: “The Giver of Time beats with his staff up and down in equal movements so that all might keep together.”<sup>5</sup> This is precisely how one could describe the keeping of time by *taktschlägers* like Lully over two thousand years hence!

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27-28

<sup>5</sup> Galkin. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*, 245

## Taktschlägers

There is hardly an undergraduate student who completes their survey courses in Western music history who has not committed to memory a singular story about Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), that story of course being of his death by conducting. As the tale goes, Lully was leading a performance of his *Te Deum*, which in those days was facilitated by the beating of “une canne”, a long wooden stick.<sup>6</sup> In a moment of great fervor, Maestro Lully struck his foot. Having impaled himself, he eventually succumbed as the result of infection. Sadly, this is the sole fact most music students retain about this hugely consequential figure. However, apart from his significant contributions as a composer, we also have Lully to thank for several innovations with regards to the evolution of the orchestra.

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) is rightfully credited as the father of opera, not because he was the first to compose one – that distinction belongs to Jacopo Peri – but rather because his opera were such masterpieces. As history has shown us repeatedly, credit for invention/innovation often goes not to the person who invents first but rather he/she who invents so well that the invention need never be repeated again. We don’t know a great deal about Monteverdi as a ‘conductor’ (the term was still not yet in use), but we do know that he led an instrumental ensemble of typically between 20-30 players.<sup>7</sup> Most of the increase in numbers was due to Monteverdi’s having made string players of greater focus. It is from this innovation that we see not only the blueprint for future operas and opera orchestras, but also the eventual makeup of concert orchestras.

If Monteverdi is the father of opera, we might very well consider Lully to be the father of conducting. A taskmaster of an orchestral leader, he brought about his own innovations to the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 192

<sup>7</sup> Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 33

orchestra which have continued to today and thus, by extension, to conducting as well. Among these innovations we can include uniform bowings in string sections.<sup>8</sup> Schonberg describes Lully's influence thusly:

Lully's orchestra became the model on which the modern orchestra developed, especially the opera orchestra, with singers on the stage, the orchestra below, both led by a conductor on a podium. This we owe to Lully. Musicians from all over Europe went to Paris to study Lully's orchestral technique. They also learned from Lully what temperament could be. Lully was a Toscanini-like prima donna who would, in a fury, grab a violin from the hands of an offender and smash it to pieces. But results are what count. Lully created the world's best orchestra of the time, and has a legitimate claim to being called the first of the great conductors.

Lully's influence would seem to have spread across Europe, and doubtless his innovations would be felt by Bach, Handel, and others. It is imperative to point out, however, that the manner in which Lully would achieve his desired precision was *not* silent. A *taktschläger* he was – roughly translated as “time beater”, from *tactus* and *schläger* (to bat) – so much so that it was the instrument of his death. The beating of time was often done audibly. However, this was not always the case, and it is to the French that we can attribute the first *baton technique*, however basic. Used well into the eighteenth century (there are countless examples, from Quantz, to C.P.E. Bach, who refer to tempo in terms of *tactus*, and the “raising and lowering of the hand”), the French attributed the terms *frappe* to the downward stroke, and *leve* to the upward.<sup>9</sup> And while the modern baton was still a long way into the future, there are many accounts of conductors using sticks of all sizes as well as rolls of paper and even handkerchiefs

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 35

<sup>9</sup> Galkin. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*, 192-193

(then called “fazzoletto”<sup>10</sup>) to *schlag* their *takt*. Incidentally, the first appearance of the term “conducteur” in writing appears to have taken place in an article by Meude-Monpas entitled *Bâton de mesure*, published in 1791.<sup>11</sup>

### “Divided Leadership” – Leaders vs. Conductors

The role of the orchestral conductor came into being out of necessity, as opposed to design. It was a long and evolutionary process. Looking back on music history, we draw lines between the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras. But there was of course no single great revolution or event which clearly marked the dividing lines between these eras. It was a gradual transition of styles, aesthetics, and technology which brought about ongoing musical innovation and new modes of artistic expression. The evolution of the orchestra, which eventually necessitated the presence of orchestral conductors, was equally gradual. Concert orchestras grew largely out of the instrumental ensembles which accompanied Baroque opera, and finally took the form we would consider to be akin to our modern orchestras between roughly 1790-1830<sup>12</sup>.

While it is unclear whom was the first to describe it thus, there are a multitude of sources which describe the first emergence of a dedicated conductor in musical performance as a period of “divided leadership.” Our modern conception of a conductor, who stands before an ensemble without any musical instrument, came about over the first few decades of the nineteenth century<sup>13</sup>. This oft-used descriptor (“divided leadership”) refers to the presence of not only two but occasionally even three members of the early orchestra providing temporal leadership: the leader/konzertmeister/concertmaster, a keyboardist/conductor (typically with the presence of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 195

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 193

<sup>12</sup> Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 29

<sup>13</sup> Erick Neher, "Conductor Versus Conductor." *The Hudson Review* 63, no. 4 (2011): 653



singers), and sometimes an additional conductor without instrument as well (typically the work's composer). What is clear, however, is that early conductors were typically doubling as an instrumentalist, either in the form of the leader or the keyboardist, through the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Johann Stamitz, and his immediate successor Christian Cannabich, who revolutionized orchestral playing in Mannheim were not truly *conductors* but rather *leaders* – both were violinists.<sup>14</sup> It was in the decade between 1810-1820 that a conductor leading *without* an instrument became increasingly commonplace, and less of a novelty.<sup>15</sup> And it was, again, far from a sudden or definitive transition. There are still many accounts of conductors as leaders/principal violinists and/or keyboardists who felt it necessary to audibly tap, stomp, or count. This necessity is attributable to the fact that not only did an advanced orchestral conducting technique not yet exist, but also that an ensemble of musicians universally adept at following physical cues of musical direction also did not yet exist. It was a gradual, messy evolution of trial and error all over Europe with ubiquitous resistance to change. Nevertheless, a dedicated orchestral conductor first emerged out of necessity<sup>16</sup>:

In 1825, Mendelssohn reported a performance of Beethoven's Second Symphony in Paris where "The tempi were altogether too fast, and Habeneck, who conducted from the violin, and would have liked to hold them back, made himself quite miserable, stamping his feet, hitting the stand with his bow so hard that it wobbled, and moving his whole body, but none of it was of any avail.

Further complicating performance situations was the reality that ensembles of the era would typically perform with only a single rehearsal. There are multiple accounts from Schindler and

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<sup>14</sup> Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 44

<sup>15</sup> Clive Brown, "The Orchestra in Beethoven's Vienna." (*Early Music* 16, no. 1, 1988.) 14

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

other contemporaries of Beethoven lamenting the fact that German orchestras of the time were habitually under-rehearsed, and that the musicians were far from enthusiastic about the technical demands being placed on them in Beethoven's works. Thus, it is suggested by Clive Brown (*The Orchestra in Beethoven's Vienna*, 1988) the quality of performances was habitually mediocre. All the more reason why a conductor quickly became indispensable in rehearsal and performance. Beethoven himself was actually among the very first composer/conductors to lead without an instrument. One such occasion was reported as follows<sup>17</sup>:

At Clement's Academie, at the *Theater an der Wien* on 7 April 1805, for instance, where the 'Eroica' was performed, the printed programme announced: 'The composer kindly consented to conduct the work'... Ignaz Moscheles reported that during his time in Vienna (from 1809) he had 'never missed' the delightful Concerts at the *Augarten* where he [Beethoven] conducted his own symphonies.

### **The Big Three**

Looking back across the nineteenth century, there are three conductor/composers who tower over all others as enormously consequential in the history of the conducting profession, as well as to the establishment and evolution of concert orchestras. Those three great maestros were Felix Mendelssohn, Hector Berlioz, and Richard Wagner. Berlioz and Wagner both went so far as to publish numerous works of prose on the subject of conducting. There were others, of course. Robert Schumann, towards the end of his life as an active and performing musician, assembled and conducted a chorus of over a hundred vocalists. Schumann programmed a wide-

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 14

ranging and eclectic array of works including those of J.S. Bach, Handel, Gluck, Mendelssohn, Palestrina, and Schubert<sup>18</sup>.

The concert orchestra as a performing institution has been described, since the early twentieth century, as an 'aural museum'. From its birth under musical leaders like Lully, composers led these ensembles in their own works as opposed to the works of other composers. Today, however, it is generally the exception rather than the norm for concert audiences to hear music of our own time in concert. This exhibition of music from earlier eras begins with the concerts and festivals of composer/conductor Felix Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn was nothing short of a revolutionary, as a conductor, and the significance this change in programming represents cannot be overstated. With little exception, composers before Beethoven wrote for the moment, not posterity, and did not anticipate that their music would be performed by future generations. In many ways, Mendelssohn was truly ahead of his time, an early blueprint of conductors as we would not see again until late in his century<sup>19</sup>:

From his earliest ad hoc and guest appearances on the podium, through his tenures as music director in Dusseldorf, Leipzig, and Berlin, to his numerous performances at the helm of the massed ensembles of Europe's major music festivals, he [Mendelssohn] earned a reputation for having utter command of orchestral and choral ensembles and for performances of works by composers ranging from Lassus and Lotti through Beethoven, Liszt, and Wagner. He was known as a fastidious and innovative programmer-not only one of the central figures in the formation of the western European musical canon, but also an influential promoter of the idea that the world of musical performance should consist of a cross-section of historical styles.

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<sup>18</sup> Gary Harwood and Gregory Harwood. "Robert Schumann's Choice of Repertory and Rehearsal Planning in his Career as a Choral Conductor." (*The Choral Journal* 51, no. 2, 2010.) 35

<sup>19</sup> John Michael Cooper. "Knowing Mendelssohn: A Challenge from the Primary Sources." (*Notes* 61, no. 1, 2004): 35

While Mendelssohn didn't go so far as to pen any publications on the subject of conducting, it is clear from his personal letters that he was a musician of uncommon humility. He was the first to establish the tradition of observing fidelity to the composer's score which still persists as a primary motivation for most conductors today. And Mendelssohn's own adherence to this personal credo was particularly orthodox in nature. When he was asked to serve as editor of a new edition of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, there were repeated issues and arguments because Mendelssohn refused to take part in the project unless it was made clear, in print, which markings were his and which were those of Handel<sup>20</sup>. Mendelssohn, and Berlioz as well, saw the role of the conductor as explicitly *not* an act of creation but of respectful and authentic presentation of another respected artist's work. They would no sooner tamper with another's score than they would correct the enigma of Mona Lisa's smile. Berlioz too had a purist's view of instrumentation/orchestration. When conducting the symphonies of Beethoven, though valved horns had become available as well as the introduction of clarinets in multiple keys (both of which improved the sound quality, agility, and tone of the instruments in many situations), Berlioz staunchly refused to alter the instrumentation originally called for in Beethoven's scores<sup>21</sup>.

One critic of the era recalled a performance of Beethoven under Mendelssohn's direction in the *Spectator*, on July 13, 1844, stating, "The work [Beethoven's *Eroica*] was performed in more rigorous time and less like an instrumental fantasia, than we have been accustomed to hear." This is an immensely revelatory account on multiple levels. Firstly, it is further evidence

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<sup>20</sup> Jose Antonio Bowen. "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of the Ideal of "Fidelity to the Composer", (*Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 4, 1993.) 78

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 83

of what we know of both Mendelssohn's and Berlioz's attempts to observe every marking in Beethoven's scores, including metronome markings. In the twentieth century, nearly two centuries later, we are still debating when and how closely to follow Beethoven's metronome markings, and yet both of these immediate successors were reported consistently to take very brisk tempos in performances of Beethoven's works. Secondly, this description of performances of the time being akin to "instrumental fantasias" is intriguing, to say the least. We know that in the latter nineteenth century, Brahms and his contemporaries expected a level of elasticity in tempo, and we can hear the remnants of this style of play through to the early twentieth century in the recordings of Mengelburg and Bruno Walter, among others. But here is direct evidence from a critic in 1844 which suggests that some degree of elasticity was the norm far earlier in the nineteenth century. This style of play is only *very* recently being explored and embraced once again by major orchestras (listen to the recent Brahms cycle recordings of Simon Rattle and Paavo Järvi) after many decades of rigidity with regards to tempo.

By the 1840's, the use of an actual *baton* had become commonplace, and conductors were already wielding all manner of sticks at the podium composed of fine woods to fine metals and often even bejeweled. Berlioz and Mendelssohn, being similarly minded conductors, held more than simply professional respect for one another. There's a beautiful story of their having met in 1843<sup>22</sup>:

The meeting of the immortals occurred in Leipzig, while Berlioz was on tour. He asked Mendelssohn for his baton. "By all means," Mendelssohn gallantly said, "if I may have yours instead." Berlioz was even more gallant. "It will be bronze for gold; still, you shall have it." Berlioz's baton was, according to Sebastian Henschel, "a cudgel of lime tree with bark on." Berlioz himself called it, "a heavy oaken staff." Mendelssohn's

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<sup>22</sup> Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 88

baton was delivered the next day, and Berlioz obviously got the better of the trade. Mendelssohn's baton was, like Mendelssohn himself, elegant: a light stick of whale-bone covered with white leather to match his white gloves.

Richard Wagner was of an entirely different perspective on the role of the orchestral conductor. Whereas Berlioz and Mendelssohn had seen conducting as a re-creative act, Wagner was the first of an opposing school of thought which saw conducting as a creative and interpretative act<sup>23</sup>. Wagner sought not simply to follow the directions in the printed score, but to channel the desires and intentions of the composer and even translate them into the idiom of the modern orchestra and for the modern concert audience. He would change orchestration as he felt necessary to convey what he believed the composer's intentions would be had they had access to the modern orchestras with all of its innovations, or if they had been performing in the cavernous concert halls of the late nineteenth century. Rather than simply accepting the metronome markings in the score, Wagner wrote of the concept of *melos* as being key to finding the correct tempo.<sup>24</sup> The concept of *melos* is not unlike the manner in which tempo was described by Quantz or C.P.E. Bach a century earlier, when achieving the desired *affect* was of greatest import. Moreover his approach to tempo and pacing, by all accounts, was the height of elasticity. His goal would seem to have been to achieve maximum dramatic effect, just as in the music of his own *Tristan und Isolde* or his *Ring* quadrilogy. Henry Smart described a performance of Beethoven led by Wagner in the *Sunday Times* of London as follows<sup>25</sup>:

Firstly, he takes all quick movements faster than anybody else; secondly he takes all slow movements slower than anybody else; thirdly he prefaces

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<sup>23</sup> Jose Antonio Bowen, *Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors*, 78

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 86

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

the entry of an important point, or the return of a theme—especially in a slow movement—by an exaggerated ritardando; and fourthly, he reduces the speed of an allegro—say in an overture or the first movement—fully one third on the entrance of its cantabile phrases.

Wagner himself described his point of view, in a manner which sound remarkably similar to Leonard Bernstein, in a letter to Wittgenstein<sup>26</sup>:

Whoever has had the opportunity of hearing Liszt play Beethoven (for example) in a small, intimate gathering must have been struck by the fact that this was no mere matter of recreation, but of [original] creation. The dividing line between these two processes is much harder to define than most people would think. But I am convinced that to interpret (recreate) Beethoven properly, one must be able to create anew with him.

Wagner's approach to conducting, his approach in fact to music in general, is written off by some as a sign of his immense ego, of self-aggrandizement. Certainly, Wagner's sense of self-worth was legendary. Nevertheless, this concept of Wagner's was indeed a new and revolutionary approach to music performance. Studying Wagner's extensive alterations to Beethoven's final symphony, of which there is a great deal of scholarly work available, it is hard to deny that his goal truly was to bring about more clarity and balance within the setting of the modern orchestra and the modern concert hall. Just as is the case with Wagner's operatic output, his approach to orchestral conducting attracted a fervently devoted list of disciples, among them some of the most important and impactful musicians of the early twentieth century, including: Felix Mottl, Max Fiedler, Ferdinand Löwe, Hans Richter, Hans von Bülow, as well as Felix Weingartner and Gustav Mahler<sup>27</sup>. Of equal import was the milestone reached with this

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 85

<sup>27</sup> Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 128

generation of Wagnerites, particularly in the case of von Bülow and Richer: these were the first conductors who were not composers as well. They made conducting their sole, full-time profession.

### **Applications of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Conducting Theory and Method: Beethoven's Ninth**

Wagner and Berlioz represent two opposing nineteenth century viewpoints on the role of the orchestral conductor. Berlioz contended that the role of the conductor was to realize the printed score with utmost fidelity. Reading his essays on the Beethoven symphonies<sup>28</sup>, and the *ninth* in particular, it is striking how utterly different this is to Wagner's approach. Berlioz speaks throughout of inspiration, of images brought to mind by key moments of the work. Nowhere, however, is there more than a general guideline about key areas or the need for study by the conductor. There is not a single aspect of the work critiqued or addressed with regards to balance or orchestration.

By contrast, Wagner's notes on Beethoven's last symphony are numerous, detailed, and extensive. If Berlioz describes this symphony with a painter's brush, Wagner does so with a surgeon's scalpel. Musicologists Denis McCaldin and Raymond Holden have written a great deal on Wagner's and Mahler's (which is based almost entirely on Wagner's score notations) approaches to this symphony<sup>29</sup>. McCaldin makes reference to numerous changes to dynamics and orchestration made by Wagner. This had to do with the fact that strings often overpowered the winds (which may be why in Beethoven's time the winds were often doubled, as in the

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<sup>28</sup> Hector Berlioz. "A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE SYMPHONIES OF BEETHOVEN." Translated by Michael Austin, *The Hector Berlioz Website - Beethoven 9 Berlioz 1881*, HBerlioz.com, [www.hberlioz.com/Predecessors/beethsym.htm#sym9](http://www.hberlioz.com/Predecessors/beethsym.htm#sym9).

<sup>29</sup> Denis McCaldin. "Mahler and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 107 (1980): 101



premieres of his symphonies no. 7 and 8). But Wagner went so much further than simply addressing balance issues. Already in Wagner's time there had been very significant improvement to horn and trumpet range, agility, and uniformity of sound (to say nothing of what's happened with instrument design since then), and the same can be said of the flute, as well as the technical abilities of violins. This, Wagner tried to take advantage of. It wasn't about fidelity to the score so much as one great composer attempting to channel another, to understand the *intent* of the music and translate it for modern musicians and audiences. This, most evidence suggests, is precisely what Mahler too had been attempting to do with his 1895 reorchestration. Mahler even went so far as to hire professional copyists to prepare the parts for his orchestra.

As a conductor considering the views of Berlioz versus Wagner on this work, I must admit to being beholden of the opinion that however inspired Berlioz had been by Beethoven, his approach to performance was not for posterity but rather for his own time. Wagner and Mahler went to great and extensive lengths to translate what they believed was the soul of this great work into their own age. Did they go too far? Yes, perhaps they did. One need only look at Mahler's orchestration (again, largely based on Wagner's own score notations) and compare it with Beethoven's. It's staggering!

	<u>Winds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Perc.</u>	<u>Strings</u>
<b>Beethoven:</b>	3.2.2.3	4.2.3.0	Timp 3Perc	Strings
<b>Mahler's B9:</b>	4.4.4.4	8.4.3.1	2 Timp 3 Perc	Strings

Mahler calls for a doubling of all woodwinds, 8 horns, and 2 timpani players. However, what most people tend to find even more unpalatable about Mahler's reorchestration of

Beethoven 9 is the inclusion of a tuba. – And yet, here's the difficult truth an honest musician and conductor must face when approaching this work. **Every** performance, **every** edition of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 by a modern orchestra is in fact, to some degree, an arrangement of the original. And even modern period instrument orchestras differ in instrumentation from the orchestras in Beethoven's time.

We know that Beethoven, and even Mozart for that matter, wanted the largest string sections they could attain. Beethoven had 36 violins for the premiers of his seventh and eighth symphonies<sup>30</sup>. Wagner, Weingartner and Mahler: three of the most esteemed musicians and conductors from across two generations subsequent to Beethoven himself were both sufficiently convinced and painstakingly thorough in their approach to performing Beethoven's great final symphonic ode. They considered not only modern instrumental capabilities, but the also the acoustic environment in which we currently perform, and the affect Beethoven was likely endeavoring to bring about from an audience. To reject their insights outright in preparation for any performance of Beethoven's ninth is at best a willful ignorance of available and abundant scholarly information, and at worst arrogant dismissal of learned and valuable experience which is no less than 100 years closer to Beethoven's own time than ours.

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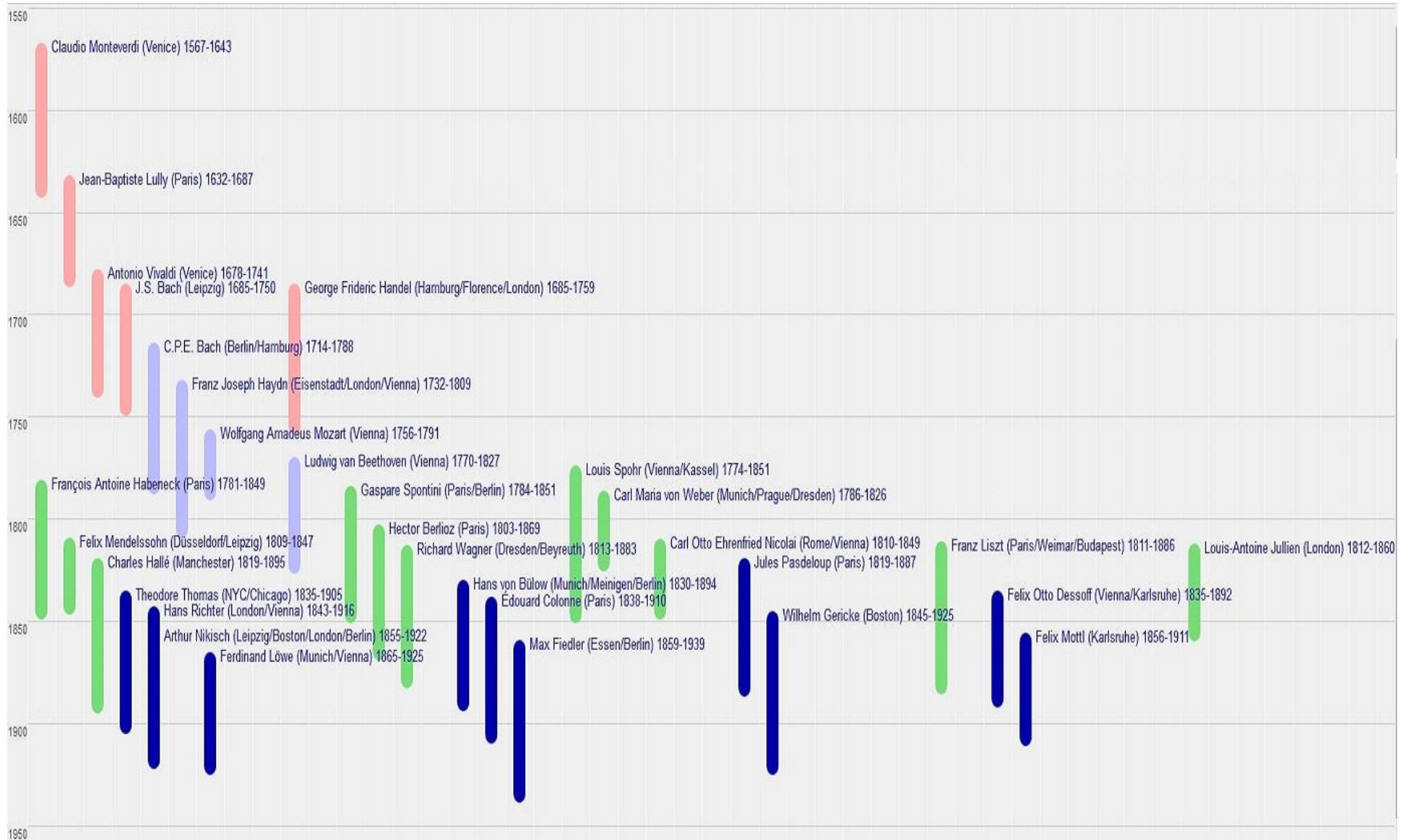
<sup>30</sup> Clive Brown, "The Orchestra in Beethoven's Vienna." 14

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- Grey, Thomas S. "Wagner, the Overture, and the Aesthetics of Musical Form." *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 1 (1988): 3-22. doi:10.2307/746606.
- Harwood, Gary W., and Gregory W. Harwood. "Robert Schumann's Choice of Repertory and Rehearsal Planning in his Career as a Choral Conductor." *The Choral Journal* 51, no. 2 (2010): 32-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23559985>.
- Holden, Raymond. "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way." *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 3-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41440727>.
- Holden, Raymond. *The Virtuoso Conductors: the Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan*. Yale University Press, 2005.
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- Knight, David B. "Geographies of the Orchestra." *GeoJournal* 65, no. 1/2 (2006): 33-53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148021>.
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- McCaldin, Denis. "Mahler and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 107 (1980): 101-10. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/766118>.
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- Pasles, Chris. "MUSIC : Conductor's Role Has Changed With Music." *Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 1991, [articles.latimes.com/1991-06-19/entertainment/ca-1044\\_1\\_baroque-music](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-06-19/entertainment/ca-1044_1_baroque-music).
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- Reichwald, Siegwart. *Mendelssohn in Performance*. Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Taruskin, Richard. *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968.
- Wagner, Richard. *On Conducting: (Ueber Das Dirigiren) a Treatise on Style in the Execution of Classical Music*. Hardpress Publishing, 2012.
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MHS 4xx: Conducting Through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Date TBD  
Thursdays, 12:35pm - 2:25pm, ESM ---

Instructor: Michael Wheatley  
Email: mwheatl2@u.rochester.edu

In this course we will explore the origins and evolution of the role of the *Orchestral Conductor* as it has come to be understood in modern usage. By examining a diverse array of musical and literary sources, we will investigate how and why orchestras increasingly grew to need a dedicated leader in both rehearsal and performance. We will also pay close attention to how musicians themselves dealt with changes to the orchestra as a performing ensemble studying excerpts from newspaper criticism, memoirs, journal articles, book chapters and letters.

Weekly readings will include writings by nineteenth-century conductors, as well as recent musicological and historical literature on the history of conducting. Periodic listening assignments will include opera and orchestral music.

**Expectations and Grading:** Due to the collaborative nature of this course, your active engagement is of the utmost importance. In addition to the assigned readings and musical examples, each week one student will guide the class through a supplementary reading. Preparation for these informal presentations is up to the student, but may involve a PowerPoint, a handout, an analytical sketch, a performance, or any other creative method.

**Weekly readings:** Take notes. Be prepared to discuss the author's argument, use of evidence, points made about specific works and events, and how the reading enhances our understanding of the topic at hand. Unless otherwise noted, all readings and recordings for the course will be made available through Blackboard. CDs and DVDs will be on reserve in the Sibley Library.

**Periodic listening:** Try to listen to the *entire* opera act/ instrumental work before coming to class. Begin by doing some quick online research on the musical work or opera, and note its plot/structure/form, composition and premiere dates, and how often it is performed today. When the week's music is discussed in the readings, be prepared to compare your own opinions with that of the author.

**Attendance:** Please let me know in advance if you will not be able to attend a particular class meeting. Two or more missed classes will begin to affect your participation grade.

**Grading:** Your total grade will consist of:

- Participation in online and in-class discussions: 20%
- Individual in-class presentations: 20%
- Final paper abstract (300 words) and 1-page bibliography: 10% (*due date TBD*)
- Final paper on a topic of your choice (approx. 3000 words): 30% (*due date TBD*)
- Final in-class presentation on your independent research (30 minutes): 20%



**Week 1 (Sept 1)—Introduction and Ancient Origins: Cheironomy in the Ancient World (Egypt, Greece, and in Jewish Tradition)**

Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 15-25
- Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988., pp. 241-261

**Week 2 (Sept 8)— Taktschlägers: Lully thru J.S. Bach and Handel**

Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 33-43
- Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988., pp. 261-272

**Week 3 (Sept 15)—Divided Leadership: Leaders vs. Conductors in the orchestras of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven**

Readings:

- Eisen, Cliff. "Mozart's Salzburg Orchestras." *Early Music* 20, no. 1 (1992): 89-103. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127670>.
- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 44-64
- Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988., pp. 437-458



#### **Week 4 (Sept 22)—New Tools in Music Making (Batons, Metronomes, etc.)**

##### Readings:

- Brown, Clive. "Historical Performance, Metronome Marks and Tempo in Beethoven's Symphonies." *Early Music* 19, no. 2 (1991): 247-58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127639>.
- Brown, Clive. "The Orchestra in Beethoven's Vienna." *Early Music* 16, no. 1 (1988): 4-20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127044>.
- Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988., pp. 543-549

#### **Week 5 (Sept 29)—L'Art du Chef D'Orchestre: Hector Berlioz as Conductor**

##### Readings:

- Cairns, David. "Berlioz: A Centenary Retrospect." *The Musical Times* 110, no. 1513 (1969): 249-51. doi:10.2307/951544.
- Pasles, Chris. "MUSIC : Conductor's Role Has Changed With Music." *Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 1991, [articles.latimes.com/1991-06-19/entertainment/ca-1044\\_1\\_baroque-music](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-06-19/entertainment/ca-1044_1_baroque-music).
- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 107-116

#### **Week 6 (Oct 6)—Mendelssohn and the German School**

##### Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 117-127
- Reichwald, Siegwart. *Mendelssohn in Performance*. Indiana University Press, 2008, Chapter 6 "Mendelssohn as Composer and Conductor"
- Cooper, John Michael. "Knowing Mendelssohn: A Challenge from the Primary Sources." *Notes* 61, no. 1 (2004): 35-95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4487302>.

#### **Week 7 (Oct 13)—Rehearsals and Performance in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> c.**

##### Readings:

- Harwood, Gary W., and Gregory W. Harwood. "Robert Schumann's Choice of Repertory and Rehearsal Planning in his Career as a Choral Conductor." *The Choral Journal* 51, no. 2 (2010): 32-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23559985>.
- Di Grazia, Donna M. "Rejected Traditions: Ensemble Placement in Nineteenth-Century Paris." *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 2 (1998): 190-209. doi:10.2307/746857.
- Bowen, Jose Antonio. "The Conductor and the Score : the Relationship between Interpreter and Text in the Generation of Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner." *SearchWorks*, Stanford University, 1993, [searchworks.stanford.edu/view/2951339](http://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/2951339).
- Bowen, Jose Antonio (1993) "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of the Ideal of "Fidelity to the Composer"," *Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 4. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199306.01.04

### **Week 8 (Oct 20)—Richard Wagner as Conductor**

#### Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 128-143
- Bowen, Jose Antonio (1993) "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of the Ideal of "Fidelity to the Composer"," *Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 4. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199306.01.04
- Holden, Raymond. "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way." *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 3-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41440727>.
- Grey, Thomas S. "Wagner, the Overture, and the Aesthetics of Musical Form." *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 1 (1988): 3-22. doi:10.2307/746606.

### **Week 9 (Oct 27)—Wagner's Disciples: Dessoff, Reinecke, Löwe, Richter, und Levi**

#### Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 176-188
- Mathieson, Holly. "The "True Wagnerian" and the English Imagination: The Image of Hans Richter." *Music in Art* 34, no. 1/2 (2009): 311-16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41818597>.
- Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988., pp. 563-604 and 611-618

### **Week 10 (Nov 3)—Hans von Bülow: The Conductor as Composer's Advocate**

#### Readings:

- Holden, Raymond. *The Virtuoso Conductors: the Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan*. Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 11-36
- Hurwitz, David. "'So Klingt Wien': Conductor, Orchestras, and Vibrato in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries." *Music & Letters* 93, no. 1 (2012): 29-60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41418809>.

### **Week 11 (Nov 10)—Towards a New Century: Arthur Nikisch and Gustav Mahler**

#### Readings:

- McCaldin, Denis. "Mahler and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 107 (1980): 101-10. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/766118>.
- Holden, Raymond. *The Virtuoso Conductors: the Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan*. Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 37-96

## **Week 12 (Nov 17)—In the New World**

### Readings:

- Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968, pp. 189-197 (“America and Theodore Thomas”)
- Keener, Andrew D. "Gustav Mahler as Conductor." *Music & Letters* 56, no. 3/4 (1975): 341-55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/734891>.
- Kremp, Pierre-Antoine. "Innovation and Selection: Symphony Orchestras and the Construction of the Musical Canon in the United States (1879-1959)." *Social Forces* 88, no. 3 (2010): 1051-1082. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40645882>.
- Burkat, Leonard. "American Orchestras." *Tempo*, no. 7 (1948): 13-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/943116>.

## **Week 13 (Nov 24)—No Class (Thanksgiving)**

## **Week 14 (Dec 1)—Presentations**

## **Week 15 (Dec 8)—Presentations**

**Final Paper Due: Monday, December 12, 20\*\* at 11:59 PM by email attachment**

### **Items Available at the Sibley Reserve Desk**

Galkin, Elliott W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting: in Theory and Practice*. Pendragon Press, 1988.

Holden, Raymond. *The Virtuoso Conductors: the Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan*. Yale University Press, 2005.

Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Conductors*. Simon and Schuster, 1968.