

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE CONDUCTOR AND THE ENSEMBLE
- FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT

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In my experience as a beginning conductor, I encountered some difficulties with self- emotional control and conflict with the ensemble members. When I was inexperienced, it was easy for me to be nervous and tense. Sometimes I lost the ability to control my temper and facial expression and couldn't communicate with the ensemble well enough. I was aware that the interaction between the conductor and the ensemble is a key element of efficient rehearsal and for successful music making. The conductor, as the one who stands in front of people, can affect the emotional involvement of the ensemble through his attitude and personality. That is why there exists a common perception regarding the power of the conductor. Because music has such an intimate relation with emotions, the emotional involvement is very important for music making. Music can display the human being's affection unreservedly and also arouse emotionality directly.¹ Thus, if the conductor wants the ensemble members to be able to play the interpretation of the composer's intent, he needs to demonstrate it either through his own singing voice, description, or his conducting technique. If he is able to produce the

¹ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 29.

correct emotional response from the ensemble, then they can perform with the “right” feeling for each particular piece.

This dissertation discusses the practical psychological methods in rehearsal, and how the conductor can earn the respect and trust of the ensemble in order to bring out the maximum influence upon his ensemble, assuming he has excellent musicality and musicianship. If the conductor knows what is the quickest and best way to inspire his ensemble and really tries to create a “psychological bridge” to his ensemble, it will be a great help for efficient rehearsal.

How do the ensemble members think? In Chinese proverb, “if you want someone follow you willingly, you need to know what is his favorite and dislike, then you can earn someone’s heart.” In order to investigate how ensemble members perceived their conductors and related to them, I conducted a survey of 153 students participating in performing ensembles at the University of Maryland between March 28th and April 1st, 2005. I created this survey by drawing questions from my research on this topic and refining them with input with from my adviser. The appendix A of the paper includes the results of the survey.

THE CONDUCTOR AND THE ENSEMBLE
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By

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Chapter One: Psychological perspectives of the Conductor and the Ensemble

Music and Psychology

Music and Soul

Music Book, the Confucian scripture, states: “Sound comes from the heart; the human soul is touched by sensibility,” and “music is the soul of the human heart. It is born from emotions, and then expressed through the sound. The sound forms melody, so that’s what music is called.”² It means that the origin of music is human sensibility, which is affected by externality. People who are moved and touched show their feeling via music, and it is the reason that music has a close relationship to human emotional activity. Therefore people hum a delightful song while feeling happy and a doleful melody while being sad. It is the same in performing; a musician tends to imagine mournful emotion before performing a doleful piece in order to naturally and sincerely convey the music to the audience. Wagner says, “Poor pen-and- paper music, without a shadow of soul or sense”.³ C.P.E. Bach expresses the same idea, “Play from the soul, not like a trained bird!”⁴

Music is meaningful in our lives, because it can sincerely express our inner emotions and sentiments. Without true emotions, music loses its affecting and charming qualities. Great music comes from an exalted human soul; therefore, the Confucian *Music Book* especially emphasizes that the musicians must have good and

² <http://www.harvard-yenching.net/ruxue/zhuzuo/Rites/li19yji.html>

³ David Blum, *Casals And The Art Of Interpretation*. (California: University of California Press, 1977, p. 17.

⁴ David Blum, *Casals And The Art Of Interpretation*. (California: University of California Press, 1977, p. 18.

noble character as well as sublime spirit to make the music not only touching but also educational to people.⁵

Nowadays, people may not emphasize morality in musicians, but making music from the “heart” is the key point whether you can move your listener or not. As Pablo Casals stated,

“You will see where to make the vibrato, the crescendo, the diminuendo of the notes- all those things you have to present, but present more in your feelings. Not present only here”- he said, as he tapped on his head, “because it is not profound enough; but here”- and he drew his hand to his heart.⁶

The Conductor, Music and Psychology

It is essential for the conductor to possess an acute consciousness, because he has to collaborate with live human beings. If he is not able to establish a psychological bridge to the members collaborating with him, attempts to make music will be in vain no matter how good his musicality. The conductor must sense whether or not a certain passage will make performers or singers uncomfortable and must learn how to help them to conquer the difficulties. For example, if an oboist is too shy to perfectly perform a solo passage, the conductor may try to encourage him with a gentle smile or eye contact, which could help him to establish stronger faith and to perform his solo part very well. Also, the conductor has to be a “teacher” in a way, meaning that it is a prerequisite for him to have stronger musicality and perceptual awareness. This sort of ability is essential for the conductor, so that he is

⁵ Hermann Scherchen, “On Conducting,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed., Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 223.

⁶ David Blum, *Casals and the art of interpretation* (California: University of California Press, 1977), 14.

able to knit together the musical tapestry of interpretation, point out mistakes, and bring music to people in refinement and precision.⁷

The Importance of Emotions

In order to know his ensemble well, the conductor must perfectly understand “emotion.” Emotion dominates human inner changes -- not only those of the conductor himself, but also those of the ensemble members.

“Emotion... it is not only an internal change but also a response to external conditions. The internal bodily states in fear and anger may not be so different, but their external conditions differ sharply... So we may conclude that emotions differentiate themselves in terms of the objective conditions which arouse them.”⁸

Therefore, as mentioned above, emotion is deeply affected by external conditions. Ulf Dimberg, a Swedish researcher at the University of Uppsala, found that

“when people view a smiling or angry face, their own faces show evidence of the same mood through slight changes in the facial muscles. The changes are evident through electronic sensors but are typically not visible to the naked eye.”⁹

Since emotions differentiate themselves by means of the external conditions which arouse them, they could be an aid or an obstacle to the conductor. If he employs them well, “emotions” will become a “secret weapon” in terms of changing performing manner, mood, or timbre. It is particularly essential for a choral conductor to notice the relation of voices and emotions. Compared to instrumental performing, internal changes much more directly and completely affect singing. Through singing we can directly and immediately receive or feel the music. Some

⁷ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 326.

⁸ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 31.

⁹ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 115.

scholars even conclude: “the vocal mechanism is the entire psychophysical personality”.¹⁰ Therefore:

“the good vocal teacher will not be primarily concerned with developing skill in the use of certain muscle sets, but rather in helping his pupil to acquire certain ways of hearing and imaging sound, certain types of emotional response and control, certain modes of kinaesthesia, and certain imagining and intellectual insights.”¹¹

“Higher mental processes are important in the control of the voice.”¹² Other than imagination, the main lesson for singers is to “feel” and to know whether or not the “vocal machinery” is in the correct position. Moreover, because emotions directly affect the body’s natural movements, they definitely affect voices. When people are in a good mood, for instance, their muscles are relaxed; however, “*during unpleasant emotion the thoracico-lumbar division of the ‘non-voluntary’ nervous system becomes controlling, and just the opposite kind of bodily processes are set up*”.¹³ Therefore, emotions significantly affect body movements and singing skills, in a similar manner to the “atmosphere” which may quickly change the timbre. Once the emotions being created by the conductor or players themselves are changed, the effect will be reflected in music itself to a significant degree. It can be said that our mind controls the music!

Different ways of thinking and emotional control are the reasons why people are so different from each other, and also determine different personalities. As we know, the personality plays an important role in how musicians perform and affects musical interpretation deeply. When I was studying at the Taipei National University of Arts in Taiwan, my piano professor, Sung-Jen Hsu (who is also a conductor and

¹⁰ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 224.

¹¹ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 224.

¹² James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 228.

¹³ James Mursell, *The Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 229.

philosopher), smiled and said after I played a piece for him, “to know a person, you just need to listen to his playing.” I was a sophomore then, so I did not really understand what he meant. After growing up and having more experience, I have to admit that he was absolutely right. Suppose that two musicians, for example, are performing the same piece. The one who is emotionally rigid will give a very direct performance. However, the one with the more sensitive personality may create a more rich performance through the use of emotional diversity. By listening to recordings, it can be observed that performers at different ages play the same repertory with different interpretations. This stems from the changes of personality, thinking, and views of life as we age. Thus, music and personality have many affinities with each other. If a musician wishes to achieve a mature artistic life, properly changing his pattern of thinking in addition to improving technical skills would surely be one of the paths to reaching this goal.

Rehearsal and Psychology

Between the Conductor and the Ensemble

Perhaps affected by an “egocentric power complex” or social influence, the leadership of early conductors was often lacking a sense of proportion; thus, they tended to treat players unfairly and rudely.¹⁴ Arthur Nikisch thought it was a matter of-course to treat players demandingly and exactingly: “Why should I be otherwise?” he replied. “When I play the piano, do I ask the keys how the music should sound?”¹⁵ In fact, it can be said, “a violent manner of dealing with people will either be defeated by their resistance or result in their intimidation”.¹⁶ So when people are treated rudely, they tend to either resist or turn away. During the past decade, the relationship between conductors and players has been changed, as well as the general rehearsal atmosphere. Nowadays, most of musicians are strongly self-aware; they are not only conscious of respect from people, but they are also eager to express themselves. Therefore, unlike the stern and demanding style of earlier times, some famous conductors, for example, like Von Karajan, respect ensemble members a lot.¹⁷ “It is never safe to conduct an orchestra of enemies,” Izler Solomon says, “They may officially obey your orders, but they can always find the subtle ways of making you appear at your worst, no matter how good you are.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Max Rudolf, “Rehearsal Techniques,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 288.

¹⁵ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 38.

¹⁶ Bruno Walter, *Of Music And Music-Making*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 120.

¹⁷ See page 17.

¹⁸ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 38.

Today's conductors wish to earn the respect and admiration of the players, or at least to establish a positive working relationship.¹⁹ Because of that, "human management and leadership" as well as "group psychology" are being emphasized. Music is such a personal, internal, emotional activity; the conductor must be able to create an atmosphere of perfect harmony in order to inspire members' emotions, to engage members in their musicality, and even to discover and develop members' potential.²⁰ Once the group spirit is inspired, individuals in the group will be mentally united as one, as Leopold Stokowski states:

"the conductor must understand the psychology of the players and know how to unify all the greatly varying characters of the players into one harmonious organism- which is a combination of many instruments, but still more of many psychological and emotional personalities. All these must be fused into one."²¹

Communication Through the Inner Power

During rehearsal, the conductor has to not only pay attention to players' emotions, but also effectively communicate with them, in order to express his musical interpretations and expectations. As Max Rudolf said: "*Each conductor must find his own way to project his feelings, by virtue of his personality, by singing a phrase with appropriate expression, or by hitting on the illuminating word.*"²² The general way to express one's self is through language. According to a survey conducted in conjunction with this paper, the ensemble members judge a conductor by his command of English language, because the language may affect the

¹⁹ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 38.

²⁰ Bruno Walter, *Of Music And Music-Making* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 123.

²¹ Leopold Stokowski, "The Art of Conducting," *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 200.

²² Max Rudolf, "Rehearsal Techniques," *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 289.

communication.²³ However, language sometimes is insufficient or superficial in expression. Usually, the conductor can lead players by demonstrations or singing, which is an external expression. Other than that, leading members through inner expression and eye language is the key to whether or not the group is able to perform music in a way that is deeply moving. For the conductor, performers in a group are like “instruments,” and he has to move them with sincere sensibility. So those “instruments,” will follow your emotions and perform whatever you conduct. The one who is able to touch people must have rich sensibility, a warm-hearted personality, and enthusiasm.²⁴ To touch a “group,” he needs a great deal of patience and human concern as well as a strong will. Hermann Scherchen describes that an orchestra is like an organ whose pipes are replaced by human beings:

“To be able to play this organ is to be a magician; to command it requires almost superhuman powers. But these powers live only in the innermost focus of the ego, at the very source of feeling and inspiration.”²⁵

With intense individual emotion, expression and power, Pablo Casals, the celebrated cellist as well as conductor, impressed on people the rich expression and strong emotions which made players immediately feel what kind of musical representation the conductor wished:

“When Casals rehearsed Wagner’s ‘Siegfried Idyll’- the ‘symphonic birthday greeting to his Cosima from her Richard’, written in commemoration of their son’s birth. After the opening bars had been played very beautifully, Casals stopped the orchestra, closed his eyes, and quietly clasped his hands together. For a long moment he became quite still, absorbed in contemplation. His transfigured expression reflected a oneness with the spirit from which this music is born: infinite devotion, profoundest love. Then without a single word, he indicated that the orchestra should begin again. Aware or not of how or why they had been

²³ 22% of the survey’s respondents judge a conductor by his command of the English language, and 40% people “somewhat” do the same. See appendix, question 10, p. 59.

²⁴ Compared to authority, confidence, efficiency, organization, and persuasiveness, enthusiasm received the highest score on the most important characteristics for the ideal conductor to possess. See appendix, question 1, p. 58.

²⁵ Hermann Scherchen, “On Conducting,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 226.

moved, the musicians brought to their playing a more inward quality of feeling, drawn from a source of deep tenderness and from this source the entire work sang as if shimmering from a golden mirror. Although Casals paused to rehearse points of detail, the continuity of feeling remained unbroken".²⁶

Leonard Bernstein also agrees with leading a group in the way which precisely and effectively expresses conductor's inner emotions and immediately appeals to members:

The conductor must not only make his orchestra play; he must make them **want** to play. He must exalt them, lift them start their adrenalin pouring, either through cajoling or demanding or raging. But however he does it, he must make the orchestra love the music as he loves it. It is not so much imposing his will on them like a dictator; it's more like projecting his feelings around him so that they reach the last man in the second violin section. And when this happens- when one hundred men share his feelings, exactly simultaneously, responding as one to each rise and fall of the music, to each point of arrival and departure, to each little inner pulse- then there is a human identity of feeling that has no equal elsewhere. It is the closest thing I know to love itself. On this current love the conductor can communicate at the deepest levels with his players."²⁷

Both celebrated conductors deeply understand the complexity of human emotions and expressions. Of course, the conductor won't be influential to a group until his players completely accept and respond to the spiritual affinities with each other:

"The conductor should strive to encourage every sign of emotional participation in the orchestra, he should explore and employ to the fullest degree the capacities of his collaborators; he should excite their interest, advance their musical talents, in short, he should exert a beneficial influence on them".²⁸

²⁶ David Blum, *Casals And The Art Of Interpretation* (California: University of California Press, 1977), 2.

²⁷ Leonard Bernstein, "The Art of Conducting," *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 274.

²⁸ Bruno Walter, *Of music and music-making* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957). 123.

The Personality of a Conductor

“*Music is the most spiritual of the arts... the secret of art is the secret of personality.*”²⁹ So we know that the influence of the conductor to a group is established on his personality and the level of spiritual affinity among players:

“Personality is of the decisive importance in the realm of musical interpretation, and its expansive force means more in the matter of influencing the orchestra than a spate of rational explanations.”³⁰

To reach players’ hearts, therefore, the conductor must deeply understand his own personality. Assuming that he wants to be an influential, the personality must contain all the positive qualities, such as warmth, open-mindedness, ardor, sensitivity, imagination, and strong perception:

“The players must feel that he (conductor) feels, understands and is moved; then his emotion communicates itself to those whom he conducts. His inner fire warms them, his enthusiasm carries them away, and he radiates musical energy. But if he is indifferent and cold, he paralyzes everything around him, like the icebergs floating in the polar sea, whose approach is announced by the sudden cooling of the atmosphere.”³¹

Such a personality from the warmth of the heart is the most amazing characteristic and strongest power of the conductor, and brings the music he produced into a wonderful ecstasy from soul to soul.³² However, eye language- like body language, but refers to the communication of ideas and emotions through expressions in the eye- is the best way to express warmth and sincerity of heart. The conductor’s eyes must look at players with ardor and harmlessness, so that there is more

²⁹ Hermann Scherchen, “On Conducting,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 224.

³⁰ Bruno Walter, *Of music and music-making* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 123.

³¹ Hector Berlioz, “On Conducting,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 25.

³² Bruno Walter, “The Conductor,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 197.

understanding and co-operation between them.³³ Eye language and subtle body language will betray a human's inner world; therefore, eye contact is absolutely necessary while communicating to players. To know what the players exactly think, the conductor has to look players in the eye. Meanwhile, through the eye language, the conductor can clearly express the music he wants to produce -- passionate, touching, urgent, or mournful -- and his love for the music, which is the most important thing! With pure love towards the music, the conductor would be eager to share his feeling and inspire players through his tones, portraying earnest sentiment with his eye language, and wish to have his players affected:

“In the Andante con moto from Mozart's Symphony No. 39... Casals called out, ‘Full-full!’, He rose from his chair and spread out his arms in a great gesture of openness and acceptance, saying, ‘Like this- like this!’ The musicians responded with playing of luminous warmth. Their capacity for expression had suddenly been enlarged by Casals’ fidelity to the voice of his own feeling”.³⁴

The conductor should try to be a truly sincere and honest person.³⁵ He stands in front of people, communicates his feeling sincerely, without falseness or prejudice, and expresses his love for music without hesitating. It is what Bruno Walter thinks about the charisma of the conductor, which presents the “artistic gifts and the emotional power of a great heart.”³⁶ Only when the conductor simply opens his heart do the performers clearly understand his thoughts clearly, and completely perform with their true emotion.

³³ Leopold Stokowski, “Conducting,” *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 198.

³⁴ David Blum, *Casals And The Art Of Interpretation*. (California: University of California Press, 1977), 10.

³⁵ Almost every famous conductor mentioned this point, such as Bruno Walter and Leopold Stokowski.

³⁶ Bruno Walter, “The Conductor,” *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 197.

Chapter Two

The three roles of a conductor and their practical purposes

If we want to understand the complex emotional relationships between the conductor and the ensemble members, we must first understand the conductor's role or characteristics:

Musician, scholar, coach, communicator, educator, diplomat, disciplinarian, executive, planner, budget manager, personnel officer, efficiency expert, advocate, publicist, guide, leader, visionary: The ideal conductor combines all these roles in an intricate vocation.³⁷

Among the many roles listed above, there are 3 types of roles we need to pay special attention to beyond those of musician and scholar. These are leader, teacher and colleague.³⁸

As a leader:

Ability to Organize

The conductor's organizational ability is very important, especially when he leads a professional ensemble. According to the survey, 30% of ensemble members surveyed never trust a conductor who is poorly organized.³⁹ It is a key point for the conductor to persuade and earn the trust of the professional musicians. If they feel the rehearsal is run efficiently, they will feel the conductor is worthy of their effort.

"Ability to organize, is so important because it saves precious time in the rehearsals, because a well-organized group takes pride in its smooth

³⁷ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The complete conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 1.

³⁸ According to the survey, the respondents think the importance for the conductor being a leader and teacher are almost equal. There are also 11% respondents think it is important for the conductor being a "friend". See appendix, question 21, p. 60.

³⁹ See appendix, question 13, p. 59

*functioning, and because it saves so much wear and tear on everyone's nerves, especially the conductor's."*⁴⁰

In order to have the rehearsal start on time, the conductor has to make sure everything is settled before the ensemble members walk in. For example, are there chairs and stands enough for all the musicians, or are the risers set up already in the rehearsal room? If the conductor plans a sectional rehearsal, does he book additional room in advance? If the rehearsal place is changed, is it announced beforehand to the ensemble?

In terms of concert planning, "every concert needs to be thoughtfully planned more than several months in advance to be the right kind of experience for everybody."⁴¹ There are more things for the conductor to think about before the concert:⁴²

- Who will sponsor the concert?
- Where and when will the performance take place?
- What kinds of expenses or financial arrangements are involved?
- What kind of facilities, equipment, and musical instruments will be available?
- Who will attend the concert?
- How large an audience is expected?
- What type of music will they accept?
- How long will the concert be?
- What achievement level will be appropriate?

There are so many details for a conductor to think about and prepare. Sometimes the conductor is not just a "musician" but a "manager," especially if there is no other administrator who can help. The conductor may ask the ensemble members for help, and let them share those small but important responsibilities. It can also give the ensemble a sense of participation.

⁴⁰ Max T. Krone, *Expressive Conducting* (Park Ridge, Illinois: Neil A. Kjos Music Co., 1949), 4.

⁴¹ Gordon H. Lamb, *Choral Techniques* (Dubuque, Iowa: WM. C Brown Company Publisher, 1974), 93.

⁴² Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 25-26.

Ability to Manage

There are many unexpected incidents that can happen during rehearsals or even performances. For example, in an amateur ensemble, some people may ask to join the performance even though they did not attend most of the rehearsals, or they lost their music just before the concert. The conductor needs to “establish necessary guidelines and rules”; for example: “punctuality (begin on time and end on time), absenteeism (insist on standards of attendance), and attention (require active participation and concentration from all members)”.⁴³ Once the rules are established under the insistence and execution of the conductor, ensemble management problems will be reduced. Unforeseen circumstances can still occur, and they may challenge the conductor’s wisdom. Here are several real situations:

(Situation A)

Suddenly, one violist started to speak impolitely to the guest conductor during the rehearsal. It was because when the guest conductor said, “no, no, you can’t play like this, you should play like that...” the conductor was pointing out with his forefinger toward the viola section. This player thought the viola section didn’t make that mistake, and she had the feeling of being censured by the conductor. She couldn’t tolerate the conductor’s misunderstanding and insult. The conductor was surprised at this outburst. He simply explained to the player that he did not blame the viola section, and also did not intentionally point his finger at any particular person. However, on account of the impolite attitude of the player, the conductor’s mood was severely affected and the conductor decided to take an early break in the rehearsal.

(Solution)

This happened in a professional orchestra in Taiwan five years ago. The other musicians saw the incident and the impolite attitude of this player. The only thing for the conductor to do was to explain his own unconscious behavior, and try not to fight with the player. If the conductor had reacted badly and started to dispute

⁴³ Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director’s Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 123-124.

with the musician, it could have been very negative and may have caused other musicians to have less respect for the conductor. The only thing we can say is, **the leader must have more tolerance and better demeanor, in order to earn the admiration of the people led by him.**

(Situation B)

During the performance, there was a movement performed by a soloist accompanied by the orchestra. After the orchestra played the interlude, the soloist did not sing at the right time. The conductor did not stop and he was hoping that the soloist could find the place as soon as possible. The soloist still could not find exactly where the music was, and he finally hurriedly raised his hand and said to the conductor loudly: "I can't find the place, could we start again?" The conductor could do nothing else but to stop the orchestra and start again.

(Solution)

This disaster took place at the school where I was getting my master's degree. At that time, the conductor was my professor- Dr. William Cutter. After the piece was finished, everyone felt frustrated and sad, and the mood was strongly affected by this incident. Even worse, the second half of the performance promised to be more difficult because no one would be able to concentrate. During the intermission, everyone went backstage, and no one dared to look at Dr. Cutter. We all thought that he might start to scold someone. While everyone was bowing their head low, suddenly, we heard Dr. Cutter's pleasant and clear voice, says, "Thanks to everyone, thanks to our orchestra, and thanks to our wonderful soloists!" He spoke out all the names of soloists and thanked each of them. We could not believe what we had heard and seen! Dr. Cutter's sincere smile calmed and comforted everyone. After the intermission, we entered the stage again, with everyone's mood lifted, and the people around me felt pleasant and confident. It was the best singing we had ever done for that difficult music! This experience made a profound impression on me. The

emotional intelligence of the conductor can be so powerful that it can make very important changes for the ensemble.⁴⁴

Charisma of the Conductor

Richard Strauss's father, a famous horn player, once said, "*Remember this, you conductors. We watch you step up on the podium and open your score. Before you pick up your baton, we know if it is you or we who will be master.*"⁴⁵

Some experienced orchestra players told me some conductors inspire them to play for them, but some conductors cannot influence them at all. It does not mean the process of the practice was boring or no fun. It happens when the conductor steps upon the podium, looks at the musicians surrounding him, then raises his hands- and the musicians start feeling the psychological changes made by the conductor. It sounds horrifying for us as conductors, doesn't it? It makes me start to think seriously about "charisma of the conductor."

"Leadership is not domination, but the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal,"⁴⁶ and "the ability to elicit willing responses from others is largely dependent on one's personality."⁴⁷ "...A magnetic personality is as important to a conductor as scholarship, and much more essential than either perfect pitch or a photographic memory."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Emotional intelligence: An individual's ability to manage him or herself as well as other relationships. It consists of four fundamental capabilities of self-awareness, self management, social awareness, and social skill. (www.cwru.edu/med/epidbio/mphp439/Dictionary.htm)

⁴⁵ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 61.

⁴⁶ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 149.

⁴⁷ Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 126.

⁴⁸ David Ewen, *Dictator of the Baton* (Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1943), p. 9.

People conclude more about others' personalities through "the look on your face than the words that come out of that face." ⁴⁹ The expression of the conductor can "speak" to his ensemble and attract their attention if he "looks calm, happy, interacting, and self-confident." ⁵⁰ If the conductor is preoccupied with his thought and acts uneasy, his ability to persuade to people is reduced greatly.

Being a leader, the conductor should train and remind himself to:

(1) Respect the ensemble and be patient:

"In a good circumstance, one's musicians are colleagues and must be treated with genuine respect". ⁵¹ People will respect you more when they feel your respect them. As a player of the Vienna Philharmonic said about von Karajan: "I've always greatly respected von Karajan, simply because he treated you man to man...he was a real man, a real gentleman..." ⁵² With proper respect, it will be much easier for the conductor to earn the trust of the ensemble and also to solve the problems during the rehearsal:

Sometimes problems work themselves out better if treated gently rather than with force. Patient understanding does have its virtue, especially when applied to artistic endeavor. And the director who has not learned to get his or her ego out of the way in upright situations will be unable to develop that unique quality called graciousness. ⁵³

Munch says: "How do you become a conductor? Heaven knows that it takes enthusiasm, love, patience, and work." ⁵⁴ Patience can help the conductor keep a calm

⁴⁹ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 102.

⁵⁰ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 102

⁵¹ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The complete conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 94.

⁵² Richard Osborne, *Conversations with Von Karajan* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13.

⁵³ Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 127-128.

⁵⁴ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 13.

and a clear mind, and overcome all of the difficulties during the rehearsal. If the conductor doesn't have patience, he may lose his temper quite often.

(2) Treat members with integrity and fairness:

If the conductor favors or neglects certain ensemble members, it will cause friction within the ensemble. "A chorus cannot tolerate exceptions for individuals: any *prima donna* treatment signifies the beginning of the end of a genuinely integrated membership."⁵⁵

(3) Be human, humorous, slow down, shut up and listen:⁵⁶

Although the conductor is the leader and the main "talker" during the rehearsal, he can listen to the ensemble members' opinions patiently and with respect, and at the same time, achieve real communication and understand the thoughts from others if he can just "listen, not judge."⁵⁷ If an ensemble member's behavior is really unacceptable, the conductor must guide him properly. The conductor should clearly indicate his expectation of his ensemble, and also make sure the expectation is within the member's ability. Sometimes there might be certain unbearable behaviors, but try to find the merit of each ensemble member and sincerely appreciate each of them.

(4) Stillness and confidence:

The common mistakes made by young conductors are, to act hurriedly, bury themselves in the score, or start before the musicians are ready. They sometimes speak too fast, or with an overbearing manner. All of these things mentioned above can allow the conductor to make mistakes more easily and lose the trust of the

⁵⁵ Kurt Thomas, *The Choral Conductor*, trans. Alfred Mann and William H. Reese (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1971), 43.

⁵⁶ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 10.

⁵⁷ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 173.

ensemble. The conductor should discipline himself, take a deep breath before he steps on the podium, slow down, and try his best to be calm during the rehearsal.

Stillness suggests confidence and a certain maturity. Slowing down means being purposeful and acting with awareness. People will give you more attention and pay more attention to you with your steady pace. If you take the time to rest and test, you'll be a lot faster⁵⁸.

The Speaking Manner

The conductor should be a good communicator.⁵⁹ “‘What do they expect from a new conductor?’ Godfrey Layefsky, for many years first violist of Pittsburgh Symphony, answered this question with one word: ‘communication.’”⁶⁰

A good communicator is one who can use proper words, accurately express his thinking, and at the same time, can quickly understand what others are trying to express.

A flair for what to say, and what not to say, is part of a conductor's psychological perception and calls for presence of mind. To know how to word criticisms, to feel when to give encouragement, to sense when a tense moment is best relieved by a joking remark, all this affects the relationship between the leader and his group.⁶¹

If the conductor knows the art of speaking, he can avoid improper words that might cause misunderstanding. In order to avoid misunderstanding, the conductor may observe the facial expressions of the ensemble members; if members express their confusion or disapproval on their faces, the conductor should explain his reasons for making a decision, or ask the ensemble directly for their thoughts. It doesn't mean that the conductor should be a “nice guy.” Actually, the conductor needs to be decisive because of the responsibility of leadership.⁶² This kind of communication is

⁵⁸ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 154.

⁵⁹ Robert W. Demaree, Jr. and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1995), 4.

⁶⁰ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 56.

⁶¹ Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), 394.

⁶² Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 125.

necessary in order to avoid possible conflicts and misunderstanding between the ensemble and the conductor, and to create a harmonious atmosphere during the rehearsal. Also, “Whatever the conductor says he should say in a loud, clear voice, for no orchestra trusts a timid leader,”⁶³ says Peter Fuchs. And then he should quickly “look over every single player.” With the eye language, the conductor could take care of each player and also make sure that everybody is ready. Besides, the conductor should be careful of the duration of his talking. When the conductor starts making a “speech,” team members will gradually lose their attention after a few minutes.⁶⁴

During the rehearsal, sometimes the conductor makes mistakes. Under everyone’s eye, it is not smart if he tries to hide any mistake, because it only puts himself into a more embarrassed or difficult position. The best way is to admit fault immediately. Pierre Monteux once told his student: “When you make a mistake you must admit it, but of course’ - he added with a twinkle- ‘you must not make it too often’.”⁶⁵ Most of the ensemble members will accept the courage the conductor has shown.⁶⁶

When the conductor asks the musicians to do what he wants, he can make his request by starting his sentence with “let us ...” or “could we try....”. If the conductor uses “we” instead of “you,” it can let the ensemble feel and realize: “the conductor is ‘with us,’” and also have the feeling of “being invited,” instead of being “ordered.”

⁶³ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 48.

⁶⁴ According to the survey, only 24% respondents can accept if the conductor gives a long speech. See appendix “question 17,” p. 60.

⁶⁵ Max Rudolf, “Rehearsal Techniques,” *The Conductor’s Art*, ed. Carl Bamberger (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 288.

⁶⁶ According to the question 5 and 14, 77% respondents agree that the conductor should admit his own mistakes, and tries to improve. 90% respondents think the conductor will not compromise his professionalism if he acknowledges his mistakes. See appendix, p. 58 and 59.

Another issue is temper control, which many young conductors may confuse temperament with emotional outbursts:⁶⁷

“The unforgivable sin of conducting, so serious that it has damaged more than one conductor’s prestige and in some cases has resulted in termination of tenure, is losing of one’s temper. A conductor may be distressed at the inability of his chorus to realize his wishes, but he must nevertheless remain cheerful and encouraging.... The singers must respect not only the musician but the man as well, and a single loss of temper may jeopardize relations between chorus and director, a situation which can never yield the best artistic results.”⁶⁸

The conductor can speak with a firm and serious manner to the ensemble if they make the same mistake many times or they don’t have a good attitude during the rehearsal, but he needs to be extra careful about his temper and words.

Conductors should never offer criticism

... delivered in a harsh, sarcastic, angry tone, providing neither a chance to respond nor any suggestion of how to do things better. It leaves the person receiving it feeling helpless and angry. From the vantage point of emotional intelligence, such criticism displays an ignorance of the feelings it will trigger in those who receive it, and the devastating effect those feelings will have on their motivation, energy, and confidence in doing their work.⁶⁹

The ensemble needs a calm leader but not a dictator. If the ensemble member’s behavior is really unacceptable, the conductor must “guide him properly, and not attack the person’s character, motive, or ability. Stick to the needed behavior change.”⁷⁰ Therefore, any criticism has to state the facts and the way to improve.

⁶⁷ Lloyd Pfautsch, *Mental Warmups for the Choral Director* (New York: Lawson-Gould Music Publishers, Inc., 1969), 26.

⁶⁸ Archibald T. Davison, *Choral Conducting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 41.

⁶⁹ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 151.

⁷⁰ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 44.

The conductor should also pay attention to how his words sound in another people's ears, and adjust in order to let people accept them easily.⁷¹

Besides criticism, anger is another important issue. Psychologist Diane Tice found that “ventilating anger is one of the worst ways to cool down: outbursts of rage typically pump up the brain's emotional arousal, leaving people feeling more angry, not less.” “When people told of times they had taken their rage out on the person who provoked it, the net effect was to prolong the mood rather than end it. Far more effective was when people first cooled down, and then, in a more constructive or assertive manner, confronted the person to settle their dispute.”⁷² Also, the Tibetan monks suggest: “Don't suppress it. But don't act on it.”⁷³ **The degree of the criticism should be according to the degree of the error.**

Conductor's Demeanor

The conductor's demeanor must always be true and real. The conductor should be fair to every single musician, and not show preferences or dislikes. Some conductors tend to judge people and believe that “everybody is working against me,” which is the wrong pattern of thinking and needs to be avoided. However, it is inevitable that players may be biased against the conductor for many different

⁷¹ According to the survey, most of the respondents can't accept if the conductor: loud yelling, throwing the music in anger, weeps, the conductor walks out, the conductor speaks sarcastically, or the conductor expresses frustration with a sign. See appendix, question 7, p. 59.

⁷² Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 65.

⁷³ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 64.

reasons.⁷⁴ The conductor should neither take those incorrect notions personally, nor take revenge on the players for this. Negative emotion doesn't resolve any problem.

For example, for some reason, one of the singers in the chorus was somewhat rude during my rehearsal. I was trying to convey the idea of the music, and I requested that everyone listen to my thoughts. But this particular singer tried to cover her mouth with her music and seemed to criticize my rehearsal technique. Therefore, I responded: "Please let me and everybody know right now if you have any comment!" She replied, embarrassed, "it is *a cappella*, so I don't understand why you still play the piano when we sing?" I explained, "This piece is kind of difficult for our chorus, and the second sopranos are still not able to get the pitches with accuracy, so we need the help from the piano for now. I know it is *a cappella*, but I have to consider how to make the rehearsal effective by helping you feel successful and comfortable." She nodded and understood.

I usually tell my ensemble members that they are welcome to make any comment during the rehearsal or talk to me personally. It will be very negative if they are unhappy and criticize me behind my back. I prefer to discuss issues with people, to come up with a resolution to a problem, and to really **work with** them. Assuming that everybody appropriately expresses any confusion and that the conductor clearly explains it, there is no need for distrust or any gray area. Being honest is one of the best ways to effectively present music. I was glad that I did not just tolerate and suffer, but asked her to express her ideas instead. If I was just angry or suffering without saying anything, in the course of time I would dislike her and that would ruin our relationship. **As she got the opportunity to express what bothered her, I also got the opportunity to explain what I thought.** Since the

⁷⁴ According to the survey, some of the respondents judge a conductor by gender (20%), nationality (16%), and may have different attitude for an assistant conductor as opposed as regular conductor (65%). See appendix, questions 8, 9, and 11, p. 59.

conductor and players have different roles on the stage, they definitely think in different ways. When the conductor takes something for granted, players may not think in the same way. Therefore, communicating plays an important role – people express what they consider, and at the same time understand others – which will reduce a lot of unnecessary misunderstandings. Besides, if the conductor loses his temper merely because of one or two members, it is unfair to others, and may bring about unnecessary misunderstandings or hurt feelings. Thus, the conductor should think carefully before getting angry in order to be in good emotional control.⁷⁵

Knowing the Psychological Conditions of His Musicians

Besides controlling himself, the conductor should encourage players whenever he can; but if he doesn't know them well, it is not easy to do. Charles Munch used to observe his ensemble members and tried to understand their personalities and psychological conditions through watching their “eyes.”⁷⁶ Peter Paul Fuchs even suggests the conductor “may be an amateur psychologist who can tell a great deal about a man by the way he looks at him or by the way he takes his instrument out of the case. If he does, it will give him a considerable advantage in his work.”⁷⁷

Knowing his ensemble members well will be a great help especially when the rehearsal mood is not quite right during rehearsal. Besides showing his optimistic and

⁷⁵ According to the survey, there are 76% respondents agree that the emotional self-control is an important issue for a conductor. See appendix, question 7, p. 57.

⁷⁶ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 77.

⁷⁷ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 39.

positive attitude by keeping a smile, the conductor can change the bad mood of the ensemble by putting himself into the psychological situation of the musician who looks unhappy today: “She is not a rude person, so she is probably in a bad mood or something bad happened. I should try to encourage her or smile at her more often; that may change her low energy.” Or after rehearsing the conductor may ask her, “you don’t look well today, are you alright?” Usually the ensemble members will appreciate that the conductor cares about them sincerely. Ensemble members may not feel strongly about the conductor, but they will be happy to work with him if he can deal with their emotions well.

It should be noted, however, that the conductor should not attempt to make excessive repeated efforts to overcome a particular shortcoming. For example, if the sopranos are unable to sing a downward minor third correctly after several tries, perhaps it is time to move on and try to correct this problem at a later time. This is necessary to avoid causing a sense of discouragement and also to maintain a steady pace of progress. In addition, it protects the singers from losing their voices. It often turns out that, after the rehearsal, the conductor (having been able to think through the situation thoroughly) may discover what the underlying problem was and come up with an effective solution.

How do you encourage your ensemble? The answer is, with “kind words” and sympathy. The musicians will respond with wonderful performing if they receive “kind words” from the conductor:

“To encourage the horns to produce an uninhibited crescendo in a difficult passage from the third movement of Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’, Casals said: ‘Let us make the crescendo right to the end of the phrase. Play without fear. If the note doesn’t come out, you’re welcome all the same.’ The note did come out, and with rousing vigour.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ David Blum, *Casals and the art of interpretation* (California: University of California Press, 1977), 10.

The conductor's sympathy, trust and help are equally essential when playing an important and difficult solo segment; the conductor has to be respectful to the soloist's interpretation and allow him to freely present his.⁷⁹

Charles Munch concludes,

“What attitude should the conductor take toward the musicians to obtain the best results? - Let him not make long speeches to them. Musicians come to play, not to listen to lectures. Say what you must in as few words as possible. ... Let them retain some sense of responsibility. Never discourage them. Restore the confidence of those who are in trouble. Do not make much of their errors. Correct them without embarrassing them before their comrades.”⁸⁰

As a Teacher

“All conductors are music educators.”⁸¹ The conductor acts primarily as a teacher during rehearsals in terms of interpretation of the music, correcting the mistakes, and introducing knowledge of the musical background and style. The Chinese proverb “teaching and learning advance mutually” means that the teacher during instruction also learns from the students. Consequently, the conductor should not be afraid to try different or new rehearsal techniques. Through assessing the responses of the singers, the conductor can improve his rehearsal skills and find the best way to work with a particular group.⁸²

⁷⁹ Sir John Barbirolli, “The Art of Conducting,” *The Conductor's Art* ed. Carl Bamberg (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 244.

⁸⁰ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 61.

⁸¹ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 5.

⁸² Lloid Pfautsch, “The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal,” *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 78.

Speaking Skill:

In general, if the ensemble's level of musical proficiency is lower, they need more encouragement from the conductor.⁸³ Encouragement does not equal superficial praise. The conductor needs to clearly point out the things that the ensemble members did well. This is especially true with adult ensembles, as they usually can easily sense a "good will lie". The encouragement will be even more effective when statements are accompanied with a smile and expressed with sincerity.

When the members really feel they are being praised, their self-confidence will grow and learning motivation will also increase. Following Torrance's theory on "Increasing students' creative thinking," a criticism must clearly explain its cause and consequence relationship. Do not simply state, "this is good" or "this is bad," but say "I like this because..." and "If we do this... it can be even better."⁸⁴ Take the choir as the example; the conductor can say, "You guys sound good, the rhythm was exactly right. Can we now pay more attention to the volume?" Or, "That was great! Our diction is more precise than last time. May we sing it one more time and try to make a better balance? We need more tenor sound but less soprano." Most of the time, the conductor should "praise frequently, criticize indirectly."⁸⁵ As discussed above, one should use positive, constructive, and encouraging statements to stimulate the motivation and interest of the members. Furthermore, the conductor can train the singers "to be their own teacher." When rehearsing with the University Chorale, Dr. Edward Maclary (Professor of University of Maryland) sometimes would test the

⁸³ According to the survey, most of the respondents enjoy working with encouraging conductor most. See appendix, question 3, p. 58.

⁸⁴ E. P. Torrance, *Guiding Creative Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 26.

⁸⁵ Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 119.

students' ability to analyze the quality of their singing. On a relatively new song that the group had practiced for only a few times, he would ask, "If we sing this song again, what would you do to make the singing better?" Surprisingly, those non-music major student singers were always able to come up with appropriate and effective suggestions. When the ensemble members have the ability to think independently regarding the quality of singing, the ensemble would improve rapidly because they know how to use their ears and brain during the rehearsal. I also use this method on my amateur choir in order to make sure whether the ensemble understands or not. I might ask, "since these notes are quite high, what preparations should the sopranos make?" Usually because of my repeated reminders, they would reply, "Create more space inside and lift up the eyebrows." This kind of "question and answer" method may be effective in drawing ensemble members' attention and increasing their sense of active participation.

Classroom Dynamics and Classroom Climate:

The classroom dynamic has similar meaning to "group dynamics" mentioned by Lloyd Pfausch.⁸⁶ The behaviors of students and teachers have a close interaction.⁸⁷ If the teacher treats students with acceptance, encouragement, and appreciation, students will respond in a positive manner and have a strong will to participate in the class.⁸⁸ It is what the conductor expects during the rehearsal that can make the rehearsal run more efficiently. The personality of the teacher has a

⁸⁶ Lloyd Pfausch, "The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal," *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 70.

⁸⁷ S. Klein, *Student influence on teacher behavior* (American Educational Research Journal, 1971), 403-421.

⁸⁸ N. A. Flanders, *Teacher influence, pupil attitudes and achievement: Studies in interaction analysis*, Final report, Cooperative research project No. 397 (Mineapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1960)

strong influence on the students. The students will perform differently under the direction of different teachers. So the teacher's behavior has a decisive influence on the behavior of the students.⁸⁹

I emphasize on emotional intelligence because the conductor has to and must keep a good mood for rehearsal: "Good moods, while they last, enhance the ability to think flexibly and with more complexity, thus making it easier to find solutions to problems, whether intellectual or interpersonal."⁹⁰ Each rehearsal is a lesson to discover the problems and their solutions, a challenge for the conductor to remain energetic and sharp-minded as well. "Even mild mood changes can sway thinking. In making plans or decisions people in good moods have a perceptual bias that leads them to be more expansive and positive in their thinking."⁹¹ Some senior conductors also suggest that a sense of humor is essential for the conductor. Amusing the team members can dramatically change people's moods, build up their attention, improve the rehearsal atmosphere, create an efficient rehearsal, and encourage a good interaction in between.

"The conductor himself, if he is absorbed in his work, will often quite innocently say or do things which amuse the chorus... A rehearsal should be enjoyable in the widest sense. The conductor or singer who does not anticipate the fun as well as the artistic profit should stay at home."⁹²

A smart conductor knows how to relieve a group with a little amusement, making fun of himself or exchanging banter with ensemble members. "Humor is one

⁸⁹ Chin-Hsien Chu, *Psychology of Instruction* (Taipei: Wu Nan Publisher, 1995), 126.

⁹⁰ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 85.

⁹¹ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (USA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1995), 85.

⁹² Archibald T. Davison, *Choral Conducting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 9.

of the forces at work in group dynamics,”⁹³ says Lloyd Pfautsch. Humor used appropriately can draw an ensemble together, creating a wonderful, efficient rehearsal atmosphere.⁹⁴ Trying to reduce pressure with a sense of humor, the conductor can simply bring the musicians a positive mood, obviating distrust and creating a strong faith among them.⁹⁵

This term “classroom climate” mentioned in *Psychology of Instruction*, speaks about different groups that have different characteristics.⁹⁶ It is the same for choirs and orchestras. With choirs for example, as Lloyd Pfautsch says, various kinds of choral groups have different group dynamics in a rehearsal. The conductor needs to adjust his rehearsal pacing, humor, and general attitude when he rehearses with various groups.⁹⁷ If the conductor understands the characteristics of a particular group and the reasons that the ensemble members are participating, then he can make suitable repertoire choices and rehearsal plans, and create an appropriate atmosphere for the ensemble.

Differences among some types of choral ensembles

The following discussion will touch on differences among some types of choral ensembles:

1. Women’s Chorus:

In comparing a Women’s Chorus with a Mixed Chorus, both of which I conducted while at the University of Maryland, the characteristic of the Women’s

⁹³ Lloyd Pfautsch, “The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal,” *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 71.

⁹⁴ Lloyd Pfautsch, “The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal,” *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 70.

⁹⁵ D. A. Benton, *Executive Charisma* (USA: Mc Graw Hill, 2003), 184.

⁹⁶ Chin-Hsien Chu, *Psychology of Instruction* (Taipei: Wu Nan Publisher, 1995), 131.

Chorus was quiet and shy, especially in the beginning of the semester. I needed to lead them in an extremely positive and vigorous fashion. I rehearsed in an enthusiastic manner and lively way. For example, warm ups with a downward five-note scale with the words, “How are you today”; encouraging them to look at each other with a greeting smile. I allowed them to massage each other’s shoulders and say hello to each other at the same time. I also used the humor to break the ice and ease the ensemble members. When they feel comfortable during the rehearsal, then they can make friends with each other easily.

Being a conductor of a Women’s Choir, I always needed a strong sympathetic and concerned mind, because female singers are somewhat sensitive and in need of encouragement. Also, the conductor can interact with the singers before or after the rehearsal, and they will be happy and appreciate it.

2. Men’s Chorus:

In the opinion of Lloyd Pfautsch, the conductor of a Men’s Chorus requires more of a sense of humor than the one of a women’s.⁹⁸ Men’s Chorus can also benefit from a “buddy-buddy” relationship. For example, when Patrick Walders led the Men’s Chorus at the University of Maryland, this group grew rapidly both in number and quality during 3 years. One of the main reasons was the close friendship and harmonious atmosphere that Patrick created with the ensemble members. Once a Men’s Chorus builds this kind of belonging feeling and identification within the group, they will have a strong will to contribute their efforts to the conductor.

⁹⁸ Lloyd Pfautsch, “The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal,” *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 71.

3. Mixed Chorus:

Let's take University Chorale of University of Maryland as an example. The ensemble members are active and vigorous. They are willing to talk with people, and they have good and positive reactions caused by the conductor's jokes or small funny movements. Because of the mixed gender of members, there is a greater diversity of personalities in the group and so building discipline is a challenge.

In this group, the conductor needs to insist on discipline while shifting between a serious and humorous attitude. Because they are talkative and always have many interesting ideas to share, sometimes the rehearsal can become noisy and disorderly. The conductor needs to train them with admonishments, such as "please don't talk when the conductor is talking" and raise his hands to show "be quiet now" at the same time. The conductor may need to remind them for several times for them to get used to the rules.

4. Concert Choir or select college choir:

"A select college choir can rehearse at a much faster and more demanding pace than the average volunteer church choir."⁹⁹ If the conductor slows down his pacing, the ensemble members will lose their interest and feel bored right away. The Chamber Singers of the New England Conservatory are an example of this kind of group. The members are the most selected from music major students. They have excellent sight-singing skill, excellent ears, a high quality of musicality, and quick responses to the conductor's demand. If the conductor tries to explain something they already know or something not so important, they will show on their face

⁹⁹ Lloid Pfautsch, "The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal," *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 71.

immediately: “Why do I need to do this?” or “I know, you don’t need to explain!” Therefore, the only thing that the conductor needs to do is to point out what he wants in short and clear sentences, they fix, and then go on; or he may point out the mistakes without stopping. The conductor can arrange at least three pieces in a one-and-a-half hour rehearsal. It is better not to stay in the same music and practice it repeatedly, unless the conductor has very important reasons to do so. Being a conductor of this kind of group, he needs to have an excellent reaction, judgment, organization, and control of time. The most important thing that the high level musicians care about is whether the conductor can run the rehearsal efficiently with quality and good communication:

“they expect authority and efficiency from their leader when he finds it necessary to discuss passages whose rendition needs verbal explanation. The ability to express himself plainly and concisely is an important part of the conductor’s craft”.¹⁰⁰

So they require a superb “professional” conductor more than other groups and may not care too much if the conductor is humorous or nice.

5. Amateur Choir:

There are many different kinds of amateur choirs. The ensemble members join a choir for various reasons. Some of them join because they want to know people and make friends. Some of them look for the chance to learn and improve their singing skills, therefore they join with musical expectations. The teaching purpose for the amateur choir is to lead them to enjoy the beauty of music and teach them how to show their feelings of the text via singing. The conductor’s attitude should stay lively and vivacious when he rehearses in order to inspire the interest and attract the attention of the ensemble members. At the same time, the conductor needs a strong sense of humor and profound imagination, and must also demonstrate how to sing as

¹⁰⁰ Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1969), 387.

much as possible. Although the amateur choir members' level is not high, it doesn't mean that the conductor can't ask them to do something "musical" or "skillful". If the ensemble members have the strong desire to learn, the conductor can explain the singing skills, musical style and musicality in a simple way for them to understand easily. Actually, if the conductor does ask them, it can arouse their learning desire for the improvement, unless the conductor asks them to do something too difficult. The conductor has to be very careful about his critical words, because the ensemble members need lots of encouragement, praise and patience from him.¹⁰¹ If they feel frustrated, they may quit and abandon their efforts.

No matter what kind of groups that the conductor has, he needs to pay attention to how to create the classroom (or we can say rehearsal room) atmosphere. "A teacher who emphasizes the classroom climate will get better results in his teaching than other teachers".¹⁰² In conclusion, a suitable rehearsal atmosphere for the ensemble must be: "positive, warm, harmonious, respectful" and also have the interaction of mutual help among the ensemble members and the conductor.

As a Colleague:

"No ensemble, no conductor." The conductor should be alert and should realize who are the ones that "make sound." A successful concert relies on the perfect interaction between the conductor and performers. As Bruno Walter says, "He (the conductor) who cannot deal with people or exert his influence on them is not fully qualified for this profession."¹⁰³ Therefore, people's eagerness and emotions are

¹⁰¹ James C. Coleman, *Psychology and Effective Behavior* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1969), 383.

¹⁰² Chin-Hsien Chu, *Psychology of Instruction* (Taipei: Wu Nan Publisher, 1995), 132.

¹⁰³ Bruno Walter, *Of Music And Music-Making*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 111.

the key points affecting the quality of music, and the attitude of both players and conductor is equally important.¹⁰⁴ Thus, as a conductor, his job is to inspire people, bring positive attitude and musical emotion to them as well, rather than involve his emotions too much. James Ross, conductor of the University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra, says that a conductor should learn how to let go and allow singers to present their emotions once he has cued singers with a clear gesture. With will and emotions, the conductor should inspire people's musicality and feeling. As soon as music starts, the conductor should not try to "control music," but simply follow the music itself. If the conductor can appropriately pass the "power" into the singers and give them more freedom to express their emotions, everything will go tremendously well. Robert Schumann claims, "the less an orchestra is led the higher its standing; or, the more an orchestra has to be led the lower the level of its attainment".¹⁰⁵

Therefore, the relationship between conductor and performers should be equal and cooperative, or we should say "colleague" relations. It is certain that a conductor has the right and obligation to present his/her musical ideas and emotions, so do the team members. In Leopold Stokowski's view, "A good conductor is an integral part of the orchestra."¹⁰⁶ As a result, a good conductor should be regarded as a part of the group, not just simply as a leader.

In order to create a perfect musical performance, it is important for the conductor to forget his ego, and try to even "make friends" with his ensemble members.

People who are willing to get along with people, make friends easily, and feel

¹⁰⁴ According to the survey, 67% respondents agree that both the conductor and the ensemble should take the responsibility if the performance fails. See appendix, question 20, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Schumann, "About Conducting," *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberg (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 64.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Schumann, "About Conducting," *The Conductor's Art*, ed. Carl Bamberg (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 64.

comfortable in the group, have the advantage in being a conductor.¹⁰⁷ If the conductor keeps good friendship with the ensemble members, it can be a positive benefit for leading the ensemble. Some of the conductors think they need to keep the distance with the ensemble members after the rehearsal because they are afraid that the personal friendship may destroy their loftiness and dignity. This kind of thinking emphasizes the establishment of the “professional” image of the conductor. Actually,

“current practice suggests that you should have a personable relationship with your musicians – professional but not casual or intimate – in which they are treated with respect while you are understood to represent “expert authority”.¹⁰⁸

So the conductor may not only keep the friendship, but also have authority without any conflict. As we mentioned before, Patrick Walders’ successful example with the University of Maryland Men’s Chorus is based on this kind of personal relationship.

“The musical achievement will be a higher one if the conductor’s moral faculties allow him to be ‘his brother’s keeper’ in relation to be the orchestra, rather than its task-master.”¹⁰⁹

In making friends with others, we all know it requires our sincerity, sympathy and toleration; the same is true for friendship between the conductor and the ensemble. As Wagner says, an experienced orchestra, for example like the Dresden

¹⁰⁷ According to the survey, 43% respondents think a personal relationship between the conductor and ensemble members will affect the rehearsal. Also, 38% of them think it will be affect positively. See appendix, question 16 and 17, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 97.

¹⁰⁹ Bruno Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 123.

orchestra, has a certain “family feeling.” And “the family feeling was ready to respond to the suggestions of a sympathetic leader”.¹¹⁰

“Only orchestra musicians have the capacity to judge good and bad conducting.”¹¹¹ Unfortunately, although the musicians know who is good and who is bad, they rarely let the conductor know what is the good or bad in his conducting. What kind of benefit for the conductor is there if he keeps a good relationship with his ensemble besides “making better music?” The answer is “sincere advice”. If the ensemble members think the conductor is their friend, they may tell you what they think. After the rehearsal, I always ask the ensemble members to tell me the truth, and then I can try to improve my weaknesses. I learn a lot from the ensemble members when we discuss conducting privately. In addition to the suggestions from the conducting professors, I think it is one of the best and fastest ways to improve my conducting.

This kind of relationship can also help the beginning conductor know the group well, especially if he just takes over the ensemble for only several weeks. When the young conductor chats with the ensemble members and asks for these kind of suggestions, sometimes he will learn something he would not expect at all. They may tell him they want him to be more strict because the previous conductor treated them like that, and they think he is “too nice” without showing them “I am the leader”.¹¹² Sometimes the situation will be the total opposite of this. That may be a good thing for the young conductor to know and adjust his attitude for this

¹¹⁰ Richard Wagner, *On Conducting*. trans. Edward Dannreuther (Michigan: Scholarly Press Inc., 1976), 72-73.

¹¹¹ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 62.

¹¹² Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 4.

kind of situation, especially if he has a poor interaction with the ensemble.

According to the survey, the ensemble think the conductor should communicate with them openly, and try to know what they really care about.¹¹³

So the conductor makes friends with the ensemble members with his sincerity, and tries his best to understand the needs and feelings. That will make his task much easier with this group in the future.

¹¹³ 70% respondents think the conductor should communicate with them openly if the interaction is poor between the conductor and the ensemble. Also, 27% people think the conductor should keep patient and try to do a good job. See Appendix, question 18, p. 60.

Chapter Three

The Inner Control of The Conductor: Before the rehearsal, during the rehearsal, after the rehearsal and the performance

Before the Rehearsal:

The Conductor's Mental "Warm Ups"

Each rehearsal is particularly significant and no rehearsal should be wasted. Players are not always in excellent condition while rehearsing, but the conductor must require himself to be perfect in order to make an efficient rehearsal. It is certain to be stressful if the conductor is inexperienced at leading a group. Peter Fuchs claims: "Conducting is often a war of nerves, and even the best musician cannot become a successful conductor if his nerves will let him down."¹¹⁴ Therefore, the conductor needs to learn how to calm down no matter how intense he feels towards the upcoming rehearsal. To reduce the anxiety, the only thing the conductor can do is be well prepared. Before the rehearsal, besides preparations of music analysis and interpretations, the conductor should make sure what does he plan to do and say in the "real" rehearsal but not his "imaginary" one. The conductor should ask himself: **"What do you plan to say to the group? Write out some sample sentences." "Do you plan to demonstrate any ideas? If so, what and how?"**¹¹⁵ These mental preparations are just like the "warm up" for the conductor.¹¹⁶ If he "warms up" himself well, then he can run the rehearsal fluently and with confidence.

¹¹⁴ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 49.

¹¹⁵ Robert L. Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1998), 203.

¹¹⁶ Lloyd Pfautsch, *Mental Warmups for the Choral Director* (New York: Lawson-Gould Music Publishers, Inc., 1969), 1.

Also, before he goes into the rehearsal room, the conductor's psychological condition should be stable. Assuming that something making the conductor restless or bringing out negative emotion happens at the moment before the rehearsal, he must immediately calm down before walking into the rehearsal room. No matter what happens, and no matter how angry or unhappy he is, he definitely cannot bring in the negative emotions, which would affect badly (or even ruin) the rehearsal. However, if the conductor is overly excited in anticipation of rehearsal, he needs to cool down before rehearsing.

Selections of Repertoire

Choosing the “right” music is the first and most important thing for the conductor before he starts to rehearse with the ensemble. The conductor needs to know both himself and the ensemble well enough that he can make the “right” decision.

Unsuitable repertoire may increase the difficulties of the rehearsal and performance. If the music is too easy for the ensemble, they may feel bored and lose interest. If the music is too difficult, they may feel frustrated. If the music is too difficult for the conductor to handle, there is no way for him to rehearse well, not to mention for him to “teach” the ensemble!

There are several suggestions for choosing the repertoire:

Repertoire must be chosen that:

1. You, as a conductor, can effectively teach to your choir;
2. can be a challenging musical experience to the choir;
3. can offer an opportunity for the chorister to learn more about choral music;
4. can be successfully performed.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Gordon H. Lamb, *Choral Techniques* (Dubuque, Iowa: WM. C Brown Company Publisher, 1974), 93.

Rehearsal Plan: Long Term and Short Term

Based on the total number of rehearsals to be held, the conductor sets a schedule according to the difficulty of the music. The music should be rotated throughout the period so that every piece or movement will be refreshed as needed before the concert. Pfautsch has suggested that a long piece should be divided into several parts, with the most difficult one being tackled first followed by the next most difficult part.¹¹⁸ Personally, I tend to follow this method because I prefer to devote more rehearsals on the most difficult part. The most difficult part is accompanied by the easier parts in order to avoid frustration. In addition, it is necessary to prepare a timetable for each individual rehearsal to ensure good control of the use of time and a smooth flow of the practices. In general, at the beginning of each rehearsal since the members are in their better mental and physical states, it is desirable to practice those parts that would require more focused efforts. Many professors have suggested that before ending the rehearsal, the conductor should go over all the pieces practiced in the session, and possibly including another familiar piece from a previous session. This will not only provide a chance to refresh all the songs but also help make the members feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. In the case of rehearsing an orchestra, sometimes there may be only a few rehearsals of a very long piece. The conductor should first note the time needed to go over the entire piece, and then subtract the time from the total rehearsal time. The remaining time is carefully allocated for correcting errors and improving music quality. When rehearsing a long piece, if the conductor spends too much time on particular portions or segments, depriving the group the

¹¹⁸ Lloid Pfautsch, "The Choral Conductor and the Rehearsal," *Choral Conducting- A Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker and Julius Herford (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 72.

opportunity to play the complete piece once before the concert, the members will feel a great sense of insecurity. Thus, young or inexperienced conductors or students must learn to form a habit of setting up an appropriate timetable to train themselves to be well organized and coordinated conductors.

During the Rehearsal

Teaching Sequence and Goals

Even in leading adult ensembles, orderly teaching steps are necessary. This is especially true with choruses because the singers usually need more help than instrumental players. The conductor needs to have well ordered procedures during the rehearsal, trying to accomplish one thing at a time. If the conductor tries to accomplish too many things at once, the ensemble members will feel confused and have difficulty in following him. For example, the conductor should not ask the ensemble to make phrasing or dynamics before they can sing the right notes and rhythm. Lacking the right order, it just wastes the rehearsal time and everyone's effort. Without feeling any improvement, the ensemble members will feel frustrated and not have high expectations for the next rehearsal. So the conductor needs to make a reasonable rehearsal plan, for example, ask for musical qualities after they know how to sing the correct notes with correct rhythm. In this way, the ensemble members will know what they have achieved, and what is the task in the next rehearsal. This ensures that the members will have a solid sense of accomplishment.

Attracting the Musicians' Attention:

One of the conductor's tasks is let all the musicians pay attention to him during the whole rehearsal. The conductor can use some skills to attract the ensemble right away while they walk into the rehearsal room. For example, the conductor can "give his performers a calendar that shows them what to expect to do on a particular day, or write down the names and works he plans to rehearse on the blackboard each rehearsal"¹¹⁹ The conductor can also play the music on the piano he wants to rehearse today. When the singers walk in and hear the music, they can feel and read the music, and set up the psychological preparation for the rehearsal.

During the rehearsal, it is not difficult to keep their attention if the conductor employs some simple efficient practices or procedures. For example, the conductor may ask them some questions, and ask them to answer, such as "Do you understand it?" "Yes," or "I do." And if the conductor wants the musicians to pay *a lot of* attention to him, he needs to "keep pushing,"¹²⁰ and force them to concentrate all the time. For example:

Learn to speak exactly to the point. As quickly as you finish a cutoff, say quickly, "Again! And listen for the oboe this time. Bar 112!" Freeze just a split second to let them find the place, and give them the "prep" beat."
"The authors believe even school ensembles can be essentially free of behavior problems providing the work atmosphere is kept as intense and productive as it should be".¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 126.

¹²⁰ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 418.

¹²¹ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 418.

Of course, the conductor himself must be concentrated while rehearsing. If not, he will easily make mistakes, and players will lose their attention because of the conductor's absence of mind. At the same, the conductor needs to show how eager he wants to make "good" music and absolutely insist on what he wishes to present. Sometimes things may not be so smooth in the rehearsal, but he has to persevere.¹²² The ensemble members will gradually lose their faith towards themselves if the conductor just simply gives up when the performers encounter any difficulties.¹²³

We can also consider the helpful suggestions made by Max Rudolf:¹²⁴

- (1) Before interrupting be sure of what you are going to say.
- (2) Educate your orchestra so that everyone stops right at your signal and then observes silence.
- (3) Never say "Once more" after interrupting without giving a good reason, unless things have gone wrong to such an extent that the necessity for repeating is obvious.
- (4) Do not discuss musical details without being sure that the players have turned to the right page and know exactly what you are talking about.
- (5) Once you have begun working on a passage you must persist until improvement is noticeable, unless a player is not capable of coping with a particular problem because of technical limitations.
- (6) After proper announcement, resume the music as soon as practicable, and without lingering.
- (7) Spoken comments while the musicians are playing should be used sparingly by the conductor.

What Max Rudolf suggests can make the rehearsal process smoother and more efficient without a waste of rehearsal time. It can also serve as a reassurance to the players. One friend told me he really hated it when the conductor raised his hands as if he was getting ready to conduct, so my friend hurried up to get in position to play (he is a double bass player); but the next second the conductor started to talk! It made him feel somewhat as if he was being fooled. Although it is just a minor bad habit of the conductor, it can cause the ensemble members to be less tolerant if it happens too often.

¹²² 40% respondents never trust a conductor who "changes his mind constantly." See appendix, question 13, p. 59.

¹²³ 78% respondents think that the conductor should "point out the mistakes directly and repeat the passage until it is fixed." See question 4, p. 58.

¹²⁴ Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), 387-388.

To help performers as precisely as possible, the conductor must be familiar with each instrument and its characteristics, as we know, and truly understand what sort of techniques will challenge the musicians. In a chorus the conductor should inspire singers with rich, diverse imagination. As I mentioned before, even mild timbre change can be made by means of presenting different emotions and inner psychophysical activity. To conduct instrumentalists, however, requires a different approach. Assuming that a lighter tone in strings is requested, for instance, it will be more articulate and easier for the conductor to say directly how to perform, such as “off the string, middle”¹²⁵ than describe it by using an excess of words.

Breathing is the most important skill for woodwind and brass players; so, a slight emotional change can affect their performing and even their breathing. Besides, there are various skills of breathing and attack suitable to different instruments, from flutes to trombones; thus the conductor should not conduct with the same gesture when assisting players with different needs.¹²⁶

Closing the Rehearsal:

Every conductor should try to end the rehearsal on time. But before everyone leaves the rehearsal room, the conductor can use the last minutes to “say something” as a conclusion for the rehearsal. For example, the conductor can validate what has been done today in an encouraging manner, and let the ensemble know what the plan is for the next rehearsal.

¹²⁵ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 38.

¹²⁶ Charles Munch, *I am a conductor*, trans. Leonard Burkat (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 29.

After the Rehearsal:

The time for the young conductor to evaluate himself is right after each rehearsal when he still remembers every detail. The conductor can recall what he said, his attitude and the performers' reaction, such as "Is my approach working? Is it slightly out of balance? Do I need to be more firm? More quiet in manner and tone? More patient? More precise in my request?"¹²⁷ The conductor needs to find out the problems, no matter whether the problems are caused by himself or the performers, then improve for the next rehearsal. It is useful for the conductor to be a little picky with himself. The more mistakes he finds, the more refinement he will have in the future. It will also be helpful to develop a pattern of rehearsal after the conductor has enough cumulative experiences. Then he can make a suitable rehearsal plan and style for this group, and refine his own rehearsal style.

In the Performance

A young but experienced violinist in the orchestra told me that the conductor should conduct in different ways for rehearsal and concert. Peter Fuchs states his opinion about this issue:

"How significant this spark should be will largely depend on the conductor's personality. One conductor will give everything he has to give during the rehearsal. He will prepare his concert down to the smallest expressive detail, including the fullest extent of all the emotional peaks, so that the concert will essentially be an exact repetition of the dress rehearsal. Another will rehearse the orchestra most meticulously, but will quite purposely limit the giving of emotional resources, in order to have an element of surprise left in the performance."¹²⁸

However, it depends on what the conductor and players think about, relating to the conductor's personality and players' characteristics. The element of surprise

¹²⁷ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 97.

¹²⁸ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 68.

from the conductor may confuse or even scare players. It is certain, however, that most of conductors will be much more focused in the concert than in the rehearsal, so that the expression and gesture may be more exaggerated than they usually were in rehearsal. For example, in a concert, I got the impression that the conductor was so excited that his face was totally distorted at the *allargando* segment towards the end of music. Being terrified and not sure how to react, I couldn't help myself. I stopped singing because I had never seen such a terrible facial expression in my life. The real problem was that the music was very joyous but the conductor's face looked very angry.

I can recall another example from my previous teacher Dr. Cutter, who used to sing in a professional chorus in Boston. He described that their conductor on stage was so involved with the music that the singers were nervous, worrying something out of control would happen. The piece they performed was really difficult, and needed the conductor to be in control of the whole picture. When the conductor was too emotional, he not only had the risk of loss of control of the music, but also caused unease in the group. Therefore, the conductor needs to keep reason and emotion in a perfect balance while performing in a concert. It is a reminder that too much emotional involvement will lose the acute sensibility of any kinds of feelings.

At the opening of the performances, when the conductor first bows to the audience, he ought to keep a pleasant, relaxed smile on his face. This will help ease the tensions for those members, also remind them to have a nice smile on their faces as well. During the performance, the conductor ought to show his devotion to the music to lead his members but keep certain degree of coolness inside him to avoid making mistakes. Peter Fuchs stated the following important point:

“The conductor should focus on the orchestra and not the audience... Now the conductor's task is to keep things technically well under control, to indicate the correct tempi and tempo changes, to maintain the proper

balance by making adjustment where they are needed, to give the necessary cues, and most of all, to furnish the inspiration through gestures and expressions that will draw the best efforts from the musicians”.¹²⁹

This is the so-called “combination of logic and emotions.”¹³⁰ If the conductor is too cool, it is hard to get the members’ to be emotionally responsive to the music. If the conductor is too emotional, it is easy to loose control or harder for members to concentrate. Furthermore, the conductor needs to keep a positive attitude even if a member makes a mistake at the very beginning. He ought to look forward to the next second and not be mad or regret what mistake this member has just made. If not, “a few minutes later, he himself may make a stupid mistake!”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 74.

¹³⁰ According to the survey, 53% respondents think the most ideal emotional condition for the conductor while performing, is “50% calm and 50% of emotional involvement.” See appendix, question 19, p. 60.

¹³¹ Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 74.

Correcting Tempo, Tone Color, and Pitch through the Use of Psychology

The practical use of the psychology can be explained through musical examples I have chosen. They are: Magnificat by Arvo Pärt, Work Song by Hsin-Jung Tsai, Lobet den Herrn by J. S. Bach, and Os Justi by Anton Bruckner. I have chosen one further the example, the *Libera Me* from the Requiem by Maurice Duruflé, to demonstrate the application of psychological considerations in a detailed rehearsal plan.

Magnificat by Arvo Pärt has many challenging for a college choir (Music example A). The first challenge is the sustained C and it is not easy to keep the same pitch with different vowels. The second challenge is that the whole piece needs a kind of flowing feeling. If not, it is easy for it to become boring and stagnant. When the young college singers sing without having the sense of “making music” and “making direction,” no matter how the conductor explains it, they just drag without moving. When the choir is always behind the conductor, it is better to find out the real psychological problems rather than just say “you guys are behind me, watch me!” Of course, sometimes you can say that and get what you want, but not every time. In this case, I found that when the singers stand or sit in sections, they rely on other singers of their section without taking their own responsibility, especially when they aren’t 100 % confident with the music. So when the conductor says: “mixed”, and they go and mix, the problem is solved right away. The tone is beautiful and the music is flowing!

Another example comes from a Taiwanese tribal song - Work Song (Music example B). The sopranos were struggling with their melody. The melody is not what

they are familiar with, and the rhythm is a little tricky. The sopranos, as in the Magnificat, relied on others too much. Everybody waited for each other. And also, they sang without feeling the beauty of the melody. So I then said: “Sopranos, make a circle please. I won’t conduct you now.” When the sopranos made a circle, looked at each other, and sang by themselves, it was amazing. Without the conductor, they needed to use body language to show the breathing. They listened, and “lead” each other. They sang very well with the right tempo, much better rhythm, and also sang it musically with beautiful tone.

The conductor needs to know when he should let the performers have a sense of security from him, but sometimes he needs to figure out the psychological problem of the performers, then solve it. For example, at the beginning of the Magnificat, the conductor needs to give a very clear preparation in order to lead the singers’ breathing. If the gesture of preparation is not clear enough, each singer will interpret it differently and then breathe at a different moment.¹³² If they don’t breathe together, they won’t sing the first note together. This problem can be solved by the conductor himself, not the singers. But in the two examples mentioned above, the conductor knows the singers’ fears and their dependent mentality, so breaking up the sections forces each singer to be independent and responsible.

One more example is taken from Lobet den Herrn composed by J. S. Bach (Music example C). In this work, there is much coloratura singing that is conceived instrumentally, not vocally. The college singers were so busy trying to sing every note well, that they sang behind the conductor all the time. When they felt tense, they couldn’t watch the conductor and listen to each other. So the conductor asked: “What is the right emotion when we sing this piece?” The singers read the English

¹³² Peter Paul Fuchs, *Psychology of Conducting* (New York, MCA Inc., 1969), 45.

translation of the text, and answered: “Joyful!” The conductor said: “That’s right! Let’s sing it joyfully!” With the joyful feeling, they relaxed and sang it with right tempo and better tone!

This is evidence that emotions can affect the sound, which we discussed before. For young singers, they need to change their natural sound if the music requires mature or dark color. The conductor needs to lead singers’ imaginations. For example, let them imagine that they are ten or twenty years older than they are, or increase fifty more pounds on their weight. The imagination can help a lot for the color change and to set up the mood of the music.

Vowels can be problems also. Singers tend to sing flat especially with ‘ε’ and ‘i’ without having enough pharyngeal space. Let’s take Bruckner’s Os justi as an example (Music example D). When the music reaches bar 39 and builds up the first climax in this piece, the pitch can be flat from bar 39 and not bright enough for the fortissimo of bar 40 and 41. It is because the vowels change from “ε”, which can be easily sung without enough space, then “u”, and the ‘i’, which is the closed vowel again at bar 41. The conductor can let the choir sing from bar 39 with “a” vowel, which makes it easier to create more space and forward direction. Let the singers feel the space, color and direction, then use the same feeling when they sing “ε”, “u”, then “i”. It will be more specific for the singers, and better than to just tell them, “Sing higher,” or play the pitch on the piano. The conductor can make warm ups by using different vowels, for example, sing the same pitch with “a-e-i-o-u,” remind singers to keep the same space and direction for the beginning ‘a’ vowel when they change to other vowels. The conductor can also let singers sing vowels only without consonants during the rehearsal, and make sure singers remain aware of this problem.

The conductor's gesture can help the singers a lot about the intonation. If the conductor feels the pitch is flat, he can make an upward gesture, kind of holding the sound up, then the singers receive the hint and sing higher. It can also apply to the orchestra conductor. I remember I went to a concert performed by a college orchestra. There were two fermatas in the music. The first time was for the horn solo and the second time for the trombone solo. At the first time, the horn kept the right pitch but glided down before it finished. At that moment I thought: "It is the horn player's problem, he should hold the pitch all the way through!" But the trombone player did the same thing also. I was aware that it was the conductor's problem. His gesture stopped when the players held the long note, which is fine; but before he cut off, he used a downward semi circle, and then cut them off. The players' pitch glided down right with his downward gesture. The performers did what they saw, so the conductor has to be sensitive about his own gesture.

The conductor's posture is also important:

"For conductors, good posture is not just a goal in itself. The purpose behind every physical act is effective and efficient communication, and anything that detracts from clear and accurate communication is a fault".
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Conductors need a relaxed upper torso, in terms of shoulder, fingers, chin and neck. The conductor should move their arms and legs freely and naturally. If the conductor can do all of the above, that means: "*he can conduct with maximum effectiveness, alerts the singers that he is ready to begin, and sets an example for them to also assume proper posture for singing*".¹³⁴ Also, whether for singers or players, if they see the conductor stand and conduct in a good posture, they will feel

¹³³ Robert W. Demaree and Don V Moses, *The Complete Conductor* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 13.

¹³⁴ Lewis Gordon, *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1989), 65.

comfortable when they watch and play with the same relaxation, especially for the lyrical and expressive melodic lines. The conductor can demonstrate for the performers effectively without saying a word.

Rehearsal Planning and Progress:

Repertoire: Duruflé Requiem 3rd movement, *Libera me* (Music example E)

Rehearsal time: 50 minutes

Group: College choir

The conductor needs to introduce this piece to the choir before he starts the rehearsal. Most people know the Fauré Requiem but not the one by Duruflé's. If the conductor lets the choir know some things about the music and the composer, that can be a great help. The conductor can tell the choir about the background of the composer, who was a great organist; and the basic element of the music, which is Gregorian chant.

This movement can be divided into five parts: beginning to rehearsal 84, rehearsal 85 to 87, rehearsal 88 to 92, rehearsal 93 to 94, and rehearsal 95 to the end. In this movement, its beginning and ending are written on the same melodic idea, so the conductor can rehearse those two parts first, rather than rehearse from beginning through the end. Although those two parts have the same melodic idea, it is better if the conductor lets the chorus sing the ending part first. There are three reasons. First, most of the ending part is in unison, so it is easier for the conductor to introduce the melody to everyone. Second, the tempo stays steady all the time in the last part. Third, the harmonic progression remains in f sharp minor, unlike the ambiguous key changes in the beginning. If the conductor starts right in the beginning, the chorus will have challenges among pitches, rhythms and the establishment of the modulations. After the chorus gets the idea of the first main

melody from the last part (the second main melody is “Dies irae” in rehearsal 88), it is easier for them to hear and understand the first part. Thus, beginning with a reasonable challenge, the singers experience immediate success and are more positively disposed toward the work and the working relationship with the conductor.

So the conductor decides to rehearse the last part first. Because it stays in f sharp minor, the conductor lets chorus sing with solfege. **If the choir isn’t familiar with minor keys, the conductor needs to establish the feeling of the minor mode during the warm ups**, with the both natural and harmonic minor scales because of the e sharp that sounds 5 bars before 98. If the choir sings with solfege and knows the notes, rhythm and pitch well, then the conductor can let them go back to the very beginning of this movement.

In the first part of this movement, as we said before, it is not easy to get the ambiguous keys right away. To avoid confusion, the conductor can choose any kind of syllables instead of using solfege. The conductor can let everybody sing together rather than rehearse the basses alone and have the other parts wait in the first ten bars. The reason to let everybody be involved in these ten bars is to keep the singers’ interest and attention during the whole rehearsal:

“Discipline problems may be lessened considerably if you strive to maintain the group’s interest all the time and if you stress the importance of using all the rehearsal time to the group’s best advantage. In achieving this objective, you may use the following procedures alternately. First, while one part is being rehearsed, the other singers should be asked to study their part and listen to it in relation to the other parts. Second, all singers might be asked to sing a troublesome part in unison. This procedure also has value in developing an awareness of the relationships between parts. Third, request the choir members to hum their own parts softly while the troublesome part is being rehearsed.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Robert L. Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 207.

The choir may not get the C natural, B flat and E flat four bars before 82. The conductor can play a second version of A minor triad than the first version of E flat major triad, and let the choir sing “E-A-C natural” and “G natural-B flat- E flat” separately in order to establish the chord changes, then connect those two chords. After the choir can find the E flat without struggle, then let them sing the following downward scale. The conductor can let everybody jump up to the pick up the first three notes of the tenor line at rehearsal 82, then jump back to the bass line in order to get the bass line firm and find the first note of next phrase. This way allows the basses to know the relationship of their line with the tenor line, and also find their first note of each phrase easily.

So far, we may already have spent 15 to 20 minutes of the rehearsal. In order to let some people get a little rest for their voices, we now rehearse each section individually. From rehearsal 82, let the tenors sing by themselves. Before they sing, tell them they will need to jump up to the alto line from pick up to rehearsal 83. After the first 3 notes of rehearsal 83, they jump back to their part. Also, remind both tenors and altos that the D flat and C sharp is the same note and circle those two notes. There will be another problem for tenors, which is the D of 3 bars before 84. Remind them to listen to the basses, which sing the C, the D is just one step higher than that. **After the conductor explains, then the tenors start to sing-** it will let the rehearsal process be smoother, and also let the singers know what they are going to do without any confusion. Let the tenors sing from rehearsal 82 to 2 bars after rehearsal 84, and fix some pitch problems like A sharp – E- A natural at 3 bars after rehearsal 83. After the tenors are done, the altos sing from rehearsal 83, then the sopranos.

Now, it seems that each section knows their notes. Before the conductor lets everyone sing from the beginning to the end of the first part, there is one more

thing to do, which is to communicate the ambiguous keys change. In order to let the choir get the “sound,” the conductor says: “Now, I want to play the whole melody of this part, which begins from basses, tenors take over at rehearsal 82, then altos at rehearsal 83, finally sopranos at *molto animato*”. The conductor plays the melody on his right hand, and the chords on the left hand, and says: “we are in the F sharp minor from the beginning, then A minor triad (rehearsal 81), the C major triad (second bar of 81), and E flat (third bar of 81).” “Then we have diminished triad on G at rehearsal 82, b flat minor triad (third bar of 82), G flat major triad”. “Rehearsal 83, the first chord is F sharp major triad, which is the enharmonic key of G flat, then A major triad (second bar of 83), F sharp major triad, (third bar), A major triad (fourth bar), E minor triad, then A major triad again, then finally we reach the C major right on the *Animato*, and one more, the E flat major triad at rehearsal 84”. The conductor plays the condensed progression of the chords: F sharp minor triad – A minor triad – C major triad- E flat major triad – G diminished triad – B flat minor triad – G flat (F sharp) major triad – A major triad – C major triad – E flat major triad. The conductor says: “Those chords are in third relationship, and get higher and higher each time”. After the conductor explains make the sound of the modulation, it will allow the singers sing with the collect harmonic sense.

Now, everybody sings his own section from the beginning to rehearsal 84 without tempo change. The conductor just wants to make sure every section can find their entry and notes, and changes the key easily. Then the conductor lets everyone look at the score, and explains the tempo change: “When the altos enter, the tempo becomes faster. When the sopranos enter, tempo becomes even faster. The tempo in the beginning is quarter note equal to 66, but when we arrive *Animato*,

the tempo is quarter notes equal to 126, which is almost twice as fast.” The choir is now aware of that. When they sing with the tempo change at the first time, the conductor needs to say “watch” or “now” to remind the choir during their singing. There are only several minutes left; the conductor decides to let everyone go back to the last part, which they practiced in the beginning of the rehearsal. Compared to the first part, this part is much easier. The choir sings without effort and ends the rehearsal with a sense of achievement.

Conclusion

Through these three musical examples and the rehearsal plan, we have shown the different varieties of the psychological effect. For the conductor, if he knows his ensemble well enough, it is not so difficult for him to make a rehearsal plan with imagination, and he is able to articulate the possible difficulties the ensemble may encounter. More importantly, the conductor should really open his eyes to observe the ensemble’s facial expression, open his ears to hear the sound the ensemble makes, and open his mind during the whole rehearsal in order to sense the ensemble’s reactions and their psychological changes. The conductor should be sensitive enough and be able to “read” the ensemble’s mentality. Then he can handle and solve any kind of problems or difficulties with good flexibility by using suitable rehearsal skills for any situation. In order to achieve this goal, as discussed in this paper, the conductor’s sympathy, patience, encouraging manner, and knowledge of the ensemble members are the greatest tools for helping the conductor to “read” and “feel” his ensemble. For a conductor, the ensemble

should be his first concern, followed by his own conducting skill or rehearsal technique. The ensemble will “feel” the conductor’s care, and they will respond with their most beautiful sound.

Appendix: Questionnaire for the ensemble and the results

Total number of survey: 153 (April 1st, 2005)

General Information:

1. Gender:
 - (1). Male (42%)
 - (2). Female(58%)

2. Age:
 - (1). 16-20 (36%)
 - (2). 21-25 (34%)
 - (3). 25-30 (6%)
 - (4). 31-35 (4%)

3. Nationality:
 - (1). American (93%)
 - (2). Taiwan(5%)
 - (3). Korean (1%)
 - (4). Others (1%)

4. How long have you been in an orchestra or a chorus:
 - (1). 5-10 years (42%)
 - (2). 11-15 years (33%)
 - (3). 16-20 years (9%)
 - (4). 21-25 years (3%)
 - (5). Over 25 years (13%)

5. (Multiple choice) What sort(s) of group(s) are you participating in now?
 - (1). College choir (77%)
 - (2). College orchestra (23%)

6. How many conductor(s) have you worked with?
 - (1). 1 (2%)
 - (2). 2 (1%)
 - (3). 3 (4%)
 - (4). 4 (5%)
 - (5). 5 (1%)
 - (6). More than 5 (87%)

7. Do you think the emotional self-control is an important issue for a conductor?
 - (1). Not at all (2%)
 - (2). Rather (15%)
 - (3). Yes (76%)
 - (4). Not sure (6%)

Assuming the conductor has excellent musicality and musicianship:

1. What are the three most important characteristics for the ideal conductor to possess?
 - (1). Authority (17%)
 - (2). Confidence (21%)
 - (3). Efficiency (17%)
 - (4). Enthusiasm (26%)
 - (5). Organization (14%)
 - (6). Persuasiveness (5%)

2. If a conductor has excellent musicality and musicianship, but does not possess the three of the most important characteristics you have identified, how eager are you to work with them?
 - (1). Very (2%)
 - (2). Somewhat (47%)
 - (3). Little (37%)
 - (4). Not at all (14%)

3. What kind of conductor do you enjoy working with the most?

(1). Relaxed (15%)	Intense (20%)
(2). Quiet (1%)	Talkative (6%)
(3). Critical (6%)	Encouraging (31%)
(4). Friendly (21%)	Reserved (0%)

4. How should a conductor react to mistakes in the ensemble?
 - (1). Repeat the passage (9%)
 - (2). Point out the mistakes directly and move on to the next passage of music (13%)
 - (3). Point out the mistakes and repeat the passage until it is fixed (78%)
 - (4). Ignore the mistakes and go on (0%)

5. How should a conductor react to his/her own mistakes?
 - (1). Ignore them (1%)
 - (2). Admit them and apologize (22%)
 - (3). Deny them (0%)
 - (4). Admit them and try to improve (77%)

6. What will you do if you don't like this conductor? (Two Choices)
 - (1). Ignore whatever the conductor says (0%)
 - (2). Never look at the conductor (2%)
 - (3). Contradict the conductor (0%)
 - (4). Chat with other members during rehearsal (3%)
 - (5). Be indifferent (16%)
 - (6). Quit (11%)
 - (7). Criticize the conductor privately, but not in rehearsal and will not say anything as rehearsing (31%)
 - (8). Doesn't matter, just focus on the music (37%)

7. If the rehearsal is not going smoothly and the conductor loses his temper, what kind of an emotional response can you accept? (No more than three choices)

- (1). Loud yelling (11%)
- (2). Throwing the music in anger (1%)
- (3). The conductor walks out (6%)
- (4). The conductor gives a long speech (24%)
- (5). The conductor has an angry facial expression (22%)
- (6). Expresses frustration with a sign (14%)
- (7). Speaks sarcastically to the ensemble (6%)
- (8). Weeps (2%)
- (9). None of above is acceptable (14%)

8. Do you judge a conductor by gender?

- (1). Yes (4%)
- (2). No (80%)
- (3). Somewhat (16%)

9. Do you judge a conductor by the nationality?

- (1). Yes (5%)
- (2). No (84%)
- (3). Somewhat (11%)

10. Do you judge a conductor by his command of the English language?

- (1). Yes (22%)
- (2). No (38%)
- (3). Somewhat (40%)

11. Do you have a different attitude for an assistant conductor as opposed as regular conductor?

- (1). Yes (28%)
- (2). No (35%)
- (3). Somewhat (37%)

12. How long does it take to acclimatize you to a new conductor?

- (1). Within a month (72%)
- (2). 1-2 months (19%)
- (3). 2-3 months (8%)
- (4). 3-4 months (0.5%)
- (5). Over 4 months (0.5%)

13. What kind of conductor will you never trust? (One choice ONLY)

- (1). One who is impatient (6%)
- (2). One who changes his mind constantly (40%)
- (3). One who is poorly organized or inefficient (30%)
- (4). One who has no emotional self-control (24%)

14. Do you think the conductor will compromise their professionalism if they acknowledge their mistakes?

- (1). Yes (5%)

- (2). No (90%)
 - (3). Somewhat (5%)
15. Do you think it is necessary that the conductor and players/singers have personal friendship?
- (1). Very necessary (13%)
 - (2). No (47%)
 - (3). May be necessary (33%)
 - (4). Not sure (7%)
16. Do you think a personal relationship between the conductor and ensemble members will affect the rehearsal?
- (1). Yes (43%)
 - (2). No (22%)
 - (3). Somewhat (35%)
17. If the personal relationship does affect the rehearsal, how does it affect it?
- (1). Positive (38%)
 - (2). Negative (16%)
 - (3). Not sure yet (46%)
18. What do you think conductors should do if there is a poor interaction between them and the ensemble?
- (1). Keep patient and try to do a good job (27%)
 - (2). Quit (2%)
 - (3). Communicate with the ensemble openly (71%)
 - (4). Pretend nothing is happening (0%)
19. In your opinion, which is the most ideal emotional condition for the conductor while performing?
- (1). Completely calm (2%)
 - (2). 80% calm and 20% of emotional involvement (16%)
 - (3). 50% calm and 50% of emotional involvement (53%)
 - (4). 20% calm and 80% of emotional involvement (22%)
 - (5). 100% of emotional involvement (7%)
20. In your opinion, who should take the primary responsibility if the performance fails?
- (1). The conductor (9%)
 - (2). The ensemble (0%)
 - (3). Both the conductor and the ensemble (67%)
 - (4). Do not assign responsibility (24%)
21. Assuming the conductor has to play three different roles, a leader, a teacher, and a friend, in front of players/singers, which do you consider as important? (Multiple choice allowed)
- (1). A leader (46%)
 - (2). A teacher (43%)
 - (3). A friend (11%)

22. What is (are) the motivation(s) that make(s) you join the orchestra or chorus, except for financial consideration, time, and location?

- (1). The conductor (25%)
- (2). The interaction of players/members (24%)
- (3). The music (50%)
- (4). Doesn't matter (1%)

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