

About the author

Imrich von Wörstenbeat was born in Vienna in 1927 into a family of eminent musicians. His father was the Concertmaster in the Musikkraphaus Orchestra, and his mother, born in France where his parents first met, had been something of a performer also.

Imrich, and his three younger brothers, were encouraged from an early age on their instruments. Imrich studied Organ as he possessed the longest legs, Heinrich, like his father, the violin, Gottfried the clarinet, and Cyril (named as such because he was born in England) the trombone. All four siblings studied at the First Viennese School for Gifted Boys. It was whilst there that Imrich became interested in conducting and cricket.

Imrich graduated with honours, and was straight away appointed organist and composer to the court of the Count and Countess of Grand Nez in Switzerland.

While there he impressed his peers with his musical ability and enthusiasm, and he also got on very well with many of the servants of the court. However, he departed his post very abruptly and returned one night to Vienna.

For a while he lived by giving private music lessons, but then applied, and was appointed, to a post in the opera of the Bavarian town of Badkopf where his duties included coaching the opera chorus and rehearsing the orchestra. In his spare time he founded his own chamber orchestra from local musicians, which came to be known as 'Der Kunstaitulong Ensemble', which gave many successful concerts throughout the province.

Following the death of the opera's music director, Herr Hans Ontzerjistrink, Imrich was promoted and became his successor.

He made many innovative improvements to the opera company, such as cutting out much of the musician's free time, but then fell out badly with the artistic director and his wife. The artistic director (in true artistic style) challenged Imrich to a duel, but instead Imrich packed his bags and travelled to London to seek his fortune.

He was accepted onto the faculty of The Royal College of

Conducting as ‘Professor of Languages’ and ‘Rehearsal Craftsmanship’ at which he excelled. Many great conductors have been students of his.

In 1967, following the death of the then college principal, he was promoted and became college principal himself, in which esteemed capacity he has remained ever since. He is generally considered to be the foremost authority on the vast topic of wielding the magic baton.



Appendix

About some of the conductors referred to in this volume:

Viscount Fitzhenry Attall B.Mus. FRCC GRCC (1919-)

One of the few maestri to have been born into the English aristocracy – rather than to have aspired to it. This gave him something of a head start in the ‘honours league table’ which is so prized in conducting spheres, the result being some uncharacteristic ‘sour grapes’ on the part of a few of his fellow conductors. He, nonetheless, pursued his career entirely in and around London, claiming that travel didn’t agree with him. A more plausible explanation (as he was a creature of habit) was that he traditionally preferred to spend his lunch hour(s) in the lounge bar of the ‘Famous Upbeat Club’. It is quite probable that he would have ranked amongst the greats had he taken his artistry further afield.

He had, despite his rather insular career, his supporters as well as his critics, who were mainly the new and younger generation of conductor who, being always on the lookout for innovation, latched onto his unique style of beating practically everything in ‘two-time’. And it is for this that he will mainly be remembered.



Arthur Z. Beetbashe III (1952-)

Born and brought up in Pittsburgh, ‘Artzee Threepee’ (as he was, for reasons unexplained, better known to his friends) became a champion of the avant garde school of conducting. He was much inspired by the experimental works of certain of his fellow contemporary American composers who would ‘rig’ a piano by placing within it various mundane household objects to alter the sound. Art was fired with enthusiasm for this genre and proceeded to take things a step or two further.

His ambitious attempt at ‘rigging’ the entire Springfield Symphony Orchestra has given Artzee the distinction of conducting the world’s most expensive classical concert.

It was a work both written and conducted by Artzee himself, and was inspired by the environmental theme of economizing the world’s dwindling natural resources.

It resulted, however, in all sixteen first violins, fourteen second violins, twelve violas, ten cellos and eight double basses having to be skillfully dismantled by luthiers flown in from five European countries to remove approximately forty two gallons of crude oil which had been procured solely for the occasion of the works premier performance. All the woodwind instruments had to be completely stripped and re-padded, the brass instruments had to have their valves re-bored, and the entire percussion section (totaling one thousand two hundred and forty seven separate instruments - all of which were employed in the performance) had to be completely scrapped after the napalm had burnt itself out.

The historic concert hall had to have extensive repairs and restoration, but (it should be added) looked considerably better once the work (which took three years) had been completed.

The state-funded orchestra had to cancel the next eighteen months of engagements, resulting in several law suits costing the local Government five hundred million dollars, and the resulting insurance claim for the instrument repairs alone (totaling fifty five and a half million dollars) is, to this day, still a world record.

The total cost of the concert came to seven hundred and fifty three million, three hundred and nineteen thousand, four hundred and seventy nine dollars and fifty eight cents.

Artzee says he would like to see if he can beat his own record some day.



Cedric Chopper ARCC (1953-)

Born in Maidenhead and educated at the local grammar school, Cedric has spent much of his professional years in campaigning to have

his hometown renamed. It has remained a sore point with him that, during his student years at the prestigious Royal College of Conducting, a number of his contemporaries, together with others amongst the same generation of the world's conducting fraternity, have habitually teased him about the name of his birthplace.

His crusade has been further frustrated by the Lord Mayor of Maidenhead, not to mention all of his staff, the civic dignitaries, town councilors and the vast majority of the population of the town, refusing to take Cedric's ideas seriously. He has, nonetheless, made his mark in the world of conducting by becoming the first British maestro to be appointed principal conductor to the Manhattan Symphony Orchestra.

He was also developing some notoriety as a 'closet' composer. Apparently a half-finished score had been discovered under his bed, titled 'Ode to being broke in Putney'. But luckily he escaped his critics, and set off for the United States.

He was (somewhat atypically) appointed to this high position by his charismatic and controversial predecessor who, when being interviewed by the press, following the scandalous split between himself and the orchestra's administration, regarding the future of the orchestra, said: "Who do I want to succeed me? - I'll tell who I want, you big jerk. For all I care, they can go give the job to that English jackass Cedric (no-brains) Chopper from Maidenhead, for all I give a damn. Say, is there really a place called Maidenhead? - Jeeez!"

Cedric is now campaigning to have the entire Manhattan Symphony Orchestra relocated to Maidenhead, an ambitious project which has not met with quite the enthusiasm he had hoped for amongst the players, who are, despite that, still very fond of him.



Vincent Dollars GRCC (1961-)

Dollars, born in Reading, had been a highly competent violinist, occupying the post of principal second violin in the Manchester Philharmonia Orchestra, prior to his 'maestro's eyes' opening and prompting him to take up the white stick in his new vocation as

conductor.

What moves an instrumentalist to become a conductor, is usually something deeply personal in the life of that individual – such as may be seen when movie stars go into politics, or pop stars and sporting heroes become serious actors. In Vincent’s particular case, the decisive turning point in his career came when the Manchester Philharmonia’s chief guest conductor, Cedric Chopper, reversed his golden Rolls Royce motor car over Vincent’s right foot in the orchestra’s car park. The thoughts going through Vincent’s head (apart from: ‘Ouch, my toe’s been crushed’!) was the magnificence and solidity of the Maestro’s car – especially when compared with his own twenty-six year old Austin Maestro* which he had, hitherto, regarded as something of a classic (the name, alone, evoking the racy life-style of the upwardly mobile conductor). Yet suddenly, in that moment, Vincent saw his car as a cheap rusting beige hulk, and he knew he had to own a car like Cedric’s.

Without further thought or misgivings, he handed in his notice and enrolled at the famous Royal College of Conducting.

Yet, despite all his training and obvious talent with the baton, there was, at first, still a little of the instrumentalist remaining in Vincent (sometimes it is harder to un-learn than to acquire new and different skills.), and he found himself unable to rise high enough above the musicians, while feeling (rightly or wrongly) intimidated by his orchestra and the emotional pressures that go with leadership.

He is now in the process of making a name for himself as an authority on authentic period ensembles – a whole new field of conducting – or (to be more precise) of musical directorship. He directs his performances mostly in the traditional way, by staying seated at the harpsichord - upon which he has no technical ability whatsoever, yet it is an instrument which, when skillfully blended within a small ensemble, is remarkable in that it has no pitch. The harpsichordist’s contribution is to provide a pleasing background clattering noise to

* Yes, there really was a car by that name. One may be mistaken for believing it to be a fine name for a motor car - until you see one. Bear in mind, however, the same manufacturer also brought out a model named the ‘Allegro’, so we must assume that even car designers can have a warped sense of humour.

augment the underlying timbre of the repertoire.

Vincent's sudden decision to change his career has, with hindsight, proved to be a wise move. Yet it is always interesting to note the pitfalls that await us as we stumble through this precarious life.

He now owns three golden Rolls Royce motor cars.



Sven Gottitjrjong GSAM (1949-)

Born and raised in Stockholm, Gottitjrjong stumbled into music through an extraordinary chapter of accidents.

His father's intention was for Sven to go into the family business, '*Gottitjrjong Brothers - Makers of fine hearing aids*'. The first step along the way would have been to attend technical college. But, unfortunately, Sven accidentally took a wrong turn on what was supposed to be his first day, and found himself in an unfamiliar part of the city. After walking the streets for half the morning, he suddenly beheld an academy.

On entering, Sven was informed by an agitated member of staff, that he was late, and was hurriedly ushered into a class where the students were doing ear-tests. This seemed perfectly acceptable to Sven, as he was vaguely aware that he was going to learn how to produce hearing aids, and ear-tests would seem to be logical. It did seem baffling that he was expected to write the result of these tests on manuscript paper, in a form of lines and dots which (never having seen sheet music in his life) meant nothing to him at all. But he got by through copying what the other students wrote, while feeling confident that he would pick it up as he went along. In this, he was quite mistaken.

Then, after the ear test class had disbanded, he wandered the corridors to the slightly puzzling sound of instrumental tuition coming from all directions. But the resourceful Sven eventually figured this to be yet more hearing examinations. Eventually a member of the professorial staff, on observing Sven listening outside his door, asked him what he thought he was doing. Sven then inquired if he was conducting ear tests. The professor concluded that Sven must be a

conducting student and directed him to the Maestro's room.

Thus Sven became a conducting student without knowing it.

Indeed it was only in his third year, after attending an interview with the careers officer, that Sven began to suspect that hearing aids didn't play a huge part in life at the Stockholm Academy of Music. But there seemed little point in quitting now – and he had lots of friends that he would have been sorry to lose.

Strange as it may seem, he was not a bad conductor. All the arm-waving that he had learned in conducting class, he had originally believed to be a form of sign language for those of impaired hearing, and being eager to please his father, he applied himself to the tuition with commendable zeal while, for all this time, Sven's father had no reason to suspect that he was learning anything other than the family trade.

On graduating with flying colours (and arms), Sven was recommended into his first job as assistant to the conductor in a small Opera company in Luxembourg – eventually to succeed him as chief conductor following his retirement.

Gottitjong has never quite thrown off the connection, in his own mind, between conducting and deafness, and has become a champion of music for the hard of hearing – a worthy cause which has earned him much popularity. He can still barely read music, but is nonetheless a fine maestro.



Louis de Grandtête (1905-)

Grandtête, educated at the Paris Conservatoire, was one of those many maestri who, in a manner of speaking, never completed the course. Though of obvious talent, and fine batonmanship, he made the double error of (a) whilst in rehearsal, letting himself get carried away with his language, thus talking over the heads of the orchestra and thereby losing their attention and respect, and (b) allowing the aforesaid to unduly affect his self esteem – a topic which should be emphatically drilled into every aspiring conducting student.

He turned to drink in a big way – indeed he owns a large part of France’s finest wine producing country. And has, consequently, not been sober for the last three decades.



Hubert Hacker Ph.D. B.Mus. (1847-1920)

Hacker was known in his time as a somewhat outspoken and controversial character in the artistic circles in which he moved. He was educated first at Harrow, then at Cambridge University where he was a chorister at King’s College.

His first full-time professional employment, however, was as a journalist for an arts publication based in Chelsea, London, where he gained the distinction of being sued following his very first printed article. Yet, despite that, Hubert would continue to write about, and to regularly damn every work of art or piece of music that he was called upon to review.

Indeed, rather than cause further aggravation and animosity in the arts world, it very soon became apparent that artists and concert promoters were contacting his editor specifically to request Hubert’s ‘expertise’ at either a music festival, opera, ballet, or launch of a new art exhibition. His editor, realizing that he was, perhaps, onto a good thing, would willingly dispatch Hubert to a venue. Here he would probably be greeted by the organizers, lavishly wined and dined, given every consideration for his comfort together, no doubt, with certain other considerations that are best not mentioned, and would be rewarded (yet again) by the delivery of an utter condemnation of the goods on display.

It soon became so much the ‘done thing’ to be damned by Hacker, that any concert or opera worth its salt would have to be described in Hubert’s vitriolic terms, or risk become a complete flop. Nothing else would do.

Hubert, sensing that his reviews were not being taken as literally as he had hoped, re-doubled his endeavours to rubbish the assignments he was given. Yet all his efforts were in vain. He became more and more popular in the arts world. He found himself to be the

guest of honour at high-society social events in the company of royalty and heads-of-state. He would be called upon to give speeches, but soon realized that the more he insulted his hosts, the more popular he became. The guests would cheer at every damning adjective in Hubert's vast vocabulary, they would applaud at every insult, they would laugh at all his biting sarcasm and irony. Other art critics would try to copy Hubert's style, but none of them had his flare or his colourful language. Hubert was the Master.

And it was, indeed, as a 'Maestro' that Hubert's career took a radical turn. He made the shocking decision to give up journalism (at which he excelled), and defect to the other side by becoming, of all things, a conductor. Unfortunately, he was probably the worst conductor in history. He had no ability or technique, he barely knew which end of the baton to hold, and his concerts would invariably turn into a free-for-all, eventually disintegrating into anarchy before falling to pieces. It was very rare for a Hacker performance to reach the final bar intact.

His former colleagues in the field of arts journalism would flock to his performances, as would the public (his concerts were usually sold-out the very same day they were advertised), and regularly give him superlative reviews. He was hugely successful. Yet Hubert (despite, by now, his considerable wealth and fame), was not, in his own eyes, a success. Little is now remembered of his written output, with the exception of the 'Unequal Temperament Guide', which is still referred to as the definitive reference on the generic instrumentalist's psychological temperament profiles.



Antiphony Hammerbeat GRCC BA MBE (1902-1992)

Hammerbeat is considered by many to be the embodiment of all that is stereotypical of the 'English' school of conducting. He is best remembered these days for his eccentric manner and his almost limitless repertoire of scathing remarks toward the terrified musicians under his baton. He had been known, on several occasions, to reduce the most accomplished of instrumentalists to quivering, gibbering wrecks during

rehearsal. Players had been known to deliberately mutilate themselves to avoid attending his sessions.

During the peak of his career he had the rare (some would say) distinction of probably being the least liked conductor of his time. He survived, by lucky chance, three assassination attempts: shooting, poisoning, stabbing, and a (possible) fourth attempt by a Concertmaster to encourage him to eat himself to death by sabotaging his dressing room with:

A whole roasted swan.
A ten pound gateau.
Two dozen jars of caviar.
Forty oysters.
Three magnums of Champagne.
A jar of pickled eggs.
An assortment of Danish pastries.
Four pounds of Paté de Fois Gras.
An assortment of cheese and crackers.
A large bowl of strawberries and double cream.
Two pots of Irish coffee.
A stick of celery.

However, in the time between the dress rehearsal and the performance, he had consumed everything, with the notable exception of the celery, as he had heard that celery was so low in calories that it took more energy to chew than was contained therein, stating that he needed to keep his strength up for the concert.

He then went on to conduct a performance of Mahler's ninth symphony plus encore, pausing only for a snack in the interval – as he was, by then: "Feeling a little peckish once more".

It was at first a mystery as to where this food had come from, since no one was willing to accept responsibility for its appearance. But it was later revealed, from a description by the stage manager, that it had been smuggled in by the Concertmaster. The orchestra and administration were more than a little puzzled by this, as it was no secret that there was little love lost between the maestro and the

Concertmaster. But Antiphony ‘The Slasher’ (as he was nicknamed by the orchestra) Hammerbeat, interpreting it as a gesture of good-will and respect on the part of the Concertmaster, reciprocated by insisting that he join him at his club for lunch the next day. The Concertmaster was forced (albeit reluctantly) to accept the invitation. However, being of somewhat lesser stature than the maestro, he found the quantities of food, and the pace at which one was expected to consume it, impossible to compete with. Halfway through the feast he was carried away and, ironically, died of his over-indulgence while, at the same time, cursing “The damned Slasher”.

Hammerbeat finally died at the age of eighty-nine. The cause of death is uncertain (as he had never had a day of illness in his life), but it would seem that he suffered a sudden heart attack following the mysterious discovery of a handsome trophy which was prominently displayed on the table in his dressing room. It was engraved with the words:

THE BEST LOVED MAESTRO AWARD

To Antiphony Hammerbeat from all the players in his orchestra



Otto Heiflik Hon. FRCC (1878-1955)

Heiflik is regarded as one of the foremost virtuosos of baton technique. Indeed, his artistry has become quite legendary.

Even towards the end of his life he could swish a baton with such speed that it was virtually impossible to see it move at all. Indeed, there exists in the archives of the famous Royal College of Conducting, rare film footage of his right hand, complete with his unique, custom built, specially strengthened, aerodynamic baton (now on display in the college museum), shot with high-speed cameras to capture the subtle motion of his style. Notwithstanding the cutting-edge photographic tools in use, it is still hard to see clearly how he achieves such brilliance.

His lasting legacy to the advancement of baton technique are the ‘Heiflik Manoeuvre’ – a method of splitting and ejecting part (or all) of the baton over long distances, and the ‘Sonicbatonlap’ – named as

such, for the tip of the baton which, like a whip, gives an audible ‘crack’ as it breaks the sound barrier. Thus, Otto was able to execute both singly, and (most impressively) a ‘rapid-fire’ effect, not dissimilar in tone quality and volume, to a fully automatic assault rifle.

There are not many recordings of him, as the percussive sound of his baton tends to overpower the orchestra. But he was extremely popular with the concert-going public who could purchase, in the foyer (together with their ice creams and sweets), packets of earplugs for their comfort and safety.



Jasha Loepitz (1909-1940)

Loepitz is, regrettably, best known these days for the unfortunate way in which his career was cut short (see page 19). It is a sad reflection on human nature, that the morbid or bizarre will eclipse an artist’s more creative achievements. Unfortunately, successful journalism and publicity will always remain a continual search for the sensational.

Loepitz, however, had been making a considerable name for himself as an orchestral leader and soloist, and had, during the last few years of his life, branched into conducting in a small way. He formed a small chamber orchestra from certain select players, which he would direct in the traditional style from the leader’s seat whilst playing.

Unfortunately, the task of directing and playing simultaneously involves a lot of movement which, to the uninitiated eye, can appear very perplexing. It does not possess the grace of the erect, baton-wielding maestro, but looks stiff and awkward, tending to draw the eye through its ungainly visual intrusion into the music. Thus it caused, on two occasions, the over-zealous concert hall staff, while believing Jasha to be having a fit, to rush onto the stage and attempt to offer him medical assistance. And then on another occasion, although the hall staff had been briefed beforehand to forestall any uncalled-for interruption to the performance, a concerned doctor in the audience rushed onto the platform, snatched Jasha’s violin from under his chin, threw him to the

ground, ripped off his bow tie and dress-shirt front, and slapped him round the face several times. After the orchestra had rallied itself from the initial shock of this interruption, Jasha's loyal second-in-command hastily leapt to his assistance from this (as he perceived it to be) assault, and hit the doctor over the head with his violin. The doctor, who was in no mood for interruptions, fought back. In no time at all the security staff were on the platform, and it was then a case of every man for himself.

The story was much exaggerated in the press, but nevertheless gave the small orchestra some much-needed publicity which had a very positive effect on future ticket sales.

Jasha devoted much of his personal practice-time to developing his style, and was soon to be seen doing some quite amazing (though, to my mind, still not very artistic) stunts whilst playing. I suppose it was inevitable that to attempt to play and get undressed simultaneously would cause a disaster – but who could have foreseen such a tragic end to this talented artist.



Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)

His early years were a model success story. He made maximum use of his obvious gifts as a violinist, guitarist and especially as a dancer. There is little doubt that, had he been alive today, he could have been a leading pop star.

His talent and personality soon attracted the attention of the King - Louis XIV who, there and then, gave him the appointment of musical 'supremo' to the court (the tastiest job a musician could have). It was a dream come true. With a position like that, he had virtually unlimited resources, and could stage anything he wanted – which he then did.

He teamed up with other celebrities and put on some great shows. He often included a role for himself and also the king.

He was quite undaunted by fame and fortune, and went on to enjoy a truly scandalous life of *sex, drugs and popular music*. Even the

king (who was, by all accounts, no prude) was forced to turn a blind eye to Jean's excesses.

His untimely end, however, was something quite unforeseen: He bashed himself on the foot with his over-sized baton, and died of the resulting infection. This was also quite a blow to all those who had predicted a sticky end as a result of his life-style. They were forced to say that it was a judgment – a bit lame really. It would have been more fitting to be killed in a duel, to die of the pox, or to drink himself to death or, indeed, anything more romantic than the sorry truth.

A great conductor, nevertheless, *should* die with a baton in his hand - if nothing else gets him first.



Stéphan Payneful B.Mus. BA FRCC (1913-2001)

Payneful's contribution to the wealth of literature on the specialized subject of the technical execution of the conductor's art is quite extensive. It is significant that, generally speaking, he holds less regard for the mechanical aspects of conducting – emphasizing, rather, the *expressive* area of the maestro's performance. Indeed, he believed quite strongly (and this comes across very forcibly in his writing) that the players under the baton, when tuned-in, as it were, to the maestro's mental wavelength, are quite capable of perceiving the conductor's thoughts, feelings, emotions, passions etc., without the need for any visual communication whatsoever.

As you may well imagine, when Payneful published his first book on the subject, this sort of 'hocus-pocus', as many regarded it, caused quite a lot of ripples in the established musical world. The conducting community became sharply divided into the believers, who subscribed to Payneful's theories, and the sceptics who considered it to be a load of superstitious nonsense. Well, the truth should, in theory, not be too difficult to prove. All you need is an orchestra plus conductor, and a scientifically acceptable method of putting it to the test.

A suitable venue was indeed located, and an orchestra assembled of musicians from all over Britain. It was important, for the

purposes of impartiality, to create an ensemble from relative strangers; the test being to communicate the conductor's directions telepathically, and it was essential to rule out the type of subtle communication which is so common with established groups. To further rule out any possibility of any visually interactive ensemble communication, each section of the orchestra (though in the same studio) was separated from all the others by opaque partitions.

The piece of repertoire chosen for the experiment was Brahms' fourth symphony.

Everything was set up, all was ready, the most advanced gramophone recording technology of its time was wired up and ready to operate, the orchestra were seated in the studio, and the conductor, Payneful in person, being blindfolded, with arms folded, and wearing soundproof ear-muffs, was located in another room which had no windows and was completely soundproofed.

Then, at a signal from the scientist in control of the experiment, Stéphan was permitted to start in his own time.

Quite remarkably, after an embarrassing silence of four minutes and thirty-three seconds, the orchestra spontaneously began to play.

At first it sounded like nothing on earth, and the sceptics were getting ready to celebrate their victory. Then, suddenly, it all started to sound like music. It was quite extraordinary. Total cacophony one moment, and then the perfect sounds of Brahms' glorious second subject swelling to fill the studio. It left even the believers open-mouthed in wonder.

The orchestra went on to play all four movements of the symphony, and after the final chord had died away, the recording equipment was switched off.

It was three weeks later, however, that a truly remarkable aspect of this experiment came to light.

The recording, of course, was analyzed in microscopic detail, and they couldn't fault it. But then, one of the scientists assigned to the project, having come to the end of the performance, failed to switch the machine off, and a strange thing happened. A very faint voice was to be heard continuing after the orchestra had stopped. It was difficult to make out the words, but it sounded like a man's voice - quite high in pitch,

and with a strong foreign accent.

This was a most perplexing puzzle. No one involved in the experiment could recall hearing anything like it at the time of the recording

It took several more days of intense work to analyze the voice, but in the end, this is what they came up with:

In a strong German accent, the mystery voice was heard to say:

“Ven I wrote zis symphony I intended zer fast tempi to be going a little slower, und zer slow tempi to be going just a small bit faster. Apart from zat, it voz very goot. Vell done everyone”.

The scientists were, regrettably, left with no alternative than to declare the whole experiment null-and-void on the grounds that there had been some unforeseen radio interference from a foreign station.



Mortimer Slapstick ARCC GRCC (1937-)

Another product of the English school, Slapstick had decided that he ought to create a niche for himself by championing the cause of the up-and-coming English composer in these times of transition from the pleasing ‘tonal’ to the more esoteric ‘atonal’ genre. Some of the composers of that time had formed a ‘school’ of their own (known as the ‘Second Putney School’) and welcomed Mortimer into the bosom of their inner sanctum (so to speak) with much the same cordiality as a spider welcoming a fly who had accepted an invitation to dinner.

It was less a case of Mortimer being gullible (which may indeed have been the case) than that the composers, who had run up against all the scepticism that was rife in the contemporary established musical world, felt they had found a foot-in-the-door to the performing arena that had hitherto been slammed in their faces.

This was the freedom of expression that, for a composer, represents the Holy Grail: A maestro, albeit a young and little-known one, who is ready and willing to perform anything, no matter how outrageous.

Mortimer was butchered by the press for his premier

performances of such works as...

‘Concerto for Sixteen Rubber Bands’ - by Alfred Topsy

‘Requiem for my Pet Stick Insect’- scored for fifty bassoons, bagpipes, and drum-kit by Denzel Fitz

‘Noddy and Big Ears’ - an erotic opera in two acts by Gertrude Pinnup

‘Ode to being broke in Putney’- by Cedric Chopper

‘Sinfonia Putney’ - by Rudolf Randolph Rednoze

The ‘Second Putney School’ now exists merely as a name in the musical history books, and Mortimer has moved on to more traditional repertoire.

Incidentally, there was never a *First* ‘Putney School’. The composers concerned simply felt that the word ‘second’ had a more contemporary ring to it.



Hugo De Surlygit FRCC ARCC (1927-)

Surlygit is regarded (and not without good reason) as one of the cleverest minds to shine under the conducting limelight. His contribution to the academic works on the subject is vast. Such standard works as:

Firing Musicians - a fascinating catalogue of legal loopholes.

How to Perform Rubbish - and still get paid.

The Conductor’s Revenge

Getting Your Own Way with the Band

The Only Good Composer is a Dead Composer - voted book-of-the-year by ‘Conductors and Conducting’ magazine.

Musicians - are they really people?

The Language of Conducting - over 10,000 musical terms which musicians won’t understand.

It’s Not My Fault - an indictment of the conducting profession.

...and many more.

He has, sadly, retired from teaching and writing, but is still to be seen regularly attending concerts, where he frequently shows his appreciation of the atmospheric pianissimo passages, by cheering, coughing, or (very occasionally) vomiting loudly – but usually has to leave before the conclusion, accompanied by two or three members of the security staff with whom he is, through long association, on cordial first-name terms with.



Simon Tremble BA B.Mus. GRCC (1933-)

It was clear from the start that Tremble was destined to be nothing less than ‘every inch the Maestro’.

He had been at the hub of the conducting world for as long as anyone had known him; tall, handsome, witty, charming – he had everything going for him – including the principal flautist whom he had chastised in front of the assembled orchestra for not giving his performance the required concentration (see page 14).

There was a long-standing vendetta waged by Richard Head, the principal flautist, following this public humiliation by Tremble during that fateful rehearsal. As is understandably the case with the rather insular life within the symphony orchestra, passions can run high, and small incidents can become blown-up out of all proportion. Indeed, blowing-up was the favoured method of revenge chosen by Head.

He paid a large amount of money to two con-men for what he believed to be a remote controlled bomb. In reality it was an empty coffee tin with a radio controlled siren built in. This, he contrived to conceal inside Tremble’s music case. The rest was just a matter of timing. It was Head’s plan to make a spectacle out of his maestro’s demise. Thus, it was with that end in mind, he used the occasion of the ‘Pre-concert Talk’ presided over by the conductor, as being a fitting scenario.

It was not uncommon for members of the orchestra to sit amongst the concert-going public for these events. So Head planted

himself at a safe distance from the stand and patiently awaited his moment.

Of course, everyone in the room was very surprised when the siren sounded – no one more so than Head who, to some witness's bewilderment, had thrown himself on the floor at the exact moment the coffee tin activated. Then, believing it to be a fire alarm, the whole assembly made their way to the emergency exits, leaving Head, alone, with only his siren for company.

It was hard to collect his thoughts, so many passions were stirring in his breast, but eventually he retrieved his coffee tin and somehow disposed of it.

The incident didn't even make the local newspaper – Head was bitterly frustrated. Luckily, no one at the time suspected him of any mischief, as the concert hall's real fire alarms had been known to misbehave on a number of occasions. Then, when the 'false alarm' had been sorted out, i.e. everyone was blaming everyone else for it, and normality had resumed, Head had to take his seat for a performance which he had, of course, planned to be a posthumous event for Tremble.

Somehow or other he managed to play his flute. Indeed, such was the extraordinary emotion in his playing that he received a special curtain call and commendation from the maestro. Head was moved to tears, and the feud between him and Tremble became, from that moment, the secret history of that orchestra.

It was many years later that Richard Head, now retired from playing, but newly become a writer of short stories, put his old plan for revenge into print.

Fortunately, no one believes a word of it.



Hans Vericlever FRCC B.Mus. (1934-1999)

Known throughout the conducting world for his teachings, he is considered by many to be the young maestro's lifeline. His long-running 'Tell it to Hans' agony column in the monthly magazine, '**Conductors and Conducting**' (usually abbreviated to CAC Mag), has helped many

frustrated colleagues over the hurdles which lurk in the shadows waiting to snap at the heels of the unwary maestro.

He studied at the Paris Conservatoire, but attended the renowned Royal College of Conducting on a post-graduate scholarship, later to be accepted onto the faculty as Assistant Professor of Interpretation.

It is most often the case that, in measuring a conducting students progress, the inquiring scholar, in his relentless search for knowledge, can find himself attempting to quantify an artistic attribute which, being of such an introspective nature, rather defies analysis. There is, we find, no real yardstick that can be employed. Thus, Vericlever's contribution has taken the study of the art onto a new and more personal level which assesses each student according to his own merits. It is good to embrace some new ideas in such an old profession.

Vericlever came up to me some years ago, during the days when we were both on the professorial staff at the RC of C, and showed me a letter in his column from a young maestro. It summed up the frustration that seems to go, very often, hand in hand with our profession:

Dear Hans,

I have been conducting this orchestra for two and a half years now, and am beginning to feel that my relationship with the players is losing its sparkle.

I have tried bullying them – as we were taught to do. I have also sacked a couple of unimportant string players, who no one liked anyway. Even my secret police are beginning to answer me back.

Am I losing my grip, or is this just paranoia?

If it is paranoia, is it the healthy type, or the other sort?

*Yours pleadingly,
Cedric Chopper*

Hans asked me what I thought he should write in reply.

Well, I believe I said something to the effect that he should damn well pull himself together, stop being such a girlie, sack a few more players, cancel their vacation – and I'm sure he'll feel better very

soon. Hans then confounded me by saying that he thought there might be another way, rather than the sensible and traditional method which I had quoted. As you may well imagine, I was very surprised by this, since I was unaware that any other method existed. However, he went on to show me *his* reply which he was about to forward to the magazine's editor:

Dear Cedric,

It may reassure you to know the vast majority of conductors will experience the same anxieties as those which you describe, in one form or another, at some point in their careers.

Do not be dispirited. Try speaking to the players, both individually and collectively – and I am not just referring to the important musicians either. Choose, for instance a rank-and-file violinist, and share your anxieties with him (or her) – open up to them. You can do this as often as you wish, and trust me when I say, you will find solace and support where you least expected it.

Bonding with the players is not a sign of weakness – indeed, it will reinforce your position. They will admire you all the more for it. You will have earned the sort of trust and respect that no amount of bullying can achieve.

*Yours sincerely,
Hans*

I confess to being profoundly dubious at first, but maybe, on reflection, there really is something to consider in what Hans is saying. Perhaps the future of conducting *is* all about communication and sharing.

In time it may catch on.



A murdering harpist, a pianist cast away on a desert island, an exploding violinist, a conductor accidentally shot with a cello spike, and an ex-con rock-and-roll orchestral manager called Cocky.

The Conductor's Handbook© will tell you all there is to know (*and more*) about how a symphony orchestra *really* works.

Ross Cohen has been an orchestral viola player for over thirty years, and still cannot quite manage to take it seriously. There is precious little chance, given an attitude like that, of survival in this most serious of professions.

What the conducting fraternity has to say about this book:

Sir Archibald Gitt: “Orchestras should damn well be seen and not heard! At last, a book that puts them in their place – and about bloody time too, if you ask me.”

Wolfgang Bhang: “I like women in orchestras”

Marcel du Prique: “Maestro Wörstenbeat’s volume on the noble art of conducting will be an invaluable aid in the never-ending struggle towards keeping orchestras and soloists under control.”

Fritz Schlappenkopf: “There are orchestras, and then there are orchestras, if you know what I mean?”

Leopold Fhart: “This is a serious book on a serious topic, and should only be read by serious scholars who will take it seriously.”

Hans Fumbler: “What book?”