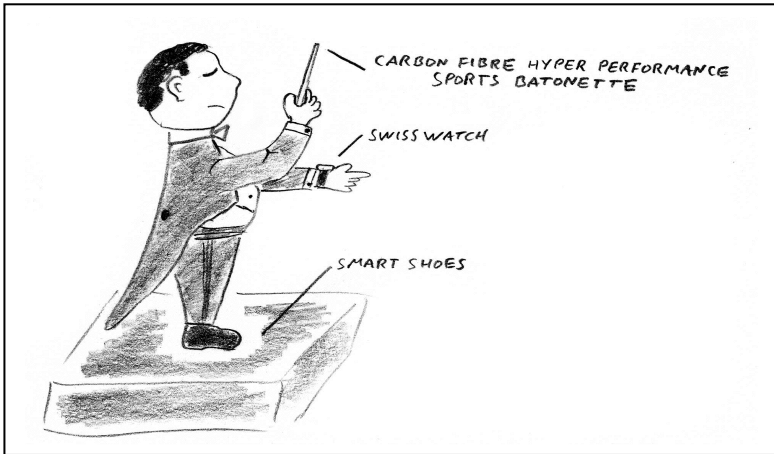


Chapter Nine: Off the Podium

It is now time to get to know your players.

This is a big step for many conductors - yet why should it be? The newly qualified conducting scholar will step, for the last time, through the doors of conducting college, and into the wide world of symphonic music. His head will be crammed with the scores of numerous pieces of repertoire which will have been read, analyzed, and re-read countless times. The theory lessons will be ringing in his ears, covering every conceivable eventuality. The weight and responsibility of the history of this noble profession will be bearing down on his shoulders like Pilgrim's burden. Charts and figures of the technical requirements of every instrument found in the orchestra (possibly excluding percussion, since it is of little use trying to teach the correct way to hold a cheese and pickle sandwich and a cigarette lighter in Mahler's Ninth Symphony), will be flashing before his eyes. And a sketchy awareness of the incredibly complex professional and social structure within the orchestral microcosm will, doubtless, be making his head spin.



The young Maestro.

Thus prepared, he now makes that first, fateful, irreversible step into the precarious world of the symphony orchestra; he steps out onto the tightrope of the profession, with no one to hold his hand and no safety net should he stumble.

He is on his own and there is no going back.

The first few months, or indeed years, are going to be a struggle – he has houses and cars to purchase, he has to get that all-important *tasteful* Swiss watch and good quality shoes. He will have to meet soloists, orchestral managers, and musicians. But he will never again work with another conductor or person of equal rank. Certainly, there will be moments when he will meet others of his own kind, but these times will be typically rare and much as ships which pass in the night.

To be a conductor is a high but lonely existence.

Nonetheless, you are always going to be working with people, and to do that you have to understand what makes them tick.

To allow yourself to become too remote or aloof from your players will stretch any bond between yourself and the orchestra to breaking point. There will inevitably come a time when you and your orchestra will no longer be on the same plane or level of comprehension. They will not understand why you make the demands upon them that you do; they will question your motivation, query your wisdom. And you will not understand the mood of the players or sense their anxieties and needs. It is a very fine balance.

The most common method of breaking down social and professional barriers would be to crack a joke or tell an amusing tale. Bond with them. However, conductors are not generally equipped with such skills since these are neither taught at conducting college nor would otherwise be acquired through normal everyday social interaction between persons of roughly equal social and professional status - conductors have usually *missed the boat* where humour is concerned.

There was a conductor named Vincent Dollars (1961-) who, having secured his first appointment as principal conductor, decided he would start as he meant to continue and get the players on his side by being ‘Mr. Nice Guy’.

His opening speech (which, of course, is taught at conducting

college, and is memorized by every student for their first-year examination) went down quite well. He said what an honour it was to be associated with this great orchestra. He wanted them all to know that he was on their side; how he intended to take them onto an even higher level of achievement; he had plans for several major concert series, tours and recordings etc, etc. Then he invited the whole orchestra to his hotel for an evening buffet at his expense.

There were mixed feelings regarding this. Some players were genuinely flattered, took the offer at face value, and readily accepted. Others felt it was a bitter irony that here was a conductor, half their age, and with very little experience, earning in one week what it would take them a whole year to earn, wearing a watch which probably cost more than their car, and inviting them to a hotel, the like of which they had only ever seen in the movies. But most of this group accepted the offer out of (a) curiosity and (b) the chance for a free meal and drink. Others (but only a few) flatly turned down the invitation.

Things seemed to be going quite well for Vincent. He looked around the sumptuous hotel ballroom and saw that those players who had accepted the invitation seemed to be enjoying themselves - at any rate they set off at a run when they saw the buffet tables, and now they had settled down and were all eating and drinking as much as they could - which counts as much the same thing.

Then things started to take a turn when he attempted to 'mingle'.

The players, of course, had formed themselves into their usual social groups:

Rank and file strings (the largest groups)

Principal strings (the most elite group – swapping jokes and laughing slightly too loudly)

Woodwind (the most nervous and intimate group)

Brass (the loudest and most playful group)

Horns (the most thoughtful group)

Harps (still knitting)

Percussion (the quietest group)

Timpani (on his own with a sandwich and working on his lap-top computer)

He first approached the timpanist...

Vincent: Good evening, You are our esteemed timpanist are you not?

Timpanist: Yes Maestro.

Vincent: May I call you Edward?

Timpanist: If you wish Maestro, however my name is Nigel.

Vincent: I do beg your pardon Nigel, and please less of the 'maestro' it feels so formal. Please call me Mr. Dollars.

Timpanist: Of course Mr. Dollars.

Vincent: So, Edward, it looks like you are working at something.

Timpanist: Um, yes Mr. Dollars. It is an article for a music magazine. I sometimes get asked to contribute material for their technical columns on practical symphonic music.

Vincent: Really, how fascinating. What is it about?

Timpanist: It's about the insurmountable *counting* complexities encountered in some of the great symphonic repertoire.

Vincent: Did you say *counting*? I feel a little dizzy. It's been a long day – will you excuse me a moment.

Then he spotted one of the rank and file string groups.

Vincent: I'm glad that you are having a good time. What were you all laughing about?

R&F: We were swapping jokes.

Vincent: I love jokes. What was this one about?

(awkward silence)

R&F: Oh just a musical joke Maestro – nothing really.

Vincent: Go on. Try me.

R&F: It wasn't really a very good one Maestro.

Vincent: Please, I absolutely insist.

R&F: Well, it is...um...about an orchestra.

Vincent: An orchestra? Excellent. Go on.

R&F: Er...*(aside)* Oh bloody hell. - What is the difference between a bull, (to his colleague) *Sod off will you and stop kicking me*, and a...and a ...um...symphony orchestra?

Vincent: I love these. Right. So what is the difference between a bull and a symphony orchestra? Let me think... No I give in. You'll have to tell me the answer. Oh no. He seems to have fainted. Quick someone give him some air.*

Next he spotted the percussion section.

Vincent: Hello gentlemen. I hope you are enjoying the wine, I had it flown in especially from my chateau in France...Oh I

*

The joke in question, which is, seemingly, a very old one, is known only to musicians. To this day neither I nor any other conductors in my acquaintance have ever managed to learn the punch-line.

see you're not drinking – Here waiter!

Percussionist: Thank you, Maestro, but none of us take alcohol. We believe it upsets our *counting*.

Vincent: Did you say *counting*?

Percussionist: Yes, *counting* Maestro.

Vincent: Oh, quite. Well, well. That's very commendable. Good for you. Er, keep up the good work chaps. I think I need a drink. No I don't... Um, yes I do... a soft drink, of course.

Then he happened upon the two harpists.

Vincent: Ah, ladies. Where would we be without those magnificent harps, I always say, not to mention those lovely ladies who play them. You are the First Harp are you not? What is your name my dear?

1st Harp: Valerie, Maestro.

Vincent: (to the second Harpist) And you my dear?

2nd Harp: Eric Maestro, and I am also the husband of the First Harpist.

Vincent: Good God! I mean...really?...yes indeed, what a pleasure to meet you both. You know the light is very poor in this hotel, and I seem to have left my glasses some place. Practically blind without them. Do excuse me a moment. I'll just...er... that's lovely knitting.

Next he came up behind a small huddle of woodwind players.

Vincent: Ah, the woodwind I presume – Oh, I’m most awfully sorry, my dear, did you spill your drink? I didn’t mean to startle you.

1st Oboe: It’s all right Maestro, our clarinetist is just a little jumpy tonight. She’ll be fine in a moment.

Vincent: Good, I know just the thing to cheer her up then... Here have another glass of wine... What was I saying?...Oh yes, I know what will cheer you up. Guess what? We’re going to be doing a live international relay of Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue – what a fabulously exposed solo opening for the clarinet eh? Oh dear, she’s dropped her wineglass again.

Then he approached the Brass section.

Vincent: Ah, - lady and gentlemen of the brass!

All: Good evening, Maestro.

Vincent: Excellent, I see you’ve all got some of my wine. Indeed *several* bottles of it.

1st Trombone: Thank you, Maestro. We hate to see it being wasted.

Vincent: Quite so... Good... Well, this is a perfect moment to tell you that I’ve already made plans to stage Janáček’s Sinfonietta – what a topping piece for brass, eh?

1st Trumpet: But won’t we need to get lots of extra brass in to help with all that part writing?

Vincent: Yes indeed, and it’s all arranged. I’ve hired the brass sections from both the PSO and PPO. How about that?

(uncomfortable silence)

Vincent: You don't look as happy about it as I hoped you would.

Tuba: Oh no Maestro, it's not that at all. We're very grateful.

Vincent: Is something wrong? Don't you like the piece?

Tuba: We all love the piece Maestro.

Vincent: Fine, that's all settled then.

Tuba: It's just that...

Vincent: Yes man, spit it out.

2nd Trombone: What our Tuba player is trying to say, Maestro, is that my ex-husband is 1st trumpet in the PPO. He ran away with the 2nd trumpet in the PSO the day after our wedding. I haven't seen him since that day. We don't keep in touch. I hope you understand.

Vincent: You know something, I've just seen the headwaiter calling to me. Do excuse me.

Then he joined the horn section

Vincent: I see you're not with the other brass players?

1st Horn: Um, Maestro, we are *Horn* players.

Vincent: Yes, that's what I meant – the other *brass* players.

2nd Horn: We don't really *count* our instruments as brass.

Vincent: *Count*? Did you say *count*? Oh, I see what you mean.

Of course you are brass players.

1st Horn: Um...I think not, maestro.

Vincent: This is another joke isn't it? I've heard of jokes, and this must be one – right?

2nd Horn: Not really, Maestro.

Vincent: That's very good – very funny. Excellent. I *must* remember that one.

Finally he sees the String principals in a group.

Principal Second: Ah, Maestro!

Vincent: Gentlemen.

Principal Second: Welcome to *our* orchestra.

Vincent: Well, Um, that's very kind of you.

Principal Viola: We've had a few little ideas we'd like to run by you, as it were.

Vincent: Well, that's good. I always like to encourage creative input from the workers - I mean players.

Principal Cello: *Yes indeed* Maestro, and we want you to *count* your stay with us as a very happy one, don't we gentlemen?

All: Oh yes. *Very happy.*

Vincent: Well, of course I will be calling a special principals meeting very soon – just as soon as we're rolling, so

to speak.

Principal Cello: Would you be *counting* the wind, brass, and percussion principals too?

Vincent: *Counting?* Oh yes, I see what you mean. *Count* them in too? Well, naturally.

Principal Viola: We really don't think you need to bother them with meetings. They're so busy; what with all those solo lines, and...

Principal Second: *Counting*, and teaching, and...

Principal Bass: ...and practice...

Principal Second: I feel they have enough on their plates, don't you Maestro?

Vincent: Err?

Principal Viola: Of course they do, Gentlemen?

All: Of course they do!

Vincent: Um, er... What were these ideas of yours?

Principal Cello: Don't you worry yourself about that now Maestro. *Count* on us - we'll be in touch later. Won't we gentlemen?

All: Oh yes, maestro, you can always *count* on us.

After the party had disbanded, and after the rank and file string players had filled their bags and pockets with any leftover food and cutlery they could find (there was no drink remaining), Vincent Dollars tried to sort out in his mind the events of the evening; the alarmingly

disproportionate number of times that the word ‘*count*’ seemed to crop up in the conversation; work out if it had all been a success. He decided, in the balance, that it might have been.

Yet six weeks later, he had to retire from his position as principal conductor due to nervous strain. He spent the following two years convalescing before he felt strong enough to hold a baton again.

He now specializes in early music. (See appendix)



The anxieties and risks associated with working and, on occasions, living with the orchestral animal can be vastly allayed through improved knowledge of the beast in question.

It is therefore well worth reproducing the following questionnaire; being one of the numerous publications by the (previously referred to) highly respected Technical Workshop for Artistic Training (T.W.A.T.), forming, as it does, part of their ongoing research into the dynamic between musicians and their maestro, and also between the players and sections of the orchestra with each other.

T.W.A.T. have made it their business to delve into the psyche of the musician - no easy task I should imagine, and have evidently devoted much time and resources into this fascinating topic which, to be frank, has, in the past, proved far too huge a task for any single individual to undertake.

As I understand it, the sources from which these questions have been compiled, have come, as it were, from both sides of the orchestral fence - i.e. the conductor’s viewpoint *and* the players. This makes it all the more interesting and pertinent as a guide. Their researches go back practically to the dawn of the symphony orchestra, and are continuing unabated to this day in their quest to understand this fascinating phenomenon that we know as ‘the symphony orchestra’.

I would urge all conductors to read it carefully, since much insight into the mind of the modern orchestral musician may be gleaned through skilful perception *between* the lines. Be aware that the answers

given by the orchestral musician may well differ to that of the conductor.

However, I would caution against coming to subjective conclusions regarding the statistical interpretation of the questions contained within this document. See it rather as the summary of the history of our noble profession - but perceived, rather, through the eyes of the orchestral musician.



Technical Workshop for Artistic Training

Conductor Evaluation Questionnaire

Name of Conductor _____

Nickname of Conductor _____

Please tick the box you most closely agree with

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
1. This conductor is always punctual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. He always remembers the name of your orchestra.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. He can read music.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. He can't read music, but <i>can</i> read the viola clef.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. He often lets the players out early.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. He remembers which country he is in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. He remembers what pieces you are supposed to be rehearsing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. You think he might play viola.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. He only ever lets the trombones out early.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. He is <i>not</i> a woman.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. He has been known to buy a round.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. He <i>is</i> a woman.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. He doesn't like the viola.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. He only likes playing <i>good</i> music.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. He likes playing contemporary rubbish.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. He dyes his hair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. He wears a wig.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 18. He is a reincarnated composer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. He <i>thinks</i> he is a reincarnated composer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. He can count. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. He can beat time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. He shuts his eyes too much. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. He knows when the piece has finished. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. He likes working with soloists. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. He doesn't like soloists. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. He sings badly. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. A good conductor should always sing badly. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Grunting is an important part of conducting. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Making faces is an important part of the job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Most rehearsing is a complete waste of time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

General points concerning conductors

- | | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Not sure</i> | <i>Disagree</i> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 31. It is important for all conductor's to be able to accurately beat time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. Most conductors are good at counting. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. No conductor should be younger than fifty. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. Shoes are very important. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35. Watches are more important than shoes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36. It is very important to have a luxury car. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. Designer baton cases are essential. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38. All good conductors should eventually be knighted. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. It is better to end a rehearsal well than to start one badly. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. Shoe-care is more important than baton-care. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. 'Three-time' is easier than 'four-time'. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 42. The conductor should always use the most expensive baton that money can buy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 43. Musicians are very understanding and sympathetic towards conductors. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 44. Musicians are <i>too</i> understanding and sympathetic towards conductors. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45. A musician can never become a conductor. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46. It is more important to know how the tunes go, than to be able to read music. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 47. Beating 'round-and-round' is better than 'up-and-down'. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 48. The orchestral score is only there for show. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 49. Toupees actually make you look younger. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Regarding composers

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 50. Composers are quite helpful to have around during rehearsals of their work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51. Dead composers are generally more respected than living ones. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 52. Most of the best composers tend to die young. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 53. Most composers tend to be geniuses. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 54. The conductor is generally more highly regarded than the composer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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You will find that you frequently cannot dissociate the particular character of an instrument from the nature of its player. So why should that be? To understand this question, you must first look back into the player's past - usually to his school days...

Into the infant's classroom steps the instrumental teacher and produces, for instance, a violin and viola, which superficially share similar techniques (at least at the early stages of learning. It is not uncommon for a violinist to be a 'closet viola player' – though getting them to admit to it is less common, and likewise it is true to say that the majority of viola players actually started on the violin before moving across to viola.).

So our instrumental teacher (after a few words of introduction), sets bow to string which, like magic, will transform the hollow wooden box into a wonderful instrument with apparent ease. It cannot fail to impress. As all the instruments of the string family can be manufactured in 'fraction' sizes, so it is, in theory, possible to begin learning shortly after the infant is on solid foods (see Mozart). But do not expect miracles (also see Mozart). Such is the nature of the stringed instrument that only an adult sized model will be capable of producing a tone quality that can be recognizable as a violin, viola, cello or double bass –

and only then if it is played well. Do not expect wonders from a quarter size viola*.

Thus, the little students will struggle heroically (usually with nightmarish results) to get to grips with these most fickle of instruments. And, if all goes well, their parents will be forced to endure the unearthly sounds of violin practice either before or after school on a daily basis for at least the next ten years – and those are the lucky ones! We won't mention what happens if all does not go well.

Improvement is a painfully slow process. Horrific howling noises will eventually give way to the sort of unearthly scraping sounds which make your teeth hurt; which will, in turn, be followed by scratching whining notes which send a cold shiver down your spine; followed eventually by a sort of asthmatic wheezing approximation of a note similar to the last dying sounds of a seventy-eight r.p.m. record player; which will then mutate into something that is recognizable (just) as a melody – and that represents the first five years of daily practice.



The young music student.

*

Or, in some cases, a full-sized viola.

But what does all this do to the inner child?

String players, more than any other symphonic instrumentalists, will, in a very real sense, assimilate the personality and nature of their instruments – there will eventually be no clear dividing-line between the temperament of the instrument and that of the player*. Such has been the technical, musical, and psychological imprinting that goes hand-in-hand with the learning process established over countless generations, that if one were, for instance, to separate a string player from his instrument, it would have much the same detrimental psychological effect as amputating a limb – part of him will have been lost forever, both physically and emotionally.

This is true to a greater or lesser degree of *all* the instruments and their players that may be found on the concert platform. Although in the case of the woodwind and brass instruments it is not possible to begin tuition at quite such an early age as with the stringed instruments, since they are unavailable in ‘fraction’ sizes, the indoctrination is arguably less deeply rooted, although at the professional level one has to regard each case on its own merits.

Musicians are fanatics. *They play to live and they live to play,* and usually they have little or no comprehension of what life would be like without their art. It is the focal point in their being.

What does all this mean to you, their conductor?

It means first and foremost that you are not dealing with normal or rational people. *No way.*

Let us say, for example, you are listening to a recording of a great symphonic work, for instance, Scheherazade, and that you are hearing one of the great solos - such as the oboe melody in the slow movement. Now imagine that you are in the company of an oboe section, and you happen to casually let slip that, not only do you not like the piece, but you really don't like that oboe melody. How will they react? You will be fortunate to leave the room without serious injury. Should you be foolish enough to insult the oboe as an instrument, or any of its repertoire, then you are committing a sin against all oboists everywhere,

*

Refer to Hacker's Unequal Temperament Guide (end of chapter)

and they will not rest until they have exacted the sort of revenge that is appropriate for your crime. And rest assured, you will suffer the maximum penalty. And quite deservedly so, in my opinion.

This law is universal, and applies to *every* player and *every* instrument in the orchestra, **so beware.**

So it is well to keep in mind, when you step into the rehearsal studio, that at all times you are in the presence of raw emotion. If you sin against an instrument, *or* it's repertoire, *or* it's position in the symphonic structure, you run a very grave risk of it being your last appearance with that orchestra – or worse. A testimony to which, can be seen (should one wish to indulge in the morbid), in every casualty department, in every hospital, in every city, where there will be a 'special box'. And in that special box will be a wide ranging assortment of strange or everyday objects that have been removed from various patients who have been rushed in for treatment. All these objects have a story to tell, and the most telling of all will be the occasional violin bow, conductor's baton, trumpet mute, or even in one tragic case, a flute complete with bottom 'B' extension.

This is the darker side of the history of conducting, and not one that it is comfortable or tasteful to dwell upon. Enough said.

The implication behind all this is that **forewarned is forearmed.**



I recently came across a '*word-search*'. As I recall, it was a viola player who handed it to me after a rehearsal, informing me that it had come from a classical music magazine, and that he thought I might find it interesting.

How right he was.

It is probably not surprising that you, the conducting scholar, may never have heard of such things. So, to those of you who, like myself, normally have no time or inclination for such trivia, permit me to explain:

It is a game where you have to find all the hidden words in the jumble of letters contained within the box.

Now, what is particularly interesting in this case is that *all* the words herein pertain to the *maestro and his artistry*. The point, as far as we are concerned, being this:

That you, the conductor, would not exist if it were not for both the musicians under your baton, and the public who attend your concerts – and it is a point worth remembering at all times. But remember also, that the esteem for the maestro, in the eyes of the players and public, can extend into *many* walks of life. It is important to be aware of this fact. Therefore even such trivia as this can be interesting from time to time.

I have reproduced the puzzle faithfully in this volume, including the strange anomaly in the disparity between the number of words *as stated* (sixty-one), and the number of words *actually listed* (twenty-four).

The Conductor's Word-Search

See if you can find the sixty-one words hidden in the box.
Here is a clue: *They all refer to the conductor's craftsmanship!*

<i>Artistry</i>	<i>baton</i>	<i>brainy</i>	<i>director</i>	<i>ears</i>
<i>elite</i>	<i>expert</i>	<i>finesse</i>	<i>gifted</i>	<i>heroic</i>
<i>interpretations</i>	<i>maestro</i>	<i>mentor</i>	<i>musicologist</i>	<i>nuance</i>
<i>passion</i>	<i>podium</i>	<i>refined</i>	<i>sexy</i>	<i>technique</i>
<i>sir</i>	<i>stoic</i>	<i>wag</i>	<i>wit</i>	

(One of the above words is not in the box. See if you can find which one.)

d	r	o	t	n	e	m	f	i	n	e	s	s	e	p
i	r	r	n	o	t	a	b	o	u	i	i	b	b	o
r	g	i	t	a	e	e	i	f	a	r	t	a	o	r
e	t	f	p	f	r	s	w	a	n	k	e	r	l	k
c	e	i	l	o	s	t	d	c	c	r	a	b	b	y
t	c	c	o	a	e	r	i	a	e	x	p	e	r	t
o	h	e	p	k	p	o	c	s	e	x	y	d	a	t
r	n	e	p	e	r	a	k	z	t	h	o	g	i	a
g	i	p	y	e	a	r	s	h	a	r	k	n	n	r
x	q	a	h	g	t	b	o	s	s	y	y	c	y	t
m	u	s	i	c	o	l	o	g	i	s	t	o	i	c
r	e	g	i	n	e	d	y	l	l	o	o	w	q	d
e	f	p	k	d	e	t	f	i	g	t	n	g	a	w
s	a	r	s	e	l	i	t	e	r	e	s	s	o	t
s	n	o	i	t	a	t	e	r	p	r	e	t	n	i



All good textbooks on conducting will quote some or all of ‘Hacker’s Unequal Temperament Guide’, which was first standardized in the late nineteenth century by the English conductor and musicologist Sir Hubert Hacker (1847-1920), and has been periodically updated over the years to keep pace with the changes in the scale and working practice of the symphony orchestra. It is invaluable as an indication to the conductor as to what level he must pitch his remarks, his criticisms, and his conversation when in the company of musicians.

HACKER'S UNEQUAL TEMPERAMENT GUIDE	
First Violinists	Outward going, friendly, inclined to show off, fiercely competitive, sociable, get on reasonably well with wind players but not brass, love playing practical jokes on the violas, tend to get bored easily and will then become fractious.
Second Violinists	Very sociable, occasionally thoughtful, happy-go-lucky, frequently hedonistic, living for the moment, dreamers, eventually good family people but need to mature first which often takes them into their fifties, keen verging-on-fanatical hobbyists.
Violists	Quiet, often shy, rather slow on the uptake (have to have jokes explained to them), creatures of habit, prefer their own company, the tragic clowns of the orchestra, and (not surprisingly) the butt of many musical jokes, from their point of view, their only saving grace is a clef which no one else can read.
Cellists	The most complex of the strings, romantic, fanciful, dreamy, imaginative, conscientious, rather egocentric, friendly, talkative (if you like conversation about repertoire and cellist's blisters), they don't like the show-off violins, and look down on the violas, they tolerate the basses.
Double Bassists	Larger-than-life personalities, noisy, occasionally moody, clowns, jokers, slapstick, passionate, open and friendly, loyal, versatile, good team players, they tend to believe the bass-line is the melody, inside every bass player is a violinist trying to get out – but they'll never admit to it.
Oboists	Gentle most of the time, but fierce when aroused, intelligent, good sense of humour, very single minded, fun loving, loyal, if the leader was not traditionally a violinist then the principal oboist would be a hot contender for the post.
English Horn	Same as oboists, pound-per-note, they get paid quite a lot for doing rather little. They get very absorbed with reed making which serves as a therapy for them, and is a fascinating topic of conversation if you can stand it, they resent having to double the viola line, so take great pains not to associate themselves with violas socially. Warning: All reed, and double-reed instrumentalists carry a selection of razor sharp knives about their person.

Flute	Conscientious, unequivocal, very hard working, passionate about obscure flute repertoire, rather egocentric, cannot understand brass players, but get on well with the horns and strings. They go through life taking <i>everything</i> as literally as if it were their music (if the speed limit is 30 mph then that is what they will do – no more, and no less).
Piccolo	Same as flute; dreamy. They also like reading romantic novels during their bars rest.
Clarinet	They swing between being quiet, thoughtful and solitary, to becoming outward going, and the life and soul of the party, very good ensemble players, they understand the strings better than any other wind player and often bond with them socially, they possess the instinct for knowing exactly the right balance in the wind section, therefore are an invaluable ally in rehearsals. They dislike looking at the back of the oboist's heads.
Bass clarinet	Similar to clarinet (which of course they also play) but have a little of the rebel about them. They like to shock from time to time by dropping things down the collars of oboists.
Bassoonists	Very down-to-earth individuals, lots of energy and enthusiasm, inclined to be pedantic, very keen on rules and a well-ordered orchestra, good sense of humour. Respectful.
Contra Bassoonists	Much the same as bassoonists, surprisingly intellectual at times, very good head for figures, can be dangerously quick at spotting a wrong beat from the conductor.
Horns	Very thoughtful, but may cover it up with an affected superficiality, they have a very strongly ingrained sense of right and wrong, they have a good sense of humour and love to tease, sitting a long way from the conductor allows them to make conductor jokes on a regular basis, very good team players, usually highly intelligent.
Trumpeters	Fun loving, dependable, loyal and supportive of each other, disciplined and meticulous workers, rather narrow musical tastes – they like <i>loud</i> music a lot, very honest and friendly, keen on sports, they identify more with string players than woodwind whom they find rather tedious company.

Trombonists	Similar to trumpeters, but have very inquiring minds, they do not accept anything without question, if they don't like something they will say so, and will make a strong stand for what they believe in, they have little knowledge or interest in repertoire that requires no trombones, they think string players are rather neurotic but prefer them to horn players whom they regard as exiled brass.
Bass trombonists	Same as trombonists, not loners, but very sociable, good humoured like the trumpeters, but with a rare (for a musician) streak of humility, very easy going, but disciplined workers, they have a way of working which resembles an obsessive ritual, they can be prone to worry, but will cover it up if they can, very loyal to their friends, hate confrontation which they find quite upsetting.
Tuba	For them, there was <i>no music</i> before the (relatively recent) invention of their instrument, good talkers, courageous, loyal, dependable, sometimes slow on the uptake due to being so far away from the conductor, they share the trumpeter's pleasure in loud brass music.
Timpanists	Solitary, quiet, conscientious, don't like tunes (you rarely hear one humming), often keen on fine art and literature, very thoughtful at times, enjoy solving the sort of puzzles which drive most people round the bend, get on well with the horns and brass, but not strings whom they regard as shallow.
Percussionists	They like to do things <i>their way</i> and do not take kindly to interference from outsiders (and that includes conductors), they get on quite well with the woodwind, but prefer their own company as no one else really understands them, they share the timpanists' contempt for melody, but occasionally like to show off on the xylophone, they much prefer very loud music and enjoy terrorizing the last desks of violins.
Harpists	Very sociable and talkative creatures, often keen hobbyists or sports fanatics in their youth, enjoy art but nothing too challenging, likewise music, theatre, cinema, books and dance, they do their best if they are not allowed time to think about it – otherwise they will worry and fret, they hate hurting peoples' feelings and are very moral creatures, fanatical and accomplished knitters.

Collective Nouns

First Violinists	-	-	-	A Circus
Second Violinists	-	-	-	A Surreptition
Violists	-	-	-	A Colon
Cellists	-	-	-	A Myopia
Double Bassists	-	-	-	A Diesel
Oboists	-	-	-	An Isobar
Flautists	-	-	-	A Pout
Clarinetists	-	-	-	An Insurrection
Bassoonists	-	-	-	An Absence
French Horn Section	-	-	-	A Levity
Trumpeters	-	-	-	An Alloy
Trombonists	-	-	-	A Quango
Percussionists	-	-	-	An Isolation
Harpists	-	-	-	A Quiver

