



**The Conductor's Leadership.
A Model of Trust, Collaboration, and Moral Character**

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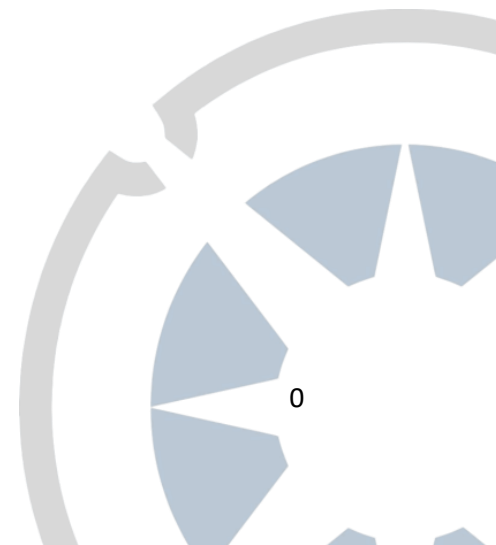
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The Conductor's Leadership.

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The art of playing music is the art of simultaneous playing and listening, one enhancing the other. This takes place on both an individual and a collective level: the playing is enhanced by the listening and one voice is enhanced by another. This dialogical quality inherent in music was our main reason for founding the [West-Eastern Divan] Orchestra.

Daniel Barenboim

The concept of leadership has been an important aspect throughout human history, reflected in various roles such as kings, political leaders, spiritual guides, and military commanders. Plato was an early thinker who contemplated the nature and importance of effective leadership. In "The Republic", he explores the relationship between power and wisdom, suggesting

that human prosperity is closely linked to the guidance of knowledgeable leaders. Over time, historical developments have consistently echoed the relevance of Plato's insights on leadership. In recent years, the study of leadership has blossomed into a dynamic and fertile field. Contemporary research emphasizes the indispensable role of innovation and creativity as key competencies that empower leaders to recognize and tackle emerging challenges, fostering a spirit of collaboration as they chart courses through the murky waters of the problematic situations of daily life (Hughes et al., 2018; Kao, 1997; Mumford et al., 2014). Echoing this idea Weick (2007) suggests that a leader's potential is greatly amplified when they embrace non-rational yet profoundly human processes – intuition, emotional insight, improvisation, imagination, active listening, “synchronous awareness”, and empathy. Interestingly, these attributes, while not typically attributed to organizational practices, find an echo in the world of the arts, particularly in the field of music. This confluence of artistic sensibility and leadership acumen is not a mere happenstance but signifies a deeper, more intrinsic connection (Goryunova and Lehmann, 2023, 450).

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In line with this view, for the past four decades, leadership scholars worldwide have been exploring how various artistic expressions—be it the visual arts, poetry, or the performing arts – can nurture a continuous flow of intuition-driven innovation. Notably, the realm of music-making and ensemble performance, with symphony orchestras often standing as a prime example, has been repeatedly invoked as a powerful metaphor for understanding organizational dynamics and structures¹. This perspective reveals that musical leadership stands as a sterling exemplar of

leadership models, offering unique insights and pragmatic applications Goryunova and Lehmann, 2023, 452).

When it was born in the late seventeenth century, the orchestra was a novelty. It represented a new kind of social organization: a large number of people (the members of the orchestra), doing the same thing at the same time in precisely the same way, led by a leader: the conductor (Spitzer & Zaslav, 2004, 507). This complex dynamic is epitomized in the unique relationship of the conductor with their orchestra, an alliance that becomes foundational for both entities.

“Conducting is inevitably about partnership” (Mauceri, 2017, 100). Every great conductor is inextricably linked with a great ensemble and this symbiotic relationship establishes something uniquely transformative for both sides (Mauceri, 2017, 100).

On stage, as many as a hundred musicians may be seated, each a dedicated individual who has devoted their life to perfecting their craft. These artists, willingly or not, subordinate their individuality, contributing to something larger than themselves: the orchestra. This process is demanding and sometimes thankless. For those in specialized roles, such as wind players, lead violinists, or brass musicians, there occasionally arises the opportunity to perform a solo, allowing them to showcase their individual artistry. However, the vast majority of the orchestra will follow the leaders of their sections, collectively creating the magnificent sound of the symphonic orchestra or the opera orchestra, the pinnacle of expressiveness in Western music.

The interaction between conductor and orchestra – in which individual talents are woven into a cohesive whole – embodies the essence of musical collaboration. It highlights how the conductor’s vision and the musicians’ expertise merge to produce something that transcends their

individual contributions, culminating in the powerful and emotional experience that is a harmonius

1 Influential works in this area include (referenced works include Adler, 2006; Allmendinger et al., 1996; Allmendinger & Hackman, 1996; Atik, 1994; Barry & Hansen, 2008; Hall, 2008; Hunt et al., 2004; Ippolito, 2015; Kammerhoff et al., 2019; Koivunen & Wennes, 2011; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Mintzberg, 1998; Sutherland, 2013).

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performance. Conductors are undoubtedly the leaders, those who imprints their signature on the final outcome. What style of leadership does they exhibit? The extensive contemporary literature has shed light on different styles of leadership, which partly overlap but are distinct from each other. These include authentic, transformational, servant, ethical, adaptive, inclusive, and charismatic leadership. Our intuition regarding the nature of the conductor's leadership is that it oscillates between the transformational and the charismatic styles. In the following, we will present these two styles of leadership and explain why they are the most appropriate for accounting for the orchestra and the conductor operate.

1. Leadership: a brief overview

Leadership studies is a diverse and dynamic field that focuses on a multitude of leadership styles, each with unique characteristics and methods for guiding and influencing both individuals and groups. Among these styles the most relevant are the authentic, the adaptive, the servant, the the transactional, the transformational, and the charismatic leadership styles. In the following, we will first provide brief characterizations of each style of leadership and then discuss the most relevant regarding orchestras' dynamics: transformational and charismatic leadership.

The *authentic leadership* style is characterized by its focus on transparency, moral integrity, and a deep understanding of people's needs and values. Leaders of this style are known for their genuineness and strong ethical principles, fostering trust and respect among their followers (Northouse, 2022, 193).

The *adaptive leadership* is about aiding individuals in managing change and uncertainty, proving crucial in complex and unpredictable environments (Northouse, 2022, 237). Greanleaf (1970, 1972, 1977) shifts the leadership focus to prioritize followers' needs and growth over the leader's self-interest. Initially purely theoretical, this style of leadership has evolved into a practical framework and aligns with moral models, emphasizing service, especially to the less privileged. It involves learnable behaviors and encompasses key characteristics like listening, empathy, healing, and community building, (Spears, 2002, 2010). Servant leadership thus emphasizes nurturing and serving followers, fostering community spirit, and adhering to ethical standards.

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The *transactional leadership* style is marked by a notable absence of a tailored approach to addressing the specific needs and fostering the personal growth of each follower. Instead, it is characterized by a mutual exchange of valuable assets between leaders and their followers, with the aim of promoting the goals of both parties (Kuhnert, 1994; Northouse, 2022, 174). The efficacy of transactional leaders lies in the understanding that followers benefit when they align with the leader's objectives, thus creating a foundation for the leader's influence (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Northouse, 2022, 174).

However, regarding the psycho-sociological and moral dynamics of orchestras, the most

relevant styles of leadership are the transformational and the charismatic ones. *Transformational leadership* is noted for its powerful ability to motivate and inspire followers beyond common expectations (Northouse, 2022, 166). This style goes beyond mere operational management, aiming to raise followers' aspirations, increase their awareness of their tasks' broader implications, and cultivate a collective commitment to organizational goals. Transformational leaders, often seen as visionary, can bring about significant changes in both individuals and organizational structures, focusing on empowerment, inspiration, and personal development.

James MacGregor Burns (1978) in the "Leadership" brought transformational leadership to prominence, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers. He distinguished transactional leadership, based on explicit leader-follower exchanges, from transformational leadership, which seeks to deepen connections and uplift moral standards. Moreover, highlighting the interdisciplinary significance of transformational leadership, Lowe, Gardner, and Dinh et al. (2020) have shown its applicability across various fields, including management, psychology, nursing, and education.

But transformational leadership may also have downsides. Khoo & Burch (2008) found it associated with individuals displaying high levels of histrionic personality traits, which could lead to manipulative behaviors. Moreover, its inspirational aspect might be exploited for personal agendas (Barling et al., 2007), raising concerns about "pseudo-transformational leadership," which mimics its motivational aspects but lacks ethical foundations.

Parallel to transformational leadership is Robert House's (1976) *charismatic* leadership, which is based on Max Weber's (1947) concept. Weber's ideal politician, endowed not just with rationality

and professionalism but also profound charisma, operates within societal constraints yet commands followers' devotion, creating a personal connection that underlies the leader's

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authority. House's theory posits that charismatic leaders possess distinctive traits and behaviors that significantly affect follower performance and organizational alignment. Subsequent studies have emphasized the role of charismatic leaders in transforming followers' self-concepts, aligning them with the organizational ethos, and fostering a shared sense of purpose. Additionally, Jung and Sosik (2006) found that charismatic leaders often exhibit self-monitoring, active impression management, a strong drive for social power, and a desire for self-actualization. However, charismatic leadership, while effective in management, can be ethically hazardous, leading to catastrophic outcomes as seen in historical figures like Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Josip Stalin, and Jim Jones (Goryunova and Lehmann, 2023, 378). Without ethical guidance, charismatic leadership can drive followers towards destructive values and unswerving fanaticism.

Coming to orchestral music, Mintzberg (1998) notes that effective conductors transcend mere obedience from the members of the orchestra, instead focusing on the nuances of music to create harmony. This has led researchers to explore if such conductors exhibit inherent transformational leadership qualities in professional orchestras (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Boerner and Krause (2002) suggest that transformational leadership in orchestras could enhance job satisfaction and performance. Rowold and Rohmann (2009) found that both transformational and transactional leadership styles positively affect musicians' emotional states and performance. A study on German symphony orchestras (Boerner and Freiherr, 2005) showed that a conductor's

transformational leadership's effectiveness depends on the ensemble's cooperative dynamics.

Finally, Hunt et al. (2004) argue that the modern conductor's role, encompassing a wide range of responsibilities beyond the traditional Maestro role, requires further investigation by leadership scholars. This is true, in particular, for the role played by transformational style, on which we will mostly focus in the rest of this article in regard to leadership of orchestral conductors.

2. The Conductor's Leadership

2.1. Authority

When the orchestra emerged in the late 17th century, it epitomized a revolutionary concept.

The magnitude and majesty of its sound and the unprecedented force of its performance provided

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an acoustic experience hitherto unencountered. In addition to its musical impact, the orchestra also represented an innovative form of social organization. It was characterized by a large assembly of individuals performing coordinated actions in a highly coordinated and precise manner. Orchestras had leaders from their earliest days. In the eighteenth century, orchestras were primarily led in three different manners, resulting in three distinct kinds of leaders: (1) the timebeater; (2) the keyboard director; and (3) the violin leader. The timebeater emerged as the earliest form among these. The method of keeping time, whether by hand, using a rolled-up music paper scroll, or with a short, thick baton, was a common approach for directing choral groups during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This technique continued to be prevalent in church music throughout the eighteenth century (Spitzer & Zaslav, 2004, 387) "To many people in the eighteenth century, leadership by example seemed far preferable to leadership by command". (Spitzer & Zaslav, 2004,

389). In fact, as Johann Mattheson observed in 1739: “Things always work out better when I both play and sing along than when I merely stand there and beat time. Playing and singing in this way inspires and enlivens the performers” (Spitzer & Zaslaw, 2004, 389).

The professional orchestra is often viewed as a paradigm of hierarchical organization, akin to a “benevolent dictatorship” with a top-down approach (Goryunova and R. Lehmann, 2023, 455).

However, a more nuanced and careful analysis reveals a much more complex structure. Within this framework, in particular, several levels of leadership coexist (including the leadership of principal musicians in each section), allowing many individuals the opportunity to significantly influence and “shape the music”. Therefore, the intricate dynamics and stratified leadership within orchestras transcending the oversimplified view of the singular, authoritative orchestra leadership.

Authority remains crucial in an organization like the orchestra and merits in depth analysis.

Discussing the authority of the orchestra conductor, Pauline Adenot (2019, 6) speaks of the “co-construction of authority”. This co-construction involves a complex interweaving of various forms of power and legitimacy. The conductor, often wrongly perceived as an absolute authority, operates within a multifaceted spectrum of influence that is far from absolute. This is evident in the way different orchestras and even different sections within the same orchestra grant varying degrees of authority to the conductor.

In the humanities and social sciences, authority is acknowledged as both a legitimate form of power, justified by the consensus of the majority, and as a relational construct that allows negotiation among actors, despite unequal resources (Adenot, 2019, 6). This relational aspect is

essential for understanding the role of the orchestra conductor. While the legitimacy of the conductor fosters adherence to their authority, the nature and degree of this adherence vary based on the individuals involved and the methods of exercising authority of each conductor.

Max Weber's sociological framework categorizes authority into *traditional*, *charismatic*, and *rational*. For orchestra conductors, the latter two types are particularly relevant, and in different contexts a conductor may embody both or either (Adenot, 2019, 6). Legal-rational authority, frequently observed in the interactions between a conductor and an orchestra, is predicated upon the formal status of the conductor at the forefront of the orchestra, grounded in official statutes that establish the conductor's leadership position. This constitutive authority grants a basic legitimacy, ensuring a minimum level of compliance from musicians, such as attending rehearsals and following the conductor's direction (Adenot, 2019,8)

However, the resistance or autonomy of the members of the orchestra can challenge, and even overrule, this authority. As noted by sociologists Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg (1977) no individual or organization exercises absolute control stopping actors to behave according to their own rationality – and this is particularly true for orchestras (Adenot, 2019, 7). Members of the orchestra are not under mere obedience, they play discretionary roles, such as the selection of substitutes or the interpretation of rules, that can significantly impact the conductor's authority.

2.2. Deference and empathy

It is worth noticing, that the notion of *deference* is conceptually linked to that of obedience.

And, as with all forms of obedience, deference implies respect for both superiors and established norms. However, it may also refer to the consideration of a person one esteems highly because of

their opinions, decisions, or actions. Deference also implies respect, whereas mere obedience requires following instructions or rules but does not necessarily imply respect. Finally, deference may be mutual, whereas mere obedience presupposes an asymmetric relationship (in which there are a superior and an inferior party) and cannot be mutual.

In music, deference is involved in following the directions of the conductor and of the first musicians of the various sections of the orchestra. In this context, deference can be understood as the willingness of the members of the orchestra to embrace the conductor's artistic vision and guidance. In particular, it presupposes recognizing the conductor as an authority figure and accepting their creative decisions as the basis for interpreting a determinate piece of music.

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In order to be artistically fecund, the conductor-orchestra relationship has to be based on mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. In this regard, Narvaez et al. (2022) recently conducted intensive multidisciplinary work to examine the relationship between virtues and practices from the perspectives of practitioners, particularly in the fields of science and music. Their findings are presented in the volume entitled "Moral and Intellectual Virtues in Practices Through the Eyes of Scientists and Musicians" (2022). According to Narvaez et al. (2022) virtuous practitioners have developed in such a way that they can achieve the most important values (ends) of their practice.

What has emerged from the studies is that musicians are naturally morally grounded, to varying degrees, and possess a sense of morality along with ethical values.

In fact, when things work properly, the orchestra members show deference to the conductor by recognizing and respecting their authority, following their guidance, and being receptive to

their interpretations and artistic vision. Deference in this context implies acknowledging the conductor's expertise, musical interpretation, and ability to guide the collective performance. It is fundamental to notice, however, that this relationship is not one of blind obedience or submission. In this light, a good conductor has to show deference to the orchestra by valuing their individual contributions, listening to their ideas, and collaborating to create a unified and expressive performance. Hence, while in the relationship between the conductor and the orchestra there is a hierarchical dimension, both parties display respect and regard (that is, deference) for each other's roles and contributions. That the relationship between orchestra members and the conductor cannot be solely based on obedience and authority has also been substantiated by recent psychological research (Woody & McPherson, 2010, p. 405). Otherwise, the result of the performance is flat. André Ernest Modeste Grétry (1797) states: "for an ensemble made up of individuals and artists, authoritarian leadership is less effective because it inhibits the performers' artistic skills and judgement" (Splitz & Zaslav, 2004, 389). Instead, the relationship between orchestra members and the conductor is characterized by deep emotions.

The development of the appropriate emotional connection between co-performers requires time, is not always characterized by positive emotions, and may be psychologically complex. In larger ensembles, conflicts may arise as members compete for status, while smaller groups lacking a hierarchical structure may struggle on addressing issues related to musical coordination (Allsup, 2003; Ford & Davidson, 2003). Musicians often form deep connections within their groups, and these personal bonds significantly influence their emotional experiences during collaborative

musical endeavors. Particularly during performances, these artists frequently encounter profound collective emotions. Keith Sawyer (2006) describes musicians comparing the “emotional empathy” in group performances to feelings of “intimacy”, “heightened sensations”, and “ecstasy” (Woody & McPherson, 2010, 405).

Many scholars, such as Davidson & Good (2002), King (2006), and Williamon & Davidson (2002), have explored how co-performers interact. Their research highlights a unique phenomenon among ensemble players: achieving a shared mental state. Described in various terms like “being in sync” (Berliner, 1994), “group flow” (Sawyer, 2006), or “empathic synchronization” (Seddon, 2005), this collective psychological condition is closely related to empathy. Recently gaining interest in intellectual circles (Lipps, 1903; Vischer, 1873/1994), empathy is increasingly recognized as crucial for facilitating interactions among co-performers and understanding dynamics within small ensembles (Waddington, 2017, 230). The role of empathy in practice and performance was emphasized by Sharon Myers and Catherine White (2012), where nine professional musicians acknowledged empathy as crucial for effective joint performance.

Elizabeth Haddon and Mark Hutchinson (2015) further investigated the role of empathy in piano duo rehearsals, finding it to be a vital tool for developing shared understanding, strengthening partnership within the duo, addressing conflicts proactively, and establishing a secure environment. Peter Keller (2014) also recognized empathy as a key element in ensemble performance (Waddington, 2017, 230).

It is worth noting that musicians primarily communicate with each other through eye contact and bodily gestures, which are fundamental and innate ways for human beings to express emotions

(Bastien & Hostager, 1988; Poggi, 2002; Williamon & Davidson, 2002). These characteristics are particularly evident in the role of a conductor (Price & Byo, 2002). For instance, Wilhelm Furtwängler, one of the most renowned conductors of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, was described as a “remarkable magician” capable of inspiring the ensemble and evoking a state of ecstasy among its members (Eschenbach, no date). Such observations underscore the emotional engagement required during rehearsals and performances of professional music, as well as the profound relationships that develop among members of professional ensembles, whose careers depend on achieving a level of excellence and intensity uncommon in other disciplines (Woody & McPherson, 2010, 405).

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Therefore, a good conductor assumes the role of an inspirational figure who – by inspiring deference –, guides and shapes the collective interpretation of the music. When this happens, the members of the orchestra properly respond to the conductor’s instructions regarding tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and the general coordination of the ensemble. This deference contributes to the achievement of a unified performance and enables effective communication within the orchestra. Moreover, as said, apart from the conductor, every instrumental section has a principal musician in a leadership position, such as the first violin or first clarinet (as we will see more in detail in a moment), and the described psychological dynamics are repeated on a smaller scale in those contexts. These subleaders also command deference from their respective sections and work in collaboration with the conductor to ensure a cohesive interpretation and performance.

In sum, the relationship between the conductor and the members of the orchestra (and, at a

smaller degree, that between the subleaders of the different sections of the orchestra with the other musicians) requires a delicate balance between mutual trust, effective communication, and artistic cohesion. What is sure, however, is that this attitude is not one of a mere obedience, but a sincere and voluntary adherence to the decisions of the conductor and and of the first musicians of the sessions. The sincere and voluntary decision to follow the instructions of the orchestra members is described by Wilhelm Furtwängler as based on an internal authority: “In art, the principle of authority works in a peculiar way: what I would call external authority is, of course, an important factor, but if it is not connected to the inner authority from which all true artistic ability stems, then in spite of all our efforts, we will wait in vain for the legitimately expected results” (1979, 310).

What Furtwängler calls “internal authority” is the phenomenon that earlier we have called “deference”.

If deference lays the foundation for the exercise of a conductor’s authority, *empathy* strengthens it in virtue of the relationships established between the conductor and musicians, and among the musicians themselves. Psychologists have shown that the personal connections musicians feel with one another can enhance the music-induced emotions experienced in their group activities (see Bakker, 2005, for a study on how flow experiences are transferred from music teachers to their students). Group emotional experiences can be more intense during performance moments. As we have noted, musicians communicate with each other during performances primarily through eye contact and bodily gestures, which are natural ways for human beings to express emotions. (Bastien & Hostager, 1988; Poggi, 2002; Williamon & Davidson, 2002). These

traits are particularly evident in the role of conductor, especially the best ones (Price & Byo, 2002). For instance, Wilhelm Furtwängler, has been described as a “formidable magician, a man capable of setting an entire ensemble of musicians ablaze, sending them into a state of ecstasy” (Eschenbach, no date). Reports like this highlight the level of emotional engagement required during rehearsals and performances of high-quality music, in addition to the intense relationships developed among members of professional music ensembles.

In this section we have stressed two important things. On the one hand, music studies have shown that, to achieve excellent artistic results, a conductor should embody authority through assertive guidance and profound musical insight, while orchestra members must exhibit deference towards the conductor. On the other hand, research in psychology has revealed that emotional empathy is a crucial component of a good conductor’s personality since it enables harmonious and expressive executions. The dynamic interplay of these elements not only shapes the musical outcome but also affects the interpersonal dynamics within the orchestra. In this context, the distinctive style of the conductor’s leadership can be characterized as oscillating between transformational and charismatic leadership.

3. Balancing ethical values within multiple leaderships

3.1 Hierarchy and Leaderships

The conductor’s role emerges as a multifaceted endeavor, delicately balancing the creative imperatives of the performance with the nuanced challenges of leading a diverse assemblage of musicians and navigating through varied repertoires that present novel complexities. This role transcends mere musical direction, encompassing a deep empathy towards the members of the

orchestra and a reverent respect for the traditions of musical artistry.

Orchestral leadership significantly differs from conventional hierarchical and directive models, because of its more fluid and interactive dynamic of distributed influence. In this context, the first musicians of the orchestra sections, manifest leadership within their distinct spheres in the orchestral structure. For instance, the first violins manifest leadership within their part. The leadership of the first violins, then, is particularly positioned as beside or secondary to that of the conductor.

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In the symphony orchestra, the violin section is divided into first and second violins.

Typically, the first violins are tasked with the higher, more melodically prominent parts, while the second violins undertake countermelodies and provide substantial harmonic support.

However, not a few composers have crafted significant parts for the second violins, assigning harmonic support and countermelody roles to the first violins. Thus, in this contexts there is no absolute hierarchy, and it would be wrong to presume that one section supersedes the other in importance. Each section – led respectively by the concertmaster for the first violins and the principal second violin for the second one – tends to hold equivalent significance. This distribution of responsibilities within the violin sections invites contemplation on the pivotal role of the first violin. Over the 18th century, the role of violin leadership gained greater significance.

Referred to as the leader in England, *primo violino* or *capo d'orchestra* in Italy, *Anführer* or *Konzertmeister* in Germany, and *premier violon* in France, this position was distinguished by directing through the vigor and volume of the performance of the first violin part (Spitzer &

Zaslaw, 2004, 391). It serves as a vibrant exemplar of leadership within the orchestra complementing within the orchestral hierarchy, albeit in a subordinate capacity, the conductor's leadership. "If an opera goes well," states Francesco Galeazzi (1791) "it is the first violin who will receive the praise, and if it goes poorly, it is he who will be blamed". And "A mediocre orchestra with an excellent director," claims Giuseppe Scaramelli (1811), "plays much better than an excellent orchestra led by an incompetent first violinist" (Spitzer & Zaslaw, 2004, 393).

Therefore, the first violin is crucial and undertakes numerous essential roles: it symbolizes the entire orchestra, tuning in response to the oboe's A, and establishes a reference for pitch. For the string section, it is the first violin that dictates the bowings, determining the direction of the strokes. With the exception of solo violin concertos, typically rendered by a guest violinist, the concertmaster performs every solo violin part. Beyond their musical and technical proficiency, the concertmaster assumes a crucial diplomatic role, acting as the principal intermediary between the members of the orchestra and the conductor.

The concept of hierarchy, however, is not confined solely to the orchestral structure but also inherently manifests itself within the realm of the musical composition itself. The fabric of professional classical music is intricately woven with a hierarchical texture (as already observed by Aristotle in *Politics* V, where he noted that in all musical modes – those for him being the Dorian, the Phrygian, and the Lydian – there is a key ruling note). Nonetheless, it is paramount to

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recognize that this hierarchical architecture coexists with a profound equilibrium. Within the practice of music, hierarchy and balance are not merely coexistent but symbiotically intertwined,

forming the cornerstone of musical expression.

In the domain of musical composition, the notion of hierarchy should not be misconstrued as signifying a rigid or authoritarian framework. Hierarchy functions as an orchestrating principle, harmonizing a multitude of distinct voices into a cohesive and unified ensemble. Each musical element, ranging from the dominant themes to the subtle nuances, and including the fundamental accompaniments, is given a unique space and opportunity to contribute creatively to the overarching narrative. The leadership exemplified by the principal voice or instruments does not serve to suppress but rather to invigorate and amplify the creative potential of the secondary voices and instrumental accompaniments. In the musical context, therefore, authority and creativity should not be seen as antagonistic values but as intricately interlaced within the tapestry of orchestral harmony.

3.2. Artistic Integrity and Shared Vision in Orchestral Performances

Integrity, as elucidated by Herdt (2020), underscores the significance of adhering to one's commitments or actualizing one's values. The epitome of integrity is achieved when one embodies and enacts positive values in a harmonious manner (Herdt, 2020; Narvaez et al. 2022, 39). Applied to professional music, the concept of artistic integrity is characterized by a profound commitment to the essence of the performed works, marked by earnest sincerity and unwavering dedication to both the art form and the collaborative relationships with fellow musicians.

In the musicians' narratives, three dimensions of integrity have been identified: (1) alignment with the composer's intent, (2) adherence to the appropriate objectives of music (for instance, articulating aspects of what it means to be human), and (3) authenticity to one's self as a

musician (Narvaez et al. 2022, 54). Musicians typically conceive integrity as the pursuit of legitimate motivational sources, such as the aspiration to remain true to the composer's intentions for a musical piece, representing a form of integrity in practice. Additional manifestations of integrity involve the pursuit of suitable musical objectives, like the creation of aesthetic beauty, contributing to the advancement of the musical field, and dedicating oneself to music as an art form (Narvaez et al. 2022, 54).

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From this perspective, a conductor must embody all forms of integrity and a strong character to exhibit authoritative leadership, which however has to be fundamentally complemented by adaptability, inventive creativity, humility, collaborative spirit, and trust. The symbiotic artistic relationship between the conductor and a the professional orchestra can only work when the conductor is perceived by the ensemble as able to transcends the merely technical functionalities of the podium. In orchestras of high caliber – where musicians may have more experience performing a piece than the conductor has in directing it –, the conductor's role may transition from unidirectional leadership to a form of collaborative leadership. This involves facilitating and nurturing the intricate interplay among the musicians, which mirror the dynamics observed in knowledge-intensive organizations. In such contexts, good leaders adeptly balance power dynamics to foster collaboration and innovation among highly skilled professionals – a principle that is notably pronounced in orchestral settings, as highlighted by Bartlett & Ghoshal (1998), Bolman & Deal (2003), and Hunt et al. (2004).

In sum, in orchestral settings, a dynamic culture of collaboration– characterized by

attentive listening, responsive interactions, and adaptive practices – prevails. Musicians do not just play their parts; they engage in the common practice, where each contribution weaves into a harmonious collective, enriching the overall performance. This approach, where the ensemble’s voice is integrated and valued, exemplifies the essence of orchestral music-making, which transcends the sum of its individual parts.

Contrastingly, in conventional knowledge-based organizations like technology companies and consulting firms, the focus often shifts towards individual expertise and specialized knowledge. Teamwork, though valued, does not permeate the fabric of these organizations as it does in orchestras since collaboration, does not typically define operations from start to finish. In orchestral performances, on the contrary the success hinges on continuous, seamless, and real-time collaboration, making each musician’s role indispensable for the collective harmony. In orchestras, the ethos of collaboration fosters a sense of collective ownership and serves as a motivational force, also acting as a robust system of quality assurance. In such a context, leadership is less about directing individual performances and more about harmonizing the collective needs of the ensemble, so enhancing the effectiveness of the performance. This approach, as Morgeson et al. (2010, p. 8; (Goryunova and R. Lehmann, 2023, 458) articulate, shifts the focus from individual achievement to collective excellence.

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Collaboration is at the heart of the orchestral process, while the essence of orchestra leadership is in community building. Thus, conductors must above all be willing to listen, support, react, grow, and if appropriate alter their artistic

concept in light of the response from the orchestra. At the same time, professional musicians join in the community of sound, and while performing, they also must listen, react, grow, and blend with other members (Goryunova and R. Lehmann, 2023, 460, 461).

This is accomplished through a harmonious balance of authoritative guidance and respectful collaboration, nurturing a foundation of trust built upon empathy and recognition of the musicians' commitment and their often-exemplary level of skill. According to Anthony Gritten, trust is identified as a transferable skill and entails several significant consequences: firstly, trust engenders a lasting emotional impact in the lives of performers beyond their performances; secondly, performers learn not only during interactions but also from them; and thirdly, regardless of how trust is defined (be it as an attitude, a characteristic, a temperament, a mindset, an ideology, a perspective, a style, a disposition, a habitual behavior, or a virtue), it provides performers with opportunities for creative transformations in substance, thought, music, and perhaps even in ethical values through group interactions (Gritten, 2017, 253).

Narvaez et al. (2021, 60) found that as a member of an ensemble, trust in other ensemble members was built up through experience, through the consistency of their behavior. Trust was considered an essential part of performing with others and generally taken for granted, though trust could be broken by repetition of mistakes or unreliability. Trust also was acquired through reputation—accepting the assessment of trusted others. Trustworthiness was often directed toward music directors, soloists, or institutions (e.g., famous ensembles) rather than to individual members of a group, though being associated with such institutions was viewed as granting members some

credibility.

In this context of trust, many conductors acknowledge that a well-prepared, proficient orchestra may possess the capability to perform most classical symphonic works autonomously, without a conductor. While such performances might lack the distinctive tone or personality

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imbued by a skilled conductor's interpretation, their technical execution could still reach an excellent level 2.

Mutual trust and respect form the cornerstone in the development of a shared vision within an orchestra, where the conductor's clarity of purpose and inspirational leadership are of a paramount importance for the success of a performance. Nonetheless, conductors cannot interpret their role correctly if they not try to reach, through mutual trust and respect with the members of the orchestra, a shared vision with them.

In fact, the conductor's role transcends mere conducting; it involves empowering musicians to reach their full potential, honoring their individual contributions while skillfully guiding them towards a cohesive interpretation. This approach fosters a dynamic interplay of leadership roles during performances, engendering a synergistic outcome that resonates profoundly with both the performers and the audience.

Another fundamental virtue of good conductors is humility: they have to acknowledge that their primary role is to serve the music, acting as a conduit through which the artistic essence of the work is unveiled and expressed (Schuller, 1997, 7). It is humility that engenders a zealous commitment to deeply understanding and adhering to every facet of the musical piece, and to delve

into its structural, expressive, and emotional layers, thereby uncovering its core essence. Another important source of humility for the conductor (and for the whole orchestra) is that, while they have to strive for perfection in their execution, it cannot be ignored that, due to human fallibility, achieving absolute perfection will always remain an elusive goal (Schuller, 1997, 7).

According to Narvaez et al. (2022, 51) for musicians, humility often manifested as an understanding of their own abilities and boundaries, as well as the necessity for continual practice.

It involved acknowledging the skills of others, owning up to errors, and realizing when they no longer met the standards of a group. However, understanding their current limitations didn't mean accepting these as unchangeable. Humility also encompassed the readiness to receive advice and

2 In this regard, the musical genre of opera is different because it necessarily demands the presence of a skilled opera

conductor to oversee and direct the entire production process. Opera conducting is perceived by many orchestral musicians as a

more challenging and intricate endeavor than symphonic performance. Furthermore, in opera, the conductor's leadership role often

intersects and at times conflicts with the roles of the singers and the stage director. Problems frequently arise when the stage director

tries to eclipse the conductor or the singers in prominence. Regardless of their relative standing, it is imperative for the stage director

and the musical director to collaborate harmoniously (Mackerras, 2003, 76). In the early 20th century, the orchestra conductor held

preeminent authority, dictating the staging of the opera and even influencing set design decisions.

However, in recent years, this

dynamic has shifted, with the producer now assuming comprehensive control over the design, staging, and occasionally even over

the musical elements – a situation that can easily lead to potential conflicts with the conductor regarding the respective leadership

roles (Mackerras, 2003, 76).

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insights from more seasoned professionals, and even from those less experienced who might offer meaningful perspectives. Additionally, it was shown in recognizing the right fit for oneself in a group and recommending someone else for positions that weren't a match for their skills.

There is and even more important why conductors should practice humility. Their purpose is to interpret – that is, to give life – to the works of great composers. In embracing the responsibility of interpreting these masterpieces, conductors must recognize the profound duty they undertake in contributing to what geniuses like Beethoven and Wagner have described as “the sacred art” (Schuller, 1997, 7). In this sense, conductors and orchestra have to humbly work as the link between the composers, musicians and the audience.

3.3. Challenges and Styles of Orchestral Conducting

The realm of orchestral conducting is characterized by the unique leadership styles of individual conductors. Each conductor, with their distinct approach, becomes an exemplar of leadership, instilling a sense of professionalism and motivation within their orchestras. For example, Leonard Bernstein is celebrated for his balanced approach to musical leadership, seamlessly blending charisma and emotional depth with authoritative respect for each musician's contribution. Herbert von Karajan, famed for his tenure with the Berliner Philharmoniker,

skillfully merged stern authority with a deep reverence for classical traditions. The rigorous focus and high standards set by Arturo Toscanini symbolized a harmonious blend of control and a steadfast dedication to musical legacy. Toscanini's performances, notable for their intense fervor, a quality seldom matched by other conductors, are still accessible today. Even in his later years, recorded footage captures his intensely concentrated facial expressions, explaining his legendary outbursts during rehearsals. His exceptional memory enabled him to conduct without scores, allowing unbroken and intense eye contact with his musicians, characterized by a static stance and expansive, majestic rhythms. It has to be said, however, that Toscanini's legendary authoritarianism is the expression of a style of leadership that is not fashionable today.

Claudio Abbado was frequently characterized as a conductor who melded a deeply musical approach with a profound respect for his musicians. Rather than being authoritarian, he was renowned for his collaborative and democratic style. Abbado firmly believed in valuing the individual contributions of each musician within the orchestra, fostering an environment where artistic ideas and interpretations could be freely shared and discussed. He was known for his

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exceptional listening skills and empathetic approach, enabling him to elicit deep and engaging musical responses from his performers. This style of conducting, centered around mutual respect and collaboration, stood in stark contrast to the stereotypical image of the authoritarian conductor.

Today Daniel Barenboim's leadership style is distinguished by intellectual depth and empathy, harmonizing authority with creativity and deep humanism. His famous "East-West Divan Orchestra" (composed by Israeli and Arabic musicians and inspired by Goethe's humanism

in its same name) offers a quick proof of Barenboim's intuition that a morally inspired orchestra may represent a transformative model for the whole world.

The research conducted by Strubler and Evangelista (2009) and Boerner and von Streit (2007) delves into the evolution of orchestral conductors from authoritative figures to transformational leaders. This body of work underscores the significance of qualities such as charisma, inspirational ability, and intellectual stimulation in the realm of orchestral conducting. Conducting necessitates a profound comprehension of group dynamics, requiring a delicate equilibrium between exerting authority and bearing responsibility. Kammerhoff et al. (2019) and Boerner and Krause (2002) illuminate the intricate interplay of interdependence and potential conflict within an orchestral ensemble. These studies advocate for a leadership approach that is both multifaceted and subtly nuanced, acknowledging the complexity of managing a diverse group of specialized musicians. Further, the research on leadership exemplified by figures such as the Australian conductor Walter Osborne as analyzed by Novicevic et al. (2011), emphasises the importance of balancing responsibility with reliability, adaptation and harmonisation of individual and collective identities within the orchestral context by implementing what Robert Sternberg's in a recent article, "Towards a Theory of Musical Intelligence," (2021) calls "practical intelligence". Sternberg elucidates the multifaceted nature of musical intelligence, encompassing creative, analytical, practical, and wisdom-based dimensions. Specifically, he addresses the practical intelligence of musicians and orchestra conductors. Practical intelligence is employed in the execution, action, and practical application of a plan, as well as in persuading others of an idea (Sternberg 2021, 1781); moreover, it is utilized to adapt, shape, and select environments.

Adaptation involves self-modification to better fit an environment; shaping entails altering the environment to better suit oneself or one's values; selection occurs when one recognizes the suboptimality of the current environment and seeks a more suitable one. In illustrating high levels

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of practical intelligence, certain musicians have connected with audiences in ways unattainable by others. For instance, conductors

Leonard Bernstein and Arturo Toscanini; cellists Jacqueline Du Pré, Yo-Yo Ma,

and Sheku Kanneh-Mason; violinists Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, and Anne-

Sophie Mutter; and pianists Arthur Rubinstein and Lola Astanova, have all

established empathetic connections with audiences extending beyond typical

classical music listeners (Sternberg 2021, 1782).

Thus, practical intelligence may facilitate an enhanced empathetic connection among

musicians and between musicians and audiences, adeptly addressing the multifaceted complexity

of the musical dimension. Moreover, the practice of orchestral conducting is increasingly aligning

with an inherent human propensity to establish empathetic connections that can be, and often are,

transformative for the group. This approach perceives the ensemble not as a domain for

authoritarian leadership, but as a forum for reciprocal exchange aimed at collective improvement

through collaboration, humility, and trust. This shift marks a significant evolution in the role and

approach of orchestral leadership, emphasizing flexibility and mutual interpretation within the

group dynamic, rendering it a paradigmatic model for leadership across various domains.

3.4 Implications for Knowledge-Based Organizations

The exploration of orchestral leadership, with a particular focus on the roles of conductors, unravels some interesting insights into the dynamics of leadership and collaboration, which resonates beyond the realm of music into the broader landscape of knowledge-based organizations.

Nowadays, the conductor's role, pivotal in orchestrating highly specialized individuals, extends well beyond the authoritarian style of leadership of the conductors of the past to encompass guidance, inspiration, empathy, and the fostering of a collaborative ethos. As seen, orchestral conductors, transcending traditional authoritarian models, exemplify a blend of authority, empathy, and respect for collective creativity. Prior to the emergence of the grand orchestra, conductors (or their equivalents) were cooperative rather than dictatorial. Subsequently, with the establishment of the large Romantic orchestra, the figure of the conductor-as-dictator prevailed. However, in contemporary times, there has been a return to the practices of two centuries ago, where authority is more equitably balanced with collaboration and other ethical values that we

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have observed. The leadership styles of great artists like Leonard Bernstein, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, and Xian Zhang exemplifies a virtuous balance between guidance and collaboration, reflecting leadership principles that are also applicable in other organizational settings.

This ethically rich leadership approach significantly influences both group dynamics and the overall quality of orchestral performances. Boerner and Gebert (2012) have demonstrated how, in an orchestral context, transformational leadership enhances the value of the artistic performance.

This is achieved by valuing the diversity of the members of the ensemble and integrating a variety

of perspectives and ideas that come from them. Then Cook and Howitt (2012) have highlighted the necessity of maintaining a balance between structural integrity and artistic liberty within an orchestra. This balance necessitates a reciprocal process of evaluation, support, and inspiration between the conductor and the musicians, ensuring both adherence to musical standards and the flourishing of creative expression.

In this light, the orchestra offers unique insights into the dynamics of the leader-follower relationship, offering valuable general lessons for mainstream knowledge-based organizations (Goryunova and R. Lehmann, 2023, 462). In environments where organizational structure involves multiple levels of leadership, with fluid and interchangeable roles of leaders and followers, the key to maintaining a power balance may lie in a meaningful combination of structured organization and flexibility. This approach allows for the channelling of individual creative expressions towards a common objective. Collaboration emerges as the primary *modus operandi*, and this approach is effective only when deeply rooted in mutual trust, respect, and accountability between leaders and members – and this is dynamic that the relations within a functional orchestra exemplify very well.

This paper has underlined the significance of mutual respect and trust in making the orchestra an environment in which, in the best cases, individual freedoms and collective goals harmoniously converge towards artistic success. The balance between individual expression and ensemble coherence is pivotal in achieving performances that are both harmonious and impactful. This is what Nicholas Cook (2004) has defined as “sound of community”. Viewing the orchestra as a collective effort in making music together provides a lens that may help us understand leadership dynamics in diverse professional contexts. Further research could explore the

applicability of the orchestral leadership principles in non-musical organizational settings. Such

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investigation could enrich our understanding of effective leadership across various fields. In

particular, the orchestral conductor may offer valuable lessons in leadership beyond the concert

hall into the broader spectrum of organizational management.

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