

GESTURE AS COMMUNICATION:
THE ART OF CARLOS KLEIBER

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Statement of Originality

I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the art of orchestral conducting and in particular, the gestural language used by conductors. Aspects such as body posture and movement, eye contact, facial expressions and manual conducting gestures will be considered. These nonverbal forms of expression are the means a conductor uses to communicate with players.

Manual conducting gestures are used to show fundamental technical information relating to tempo, dynamics and cues, as well as demonstrating to a degree, musical expression and conveying an interpretation of the musical work. Body posture can communicate authority, leadership, confidence and inspiration. Furthermore, physical gestures such as facial expressions can express a conductor's mood and demeanour, as well as the emotional content of the music. Orchestral conducting is thus a complex and multifarious art, at the core of which is gesture. These physical facets of conducting will be examined by way of a case study.

The conductor chosen as the centrepiece of this study is Austrian conductor, Carlos Kleiber (1930-2004). Hailed by many as the greatest conductor of all time¹, Kleiber was a perfectionist with unscrupulously high standards who enjoyed a career with some of the world's finest orchestras and opera companies including the Vienna Philharmonic, La Scala, Covent Garden, the Met and the Chicago Symphony. He enjoyed a special relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic, the longest of any of his associations, and the performance selected for examination is therefore one with this ensemble.

Using a DVD recording of a live performance, Kleiber's conducting gestures, and their relationship to the musical score will be examined. The performance selected is that of Johann Strauss II's *Overture to Die Fledermaus*, performed at the 1989 New Year's Day Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

¹ *Carlos Kleiber Voted Greatest Conductor of all Time*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/bbcworldwide/worldwidestories/pressreleases/2011/03_mar_ch/carlos_kleiber.shtml, (accessed December 12, 2011).

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Introduction

Today's professional orchestral conductors occupy a role primarily focussed on the expressive and interpretative aspects of the music they perform. This current role has evolved from the conductor's original function – ostensibly one that was predominantly responsible for establishing tempo and maintaining a rhythmic pulse. It was during the nineteenth century this evolution occurred – larger, longer and more involved, complicated repertoire necessitated increased conductor involvement through which the role developed.

There has been little change to the standardised time beating patterns used by the conductor since their establishment during the eighteenth century. Using these accepted and internationally recognised time-beating signals as a basis, a conductor develops and forms his own set of idiosyncratic gestures which are used to communicate with musicians. These gestures form the basic communicative vocabulary of a conductor.

The conductor's hands are therefore the primary vehicle of communication – it is via this repertory of manual gestures a conductor demonstrates the basic functions of indicating tempo, any modifications thereof, and dynamics. Through his hands, a conductor also shapes phrases and shows articulation as well as the type of sound he has in mind.

These manual gestures, however, are not the only means by which a conductor communicates. In addition to these gestures, a conductor's communicative capacity is significantly enhanced by other means of nonverbal communication. Intent is also relayed by body language, general posture and appearance alongside facial expressions and eye contact. As the function of the conductor has developed into a more interpretative one, these aspects of the conductor's art have assumed a heightened degree of importance. As Durrant confirms, 'Gesture goes beyond beating time, but becomes an essential ingredient in the conveyance of the expressive character of music.'¹

The fundamental technical elements of conducting are the same for student conductors, conductors of amateur groups, conductors of school and university ensembles as well as those who work in the professional domain. The tools a professional conductor uses to communicate therefore share this common basis. For

¹ Colin Durrant, *Choral Conducting: Philosophy and Practice* (New York, Routledge, 2003), 96.

conductors of professional ensembles however, these basics are assumed knowledge, prerequisites which are taken for granted.

The function of the professional orchestra conductor has a different purpose, an additional dimension focussed on a more elevated plane – a largely artistic, interpretative and expressive responsibility. As Kohut and Grant recognise ‘at its highest level conducting is an art.’² In this context, the subtleties of gestural communication are inherently important. Nuances of facial expression and eye contact can reflect character, mood and emotional content. Manual gestures are more refined and able to demonstrate detail corresponding to an array of articulation, variety and colour of sound, a multiplicity of dynamic shadings and gradations, and the intricacies of phrasing. Combined with body movement and involvement, these gestures are also able to reflect and communicate an understanding of the overall architecture of a work.

General body posture and stance can communicate an air of authority and confidence – important aspects in conducting. Leadership and the power of personality are also critical factors – as in all facets of life the ability to inspire counts for much. As Bowles explains ‘much of a conductor’s effectiveness depends on his personal characteristics and on his capacity to persuade others of his will.’³ One responsibility of a conductor is to unite the ensemble towards a common artistic interpretation and to inspire them towards this collective goal – something that demands an ability to exert influence over some one hundred or so potential differing opinions. Precisely how a conductor achieves this – through gesture, communication and personality – will be examined in subsequent chapters.

The information professional musicians glean from conductors is thus not limited to, nor expressed via purely manual technical conducting gestures. Rather, a conductor uses a variety of communicative tools in addition to his hands. The art of conducting is therefore a composite one – an amalgam of various forms of physical movement and posture, facial expressions and manual conducting gestures, all of which are framed by the personality of the individual.

² Daniel J. Kohut and Joe W. Grant, *Learning to Conduct and Rehearse* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1990), 2.

³ Michael Bowles, *The Art of Conducting* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1975), 15.

This thesis is centered on a conductor's means of gestural communication. In using one performance as a case study, I will analyse the specific gestures used by the conductor and their relationship to the musical score. In this study, these gestures comprise elements of body posture, language, and movement, facial expressions, eye contact and manual conducting signals.

However these aspects of nonverbal gestural communication, because they lack any directly tangible actions, present challenges in any study attempted. Facial expressions, eye contact, body language and posture are difficult to describe in absolute terms and, therefore, problematic to quantify and analyse. As Leppert acknowledges, 'the connection between music and the body throughout Western history is highly problematic and contradictory.'⁴ Intrinsically, there exists a degree of subjectivity in any observation and resulting interpretation of gestures, a fact underlined by Ian Cross in *Musical Communication* who agrees 'a degree of ambiguity seems to be inherent in all acts of human communication.'⁵

This gestural analysis will therefore be supported with evidence and accounts from the existing literature. In scrutinising the gestures of the conductor in an analytical way it is hoped that some facets of the art of conducting will be, to an extent, explained and demystified. In doing so, I also hope to suggest a possible framework for future analyses of conductors and their gestures.

The conductor chosen for analysis is Carlos Kleiber, the great Austrian conductor and son of another famed conductor, Erich Kleiber (1890-1956). Kleiber was an intriguing character – a legendary conductor whose insecurities were equally as legendary. The most sought-after conductor of his generation, Kleiber conducted less than one hundred concert performances in spite of numerous and repeated invitations. He shunned media attention and lived a relatively reclusive life, only coaxed into performing with huge fees and if a myriad of other requests and demands were met.

A man who disliked recording, it is fortunate a small part of Kleiber's work has been preserved in audio and visual documents. One such recording will be used as the case study in this thesis – Kleiber's rendition of Johann Strauss' *Overture to Die*

⁴ Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), xx.

⁵ Dorothy Miell, Raymond MacDonald and David J. Hargreaves (Editors), *Musical Communication* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 32.

Fledermaus, performed with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on New Year's Day 1989.⁶

⁶ This recording is available online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wCaz3xxQ_s and the score on which this study is based is: Johann Strauss, *Die Fledermaus: Overture to the Opera*, ed. Hans Swarowsky, Ernst Eulenburg and Co. GmbH, ETP 1103.

Objectives

This study will investigate three key areas, namely:

1. The role and function of the professional orchestral conductor.
2. The means by which the conductor communicates in gestural terms.
3. How Kleiber uses gestures to communicate musical and expressive intent in this performance of *Overture to Die Fledermaus*.

It is anticipated this study will go some way towards providing an objective assessment of the art of conducting. While a degree of interpretation is inherent in any study of conducting gesture and subjective evaluations form the basis of much of the literature, when presented in conjunction with an analytical examination of the precise physical aspects of conducting, a more balanced view of the conductor's art will result. As such, I seek to demystify to an extent, Kleiber's conducting gestures through an analysis of their relationship to the musical score.

Scope

Broadly speaking, conductors can be categorised according to the ensembles they conduct – we speak, for example, of orchestral conductors and choral conductors. The focus of this study lies in the broader category of the orchestral conductor and is limited to the professional domain. This definition also assumes those who work in opera, with chamber orchestras and smaller instrument groups, for example, modern music ensembles. There exist also conductors of concert bands, leaders of jazz combos, drum majors of marching bands as well as directors of folk ensembles, gamelan orchestras and other non-western musical ensembles. For the purposes of this study, these other types of conductors have not been considered.

There are a number of commonalities between the gestural vocabulary of orchestral and choral conductors so the broader literature on choral conducting, while not excluded entirely, does not form the primary focus of this study.

Concurrent with the development of conducting through the course of the nineteenth-century was the emergence of the first real treatises on the subject, written by eminent composers and conductors of the day. Of particular note are those penned by Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner,⁷ the latter two composer/conductors in particular are largely associated with the rise and popularisation of the art. The information contained in these writings was of a practical nature – suggestions and advice for the conductor, along with stipulations regarding the necessary skills, knowledge and requirements of an ideal conductor – a ‘how to’ type of manual.

Such literature today still comprises the bulk of available information regarding conducting. There are numerous texts, guides and handbooks describing in detail the beat patterns which are the physical basis for a conductor’s manual gestures. This literature also deals with the related functions of giving clear upbeats and downbeats to establish tempo and ensure ensemble, cueing players for entries, how to conduct specific repertoire, score study and preparation and rehearsal technique.

⁷ Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians* (orig. published 1856), Konrad Wolff (ed.), trans. Paul Rosenfeld (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983). Hector Berlioz, *A Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration* (orig. published 1856), Joseph Bennett (ed.) trans. Mary Cowden Clarke (London, Novello and Company, 1882). Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Conducting* (orig. published 1887), New York, Dover Publications Inc., 1989.

While of a more scientific and specific nature than the nineteenth century writings, the focus of this body of literature is however, slightly different. Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner were approaching conducting from a purely artistic perspective, that is, conducting was a means of musical expression and the conductor the embodiment of the music. The music dictated the need for a conductor, not vice versa. On the other hand, the origin of most modern-day texts appears to be a more technical one, one rooted in the fundamental aspects or the 'craft' of conducting. Consequently, such texts are generally aimed at the student conductor, conductors of amateur and community ensembles as well as those working in an educational context. There exist, for example, no specific textbooks appropriate for those aspiring to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Indeed, the vast majority of contemporary literature deals predominantly with the technical aspects of conducting.

While it is difficult to imagine Karajan or Bernstein being overly concerned with a precise mathematical spatial placement of their third beat - assuming it was a bar in which they chose to beat it – the basic technical vocabulary or 'craft' of conducting, does form the fundamental basis on which a conductor builds their expressive gestures. For this reason, this wide body of literature has been included so as to contextualise the art of conducting.

Literature pertaining to conductors, that is professional orchestral conductors and to the 'art' of orchestral conducting, by and large falls into two main categories. The first comprises historical and/or biographical studies of conductors – their life and work, the idiosyncrasies of their conducting style, contemporary accounts from those who knew, studied with, worked with or played under them. The second category is similar in nature – observations, accounts and reflections penned by newspaper reviewers, critics and the like. Both bodies of literature are primarily narrative, descriptive and anecdotal in style and as is the case in most evaluations of the arts and music, largely subjective. In fact, a rigorous scientific assessment or evaluation of the conductor's art is virtually impossible, as Durrant explains:

A great deal of the anecdotal evidence describing impressions that particular conductors have made on performers and audiences is curiously nebulous in attempting to define, without any specificity, an effective conductor. All the features of character and personality mentioned in these anecdotes give some

indications of what makes an effective conductor, but it is apparent that all such characteristics do not match all good conductors.⁸

As such, the difficult question of how to evaluate a conductor and his work, ability, effectiveness and success arises. The art of conducting, in contrast to all other forms of music making, is a silent one. The conductor does not directly produce a sound, however his gestures may elicit a *type* of sound. He is not able to play a note with a short, sharp accent however he can indicate this intent to the musicians. In these silent gestures lies the art of a conductor.

The art of conducting therefore is entirely anomalous when considered in the context of the art of music. In this broader auditory framework, the conductor's art appears to be a largely visual one. Information, thoughts, opinions and feedback are gleaned from audience, critics and players alike based on the way a conductor 'looks'. Audiences judge his gestures from behind while musicians evaluate and interpret them from in front.

The advent of video recording technology presents an unequivocal primary source of information and consequently, recent years have seen a renewed focus on conductors and conducting. Rather than simply reading a second-hand account or review in a book or newspaper, it is potentially possible to see the performance for ourselves. The emergence of the internet has also seen an unparalleled proliferation of visual recordings widely and accessibly available. Consequently, the evaluation of conductors and conducting has come under closer scrutiny than perhaps ever before.

The recording chosen will be subject to such scrutiny. In focussing on this performance, Kleiber's gestures will be evaluated on an almost bar-by-bar basis, something which in a comparative study of a number of recordings, and/or one involving longer works, would not be possible. As the selected recording is taken from a live performance there exists an inherent degree of spontaneity which, for example, would arguably not be the case in a studio recording produced as an amalgam of numerous sessions.

There are a number of orchestral and operatic DVD recordings of Kleiber,⁹ all of which have been viewed and considered for reasons of thoroughness, and so as

⁸ Durrant, *Choral Conducting*, 70-71.

⁹ See Discography.

to contextualise the chosen recording. This Vienna Philharmonic recording of Strauss' *Fledermaus Overture*, made at a time when Kleiber was probably the most sought-after conductor in the world,¹⁰ is a perfect exemplification Kleiber's art, and therefore indicative of the highest niveau of orchestral conducting.

¹⁰ Herbert von Karajan died in July 1989 and Kleiber had subsequently been offered the Music Directorship of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Leonard Bernstein who died in October 1990, was at that time already ill with the lung disease that would claim his life.

Rationale

Carlos Kleiber was arguably one of the greatest conductors of the post-war era, and indeed possibly of all time. Kleiber's enigmatic personality and self-confessed aversion to performing¹¹ meant that he was never Music Director of a major opera house or symphony orchestra. His competency or ability was never in question – he was offered, and declined, the music directorship of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra following Karajan's death.

During his freelance career, there were three institutions with which Kleiber shared enduring relationships – the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian State Orchestra and Italy's La Scala Opera. Kleiber performed most frequently with his 'local' orchestra, the Bavarian State Orchestra based in Munich where he resided, followed by La Scala and the Vienna Philharmonic.

Kleiber's appearances with the Bavarian State Orchestra numbered 278 in total, 33 of which were concert performances. All 61 of his performances at La Scala were operatic and of his 55 appearances with the Vienna Philharmonic, 30 were in concert.¹²

The performance selected for this study is that of Johann Strauss II's *Overture to Die Fledermaus*, conducted by Carlos Kleiber and performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in the Musikverein on New Year's Day 1989. This recording was selected for a variety of reasons, not least because the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is arguably one of the world's finest ensembles but also because it is the orchestra with which Kleiber enjoyed the longest standing professional association of his career.

Kleiber conducted the New Year's Day Concert in Vienna on two occasions, in 1989 and 1992. Kleiber authority and scholar Charles Barber highlights these performances as exemplary specimens, 'essential property for anyone hoping to understand Carlos's means and purposes.'¹³

¹¹ Cited widely in a variety of sources is Kleiber's confession to Bernstein, "I want to grow in a garden, sit in the sun, eat, drink, sleep, make love and that's it."

¹² *Carlos Kleiber Opera and Concert Listing*, <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist/>, (accessed December 12, 2011).

¹³ Charles Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos* (Lanhan, Scarecrow Press, 2011), 122.

In his 33 concerts with the Bavarian State Orchestra, Kleiber conducted *Overture to Die Fledermaus* on ten occasions, each time as an encore. Of his 30 concert appearances with the Vienna Philharmonic, Kleiber conducted the overture on seven occasions, each time as part of the publicised program, which always included similar works by Johann Strauss I and Josef Strauss.

While an encore is generally chosen and planned beforehand, it is by definition, an additional work performed after the concert program proper. A piece performed as an encore therefore is one which does not hold the same importance as the featured works in a program, and is not accorded commensurate, if any rehearsal time. For this reason, a performance whereby *Overture to Die Fledermaus* was a featured work, rather than an encore, was selected.

For reasons of thoroughness and comparison, all available recordings of Kleiber conducting *Overture to Die Fledermaus* were viewed and studied.¹⁴ There exist a total of four known recordings of Kleiber conducting this work – three commercially available DVDs in addition to footage from a television broadcast.

The first is an early film with the South German Radio Orchestra from 1969/70 featuring a rehearsal and subsequent performance of the work. At the time of this recording, Kleiber was still contracted to the Stuttgart Opera House where he remained until 1973 – his stand-alone freelance career was to begin after this date. In general terms, Kleiber's career and Kleiber the conductor were still in a relatively developmental stage. Kleiber himself admits as much during the film when he confesses there are many things that he as a conductor would like to be able to do, but as yet is unable.¹⁵

There are two recordings with the Bavarian State Orchestra, both stemming from approximately the same time. Kleiber conducted five performances of the complete opera between December 1985 and February 1986 in the Munich Opera House and of these, the performances on December 30 and 31 were together used for the production of a single DVD performance.¹⁶

¹⁴ An analysis and comparison of Kleiber's use of gesture in every available recording would be an interesting and valuable exercise however such an investigation lies outside the scope of this study. Similarly, to compare Kleiber's use of gesture with that of other conductors would be an interesting undertaking but again, the scope of such an investigation is not possible in this study.

¹⁵ *Great Conductors in Rehearsal 2: Carlos Kleiber*, DVD, South German Radio Orchestra Live, Stuttgart 1970, Arthaus Musik, 101 063.

¹⁶ Johann Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*, Carlos Kleiber: Conductor, Bavarian State Opera, re-released 2001. Deutsche Grammophone, 073 4015.

As is the case in all operatic recordings, the overture is self-evidently the prelude to the ensuing opera of approximately three hours length. It can reasonably be assumed that when conducted as part of a performance of this scope and duration, the overture would not be accorded a comparable degree of attention or rehearsal as when programmed as part of a much shorter concert program. Furthermore, given the physical stamina and mental concentration required to conduct an opera, it is logical to expect a conductor would potentially expend less energy in the performance of the overture in an operatic context than in a concert performance.

Additionally, a concert performance of an overture arguably offers a conductor greater freedom than an operatic one. Contextualised by the presentation of the opera from which the music of the overture is drawn, the origin of, and connection between melodies, themes, motifs and particularly tempi, is highlighted. In a concert performance, the overture is presented and considered a work in its own right, one ostensibly not bound by a contextual framework. For these reasons, a concert performance was preferred for analysis.

The other recording with the Bavarian State Orchestra originates from the orchestra's 1986 tour of Japan. The *Fledermaus Overture* was performed as an encore at each of the orchestra's eight performances on the Japan tour, the final concert of which was recorded for television broadcast by NHK on May 19. This film has not been released commercially, however the broadcast of the performance is available on YouTube.¹⁷

With the reasons for discounting an encore performance already discussed alongside those negating the analysis of an operatic performance, there remains only one recorded example of Kleiber conducting the *Fledermaus Overture* in concert – that being the 1989 New Year's Day Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.¹⁸ That this ensemble was one with whom Kleiber enjoyed an enduring relationship adds weight to this selection. Furthermore, he conducted the *Fledermaus Overture* with this ensemble on seven occasions in concert, that is, not as an encore – more than with any other ensemble.

¹⁷ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqJK_s7I9EY, (accessed December 13, 2011).

¹⁸ 1989 New Year's Concert in Vienna. Carlos Kleiber Conductor, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Deutsche Grammophon DVD, 073 249-9.

Methodology

Using a DVD recording of this performance, Kleiber's choice and repertory of gestures and their relationship to Strauss' musical content will be critically analysed. The score of Strauss' *Overture to Die Fledermaus* is divided into fifteen sections according to tempo indications and my analysis of the DVD performance is similarly formatted.

Kleiber's gestures will be examined according to three main categories, these being evidenced in the literature as the conductor's principal means of non-verbal communication:

1. Body Posture, Language and Movement
2. Facial Expressions and Eye Contact
3. Manual Conducting Gestures

In examining Kleiber's gestures as proposed, I aim to provide a more concrete basis for understanding the art of conducting. In particular, I anticipate being able to offer a broad physical framework for, and explanation of, Kleiber's chosen gestures.

In analysing such specific elements as whether an erect or crouching body posture is used, use of left and/or right hands, arm height, motion and direction alongside smiles, winks, nods and looks of encouragement, it is possible to describe Kleiber's conducting gestures in precise physical terms.

With a more tangible and physical explanation of what Kleiber's conducting entails, it will, to an extent, be possible to explain a component of the 'Kleiber magic.'¹⁹

¹⁹ Nicholas Kenyon, Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma, *New York Times*, New York, October 15 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/15/arts/music-carlos-kleiber-genius-wrapped-in-an-enigma.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, (accessed January 1, 2011).

Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One examines the role of the conductor in general terms. The basic technical components of the craft of conducting are considered, as are the collective musical and educational qualities intrinsic to the profession. The role and requirements of the professional orchestral conductor are examined, as are the component facets comprising the art of conducting. Significant attention is accorded the expressive and interpretative function of the conductor and the intangible aspects of the art – that is those associated with the power of personality, charisma, alongside those more difficult to define, the magic and mystery of conducting.

Chapter Two is concerned with nonverbal communication and particularly, how a conductor communicates through the use of gesture. Nonverbal communication is introduced in general terms before conducting gestures are evaluated in this broader context. The specific physical components of conducting gestures i.e. body posture and movement, facial expressions and eye contact and manual signals are then examined in detail. Individual differences and the idiosyncratic nature of conductors' gestures are also examined.

Chapter Three focusses on Carlos Kleiber. The introduction considers aspects including personal traits and the influence of Carlos' father on his professional practice and career. Followed by this are accounts establishing Kleiber's elite place in the upper echelons of orchestral conducting. A biography details principal aspects of Kleiber's career before his repertoire and the possible reasons for its selection are examined in detail. The final section of this chapter focusses on Kleiber the conductor – his approach to conducting and his interpretations.

Chapter Four is centered on Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*. A general introduction is followed by an examination of Kleiber's association with the work. His relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is also discussed in detail. The main focus of this chapter, however, is the detailed analysis of Kleiber's gestures in the 1989 Vienna Philharmonic performance. Kleiber's specific physical gestures according to posture, body language and movement, facial expressions and eye contact and manual conducting gestures, are analysed in relation to Strauss' score.

Chapter Five comprises the discussion of Kleiber's use of gesture in the selected performance, from which conclusions are drawn.

Chapter One

The Art of Conducting

Introduction

The performance of instrumental and vocal music results in some form of direct auditory outcome. Put simply, when a soloist or ensemble plays or sings, the audience hears the sound they create. Conversely when a conductor conducts, neither he himself nor the motions of his baton produce a musical sound. He leads, inspires, coerces, suggests and requests, but ultimately the responsibility for actual sound production is, somewhat paradoxically, not in his hands.

Contradictorily, it *is* the conductors' hands which are generally recognised as the primary tool and principal means by which he communicates, evoking, moulding and shaping the sound of the ensemble. Observing a performance from an audience perspective, it appears as though the musicians respond to the manual directives issued and that the conductor's vocabulary of hand gestures elicits particular musical responses.

This is, however, only true to an extent. Concurrently, these hand gestures are used in combination with other means of communication and a great deal of the conductor's communicative capacity is relayed by facial expressions, eye contact, body language and general posture. As VanWeelden writes, 'conducting is a complex art that involves, effective nonverbal communication.'¹

In addition to these effectual physical means of nonverbal communication, a conductor also relies on a multitude of skills, knowledge and experience. He must be able to communicate effectively in verbal terms, to work well with people, to lead, persuade and collectivise the energies and opinions of a large group of players. Aside from these largely personal elements or character traits, a conductor requires significant musical knowledge and ability. In addition to possessing an intimate knowledge of the score and its myriad of details, he must be able to communicate these details and his reading thereof. He needs to be able to rehearse all manner of musical intricacies, able to hear and process great amounts of auditory information. Summarily, renowned conducting pedagogue Gunther Schuller consequently notes 'the talents and skills...that ultimately comprise the art of conducting are awesome.'²

¹ Kimberly VanWeelden, 'Relationships between Perceptions of Conducting Effectiveness and Ensemble Performance,' *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 2002), 165.

² Gunther Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

Schuller explains that for this reason, conducting is the most complex, all encompassing and demanding of musical disciplines.³

The singularity and complexity of the profession seems simultaneously vexatious and enticing to Wakin who explains:

The job holds a fascination. It is unique. One man or woman stands in front of 100 fellow human beings – unlike them, without the capacity to make sound – and yet has the power to shape the great works of sonic art. The conductor's eyes dart about, seemingly all-seeing, ears all-hearing, a musical intelligence called upon to grasp a work's architecture and then convey it. He or she is curator of masterpieces, incubator of new works and public performer.⁴

Again, such a description highlights the all-encompassing nature of the art form and the cumulative skills involved. The paradox of possessing the power to shape a performance without actually producing a sound has bemused and confounded observers since the development of the art form. Clearly then, intangible aspects of nonverbal communication are central to the art of conducting.

This rather elusive nature of the conductor's art has made it the subject of much scrutiny and even criticism. Virtuoso violinist Carl Flesch, for instance, did not share Wakin's admiration for the art of conducting and rather cynically noted 'it is the only musical activity in which a dash of charlatanism is not only harmless but absolutely necessary.'⁵ Perhaps understandably, a virtuoso performer who has perfected the art of playing their instrument through years of practice may have reason to question a musician who may not even play an instrument at all. A similarly amusing assessment is offered more recently by Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic Tim Page who agrees that the conductor's is the most mysterious of musical talents, and one which encompasses elements of 'shaman, athletic coach, psychologist and traffic cop.'⁶

Such statements highlight the intrinsic difficulty of assessing and evaluating the art of conducting. Much maligned and often misunderstood, it is the intangible aspects of the art which give rise to such a degree of speculation and interpretation.

³ Gunther Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

⁴ Daniel J. Wakin, 'Now Waving Little Sticks, Littler Names', *New York Times*, July 22, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/weekinreview/22wakin.html>, (accessed December 30 2009.)

⁵ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Conductors* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1968), 23.

⁶ Tim Page, 'I Hear a Symphony,' *The Washington Post*, Washington, December 11, 1996, <http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5946>, (accessed December 11, 2009).

Gunther Schuller laments conducting as an art is often misunderstood both by musicians, who see conductors as mere time-beating metronomes, and by audiences who confuse a theatrical presence on the podium with a real artist.⁷ With so much of the art form reliant on intangible elements, it is no surprise that evaluations are derived from only a part of the overall picture, that is, the visual aspects.

Leopold Stokowski, former Music Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra (1912–1938) was similarly frustrated by what he also considered a misinterpretation of the art form, an assessment based solely on the visual aspects:

Conducting is little understood and greatly misunderstood. Often the superficial and exterior aspects of conducting are exaggerated, and the inner realities of the art of conducting completely unperceived. As music is for the ear and not for the eye, the visual part of conducting is relatively unimportant.⁸

It is important to note the significance of Stokowski's closing remark, seemingly contradictory though it is. From this statement, one is to assume Stokowski is speaking of perception from the point of view of audience members for clearly, the visual component of conducting, that is gestural expression, is intrinsically important to orchestral musicians as the principal means via which the conductor's intent is communicated. In performances where stopping to issue verbal instructions is not an option, communication via visual means remains the sole mode of expression.

Furthermore, although Stokowski asserted that the visual component of conducting is comparably insignificant, it is, and to an extent can only be, the medium through which the work of a conductor is considered. Additionally, an analysis of a conductor's gestures is clearly not a possibility without significant visual appraisal.

Attempting a rigorous analysis of the conductor's art based solely on the sound produced by the ensemble is potentially dangerous and somewhat impractical. In the case of a symphony orchestra, the conductor's gestures are open to interpretation by some one hundred individuals, and what is heard is the orchestra's collective interpretation and translation into sound of these gestures. While ostensibly responsible for the orchestra and performance, problematic intonation in the wind section, an incorrect timpani entry or split trumpet note, for example, may not

⁷ Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, 3.

⁸ Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 198.

necessarily be attributable to any form of communication or direct gestural action of the conductor.

In conducting so much of the art, and indeed the processes involved, lie beyond the eye of the observer. Arguably, an audience is not able to 'see' a conductor's knowledge of the score, whereas they obviously hear an instrumentalist's knowledge of a piece. Claudio Abbado, Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (1989–2002), for example, reportedly spent six months studying Mahler's *Ninth Symphony* before conducting it.⁹ While it would have been apparent to orchestra and audience alike that Abbado knew the score, it would be a dubious claim that they could 'see' six months of intensive study in the eighty-minute performance and for the orchestra, in the preceding rehearsals. In this undertaking Abbado spent roughly two or so days per minute of music in study, learning and preparation of extreme scholarly rigour.

Abbado's discipline is just one example; however, the extent of a conductor's conscientiousness, knowledge of the score and level of preparation are often unknown and overlooked because one cannot 'see' these aspects. Audiences in particular, enjoy the finished product and see only the final element of the process – one in many ways incongruent with all that which precedes it. This significant discrepancy is highlighted by Wagar who explains

the glamour of the public image often masks the rigorous nature of the profession. To be a conductor is both difficult and demanding, and requires a life-long investment of enormous personal discipline and energy.¹⁰

Due to its reliance on the unseen and intangible, Botstein reports that 'conducting has been and will continue to be the hardest aspect of music making to evaluate.'¹¹ Jacobson too, is correct in the assertion that 'the art of conducting ... remains the most obstinately indefinable of musical activities,'¹² a sentiment echoed by Maiello, who observes that this creative and emotional process cannot be

⁹ Norman Lebrecht, 'Can the Young Blades Cut the Big Stuff?', *La Scena Musicale*, August 1, 2007, <http://www.scena.org/columns/lebrecht/070801-NL-Dudamel.html>, (accessed January 27, 2012).

¹⁰ Jeannine Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation* (Boston, G.K. Hall and Co., 1991), ix.

¹¹ Harold Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique* (Miami, Warner Bros. Publications, 1997), viii.

¹² Bernard Jacobson, *Conductors on Conducting* (London, Macdonald and Jane's, 1979), 11.

explained in words,¹³ and critic and commentator Norman Lebrecht, who notes the art of a good conductor is impossible to define.¹⁴

So while these intangible aspects are difficult to evaluate in precise terms, some of the elements comprising the art of conducting are at least identifiable. Eye contact, facial expression and the body language that shape the conductor's communicative repertory can be, to an extent, evaluated via visual means. These features are however inextricably linked with largely indefinable aspects of individuality such as a conductor's personality, charisma and powers of persuasion, making the case for overall assessment more complicated.

The art of conducting and what constitutes a good conductor is therefore, very difficult to assess in scientific terms. The manual gestures of a conductor can be taught and analysed, however it is reasonable to assert that charisma, for example, is not an ability which can be taught, learned or measured. As Bamberger explains, 'the skill of conducting can be learned, but not the *art*.'¹⁵ In his pedagogical text, Long too, considers conducting an elusive profession:

Let it be understood that the art of conducting, like the art of becoming a fine human being, is a never-ending search. No one has ever perfected the art though several have developed it to an inspiring degree. No conductor has been all things to all musicians or to his audience.¹⁶

Long does not clarify what is meant by 'all things' however it is rational to assume the implication is the effective communication of the many component parts comprising the art. Furthermore, Long likens the never-ending pursuit of the art of conducting to that of becoming a fine human being. The emphasis on the humanistic element of the art is also a recurring theme in the literature. Scherchen, for example, considered this aspect an integral part of a more elevated function.

To acknowledge that the conductor's domain is largely spiritual is to realize the exceptional character of his art; one can then appreciate the great artistic and human attributes which must be possessed by the true conductor.¹⁷

¹³ Anthony Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach* (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp., 1996), 201.

¹⁴ Norman Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth* (London, Simon and Schuster, 1991), 7.

¹⁵ Carl Bamberger (Ed.) *The Conductor's Art* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1965), 3.

¹⁶ R. Gerry Long, *The Conductor's Workshop* (Dubuque, Iowa, WM. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1977), 4.

¹⁷ Hermann Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, trans. M. D. Calvocoressi, orig. pub. 1933 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

Precisely what these 'human attributes' entail will be examined in subsequent chapters.

In short, there has been much speculation, debate and confusion about the art of conducting. Most agree it is distinctive but struggle to explain precisely why. The profession has been described as 'unique' and 'often controversial'¹⁸ while Bamberger employs the descriptors misunderstood, underrated and over glamorized.¹⁹ Jacobson too, is unsure of the role of conductor, hypothesising 'is he an inspirer, a grand planner, or just a glorified policeman?'²⁰

¹⁸ Robin May, *Behind the Baton* (London, Frederick Muller Limited, 1981), 1.

¹⁹ Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 3.

²⁰ Jacobson, *Conductors on Conducting*, 11.

The Origin and Fundamentals of the Craft of Conducting

The craft of conducting comprises the teachable, largely technical and rudimentary facets of the art form. Because these manual technical gestures provide the platform for artistic expression, it is difficult to completely dissociate any analysis of the craft from the art of conducting. That said, it is possible to outline and explain in detail the separation of the fundamental aspects of the conductor's work that comprise the craft, and inform the art of conducting.

A straightforward description of conducting in general terms was offered by Scherchen who described conducting as 'contact between human beings.'²¹ Put simply, conducting is communication – communicating the music, communicating with the musicians and communicating with the audience. Indeed a conductor's ability to communicate is central to his task and good communication has been labelled the key to success.²² Maiello explains,

the conductor is the communicator, inspiration and overseer of the musical message; the conveyor of the composer's intent, and the courier of the music being sent to the listener via the performance. This sense of communication is what makes the musical experience something that transcends the written word.²³

The indefinable communication resulting in music making is ostensibly reliant on the use of silent gestures. A conductor employs a fundamental vocabulary of established time-beating signals, universally recognised by musicians. These gestures are executed via the conductor's hands. Supplementing this basic vocabulary are more specific, refined and idiosyncratic gestures representing a higher plane of musical expression, the art of conducting, the subject of which will be examined in the following section.

In the first instance, information is communicated most obviously via the conductor's basic time-beating gestures, the clarity of which has a direct correlation with a conductor's fundamental effectiveness. Phillips believes an effective communicative technique stems from a mastery of conducting technique, noting that

²¹ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 188.

²² Diane Wittry, *Beyond the Baton* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 141.

²³ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 7.

conductors who lack a clear and commanding technique are unconvincing.²⁴ Scherchen also believed that when a conductor makes clear and concise contact with the players, the result will be intelligible and effective.²⁵

In fundamental terms, the primary responsibility of the conductor is a rhythmic one and it is from this origin that the role originally developed. From very early times,²⁶ various implements were used to beat a pulse for instrumental ensembles while silent forms of timekeeping predominated in vocal music. Choir directors during medieval times used their hands to direct singers, preferring a rolled up piece of paper by the eighteenth century.²⁷ Instrumental music has, however, long been associated with a more powerful symbol – the baton.

Today used by orchestral conductors in an artistic and refined manner, this was not always the case. A large mace-like staff was popularly used to audibly beat time for instrumental ensembles up until the nineteenth century, with possibly one of the best-known time-beaters the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687). Lully's instrument was a large wooden stick he beat on the floor, until beating it on his foot which subsequently developed a gangrenous infection that led to his death.

As the role of the basso continuo developed throughout the Baroque, the responsibility of the keyboard player became an increasingly important one. Providing the underlying rhythmic and harmonic structure of a work, it is no surprise this position evolved into one of leadership. Often it was the composer who assumed this role of Kapellmeister, directing the performance from the keyboard.

With the keyboard gradually disappearing from instrumental music over the course of the eighteenth century, the principal violinist assumed the function of leader. Standing at the forefront of the ensemble, he was well placed to demonstrate time-beating motions with his bow and by lifting his violin to lead.

It was the nineteenth century, though, which witnessed the most significant innovations in conducting. These hitherto forms of instrumental leadership were abandoned in favour of the conductor proper – one who assumed musical leadership of an ensemble without playing an instrument therein. The role of the conductor as

²⁴ Kenneth H. Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 2.

²⁵ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 188.

²⁶ Bowen reports that in 709BC, a huge ensemble of 800 people were directed and kept in time via up and down movements of a staff by “Pherekydes of Patrae, giver of Rhythm”, who sat high above them. José Antonio Bowen (Ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 94.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

an entity was therefore firmly established, a function which has remained unchanged for almost two hundred years. At this time, the time-beating stick enjoyed resurgent popularity and gradually evolved into the modern baton used today.

The twentieth century also saw major developments. Sherman suggests that the increased precision of modern conducting technique enjoys a direct correlation with the metrical challenges of twentieth century music, noting also that larger productions demanded greater conducting skills.²⁸ With the advent of recording technology, flawless performances became the norm and consequently, conducting technique also became increasingly precise so as to ensure record-like perfection in the concert hall.²⁹

Held in the right hand, the baton is the most physical symbol of the conductor's function. In its most rudimentary function it is used to indicate tempo and maintain a rhythmic pulse via time beating gestures. There are standard patterns corresponding to the number of beats in a bar – the basic technical vocabulary of a conductor. There is of course, a great deal of information a conductor needs to communicate over and above this primary rhythmic function although the notion of the conductor as a quasi-metronome remains a popular one.

In practical terms, it is difficult to refute this notion. Essentially, if a conductor is unable to communicate this basic information there is no way the ensemble will function as a cohesive unit. This principle applies as much to a high school ensemble as to a professional orchestra, however its importance is contextualised by setting. As Kohut and Grant confirm, 'clearly, the role and function of the professional conductor at one extreme is quite different from that of the elementary school teacher/conductor at the other,'³⁰ a distinction also highlighted by Lumley and Springthorpe.³¹ Basic rhythmic information, for example, is of paramount importance to young musicians whereas in a professional context, it is reasonable to assume a significant degree of rhythmic responsibility from individual players. Context, therefore, mandates to an extent the distinction between the basic craft of conducting and its broader artistic function.

²⁸ Bernard D. Sherman in José Antonio Bowen (Ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 241.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

³⁰ Kohut and Grant, *Learning to Conduct and Rehearse*, 2.

³¹ John Lumley and Nigel Springthorpe, *The Art of Conducting* (London, Rhinegold Publishing Limited, 1989), 1.

Even so, many believe the primary function of the professional conductor remains a rhythmic one. In his famous treatise, *Über das Dirigieren*, Wagner maintained the fundamental task of the conductor is to set the correct tempo.³² Furtwängler too, believed that conducting is primarily concerned with the transference of rhythmic information³³ while conducting pedagogue Saito mandates 'the main purpose of conducting is to clearly show the tempo and the beat'.³⁴

Establishing tempo and maintaining a steady pulse are both essentially borne of the same function. The preparatory beat given to signal the commencement of a piece indicates the tempo of the piece itself. By continuing to beat this tempo, a conductor automatically maintains a steady pulse. Changes of tempo and slight modifications such as *ritardandi* and *accelerandi*, are communicated via changing or modifying the beat, and hence altering the pulse, accordingly.

Additionally, Wagner maintained that when a conductor sets the correct tempo, it induces correct phrasing and expression from the players.³⁵ This is an interesting point and one that highlights the inextricable connection between the various facets of the art. In practical terms, for example, a tempo which is 'too slow', or slower than rehearsed, could create problems for brass and wind players in terms of breath support and control, meaning they would potentially be unable to execute the desired phrasing.

Berlioz, on the other hand, placed primary importance on interpretative aspects, and rather than seeing time-beating as an integral part of the musical fabric, implies it is merely a rudimentary prerequisite to the conductor's role which requires

...almost indefinable gifts, without which the invisible contact between him and performers cannot be established. Lacking these, he cannot transmit his feelings to the players and has no dominating power or guiding influence. He is no longer a director and leader, but simply a timebeater.³⁶

For Berlioz then, the time-beating function of conducting was entirely subordinate to the more important qualities of leadership and communication. Furthermore, the

³² Wagner, *On Conducting*, 20.

³³ Furtwängler in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 208.

³⁴ Hideo Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, ed. Wayne J. Toews, trans. Fumihiko Torigai (Tokyo, Min-on Concert Association and Ongaku No Tomo Sha Corp. 1988), 3.

³⁵ Wagner, *On Conducting*, 20.

³⁶ Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 25.

function of time-beating is attributed minimal importance, one not accorded the role of prominence given it by Wagner, Furtwängler or Saito. Additionally, Berlioz did not consider it a component associated with leadership and guidance or the broader artistic function of the conductor. These more elevated functions of nonverbal communication and leadership, as highlighted by Berlioz, will be considered in the chapter on gesture.

In fact, the divergent views represented by Wagner and Berlioz are both valid. Conducting is a composite art involving much more than basic time-beating; however, it is this aspect which is at the core of the conductor's physical function and, therefore, the central element in the craft of conducting. In terms of greater musical and artistic expression, however, the role of time-beating is a relatively minor one. As conductor and pedagogue Diane Wittry confirms, 'basic conducting technique is important and critical to communicating your musical ideas, but it is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to being a great conductor.'³⁷ Similarly Stotter warns, 'standing on the podium and beating time does not make one a conductor'³⁸ and conversely Sherman notes, 'musical authority does not require modern conducting technique.'³⁹

Indeed, it is very difficult to separate the craft of conducting entirely from the art, even at the highest artistic level whereby musical expression governs all aspects of the conductor's work. Schuller clarifies this duality of the conductor's function,

to express the music with clarity, to shape it into that form which the composer indicates in the score, and to capture the essence of that composer's expression and style...at the most fundamental level the conductor's job is...to provide a rhythmic frame of reference (through his beat) and a visual representation of the music's content (through expression *in* his beat).⁴⁰

Bernstein concurred stating 'the interpretation must always be *in* the time-beating itself.'⁴¹ Traditionally, textbooks on conducting advocate the use of the right hand in a time-beating function and maintain the left hand is generally used to express nuance. Bernstein challenged this notion exclaiming, 'this is sheer nonsense. No conductor

³⁷ Wittry, *Beyond the Baton*, 12.

³⁸ Douglas Stotter *Methods and Materials for Conducting* (Chicago; GIA Publications Inc, 2006), 13.

³⁹ Bernard D. Sherman in Bowen (Ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Conducting*, 239.

⁴⁰ Gunther Schuller *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), 161–162.

⁴¹ Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1968), 131.

can divide himself into two people, a time-beater and an interpreter.⁴² As the analysis at the centre of this study will show, Kleiber's approach is one in line with Bernstein's, namely, the simultaneous use and interchangeable function of both hands in communicating rhythmic and expressive information.

Besides Schuller, a number of other pedagogues present balanced views regarding the place of technical function within the broader artistic framework. Farberman, for example, while recognising the importance of technique, states it must be connected to specific musical ideas, explaining that command of conducting technique allows the conductor to shape and mould the music, bringing life to the composer's text.⁴³ Similarly Phillips highlights the importance of artistic function over the technical explaining 'there should be an interpretation in the conductor's mind that is guiding the direction of the ensemble. If little thought is given to musical meaning, even a technically proficient performance will be dull and void of life.'⁴⁴ From these accounts it is clear that while technical function is an integral component of the art form, it is not that which defines it. Rather, the basis of all conducting function is a musical one.

Nevertheless, much of the literature on the fundamentals of conducting is centered on basic beat patterns and time beating function. Aside from forming the technical foundation on which a conductor works, these essential manual signals are relatively easy to describe, define and explain. As choral conductor and pedagogue James Jordan notes, 'Conducting texts, for the most part, deal with the 'outside' aspects of making music. That is, we tend to want to teach what, perhaps, is easiest to get at.'⁴⁵ Similarly Otranto observes, 'The essential ingredient in the art of conducting – the gesture itself – is not investigated.'⁴⁶ Furthermore, basic gestures are the most visible component of a conductor's work at any level, offering another reason for the popularity and ease of analyses. As will be examined in subsequent chapters, the conductor's communicative art beyond this rudimentary level, is problematic to analyse.

⁴² Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 131.

⁴³ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique* ix.

⁴⁴ Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 168.

⁴⁵ James Jordan, *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting and Rehearsing* (Chicago, GIA Publications, Inc., 1996), 5.

⁴⁶ Clotilde Mafalda Pereira Carneiro Otranto, *A Conductor's Guide for Beethoven's Symphony No. 4: Communicating Music Through Expressive Gestures*, DMA diss., Arizona State University, 1993, 32.

Another basic technical function of the conductor is cueing, or gesturing to a player indicating when to play. The basic function of cueing can be performed in a variety of ways – an indication with the left hand, a smile, a nod or simply by eye contact. Farberman cites a ‘clear, physically precise motion in the direction of a player’ but suggests that when working with experienced musicians, an arched eyebrow or nod of the head are appropriate means.⁴⁷

Again, depending on the context, cueing assumes a variety of meanings. Having worked with young musicians, who, more often than not are unsure of themselves, I find they will not play unless given a cue. Conversely a member of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra said to me, ‘we don’t need you to show us *when* to play, we need you to show us *how* to play.’ Clearly then, context dictates the degree of refinement of the particular gesture employed and the intent behind it. A simple point of the hand will clarify the matter for the average student musician whereas the professional orchestral musician seeks an indication as to the expressive character desired.

In tandem with this function is that of indicating dynamics. Similar to cueing, this aspect of the conductor’s function can be communicated via a number of gestures such as taking a step backwards or towards the orchestra, or a change in body posture. A simple left hand signal can potentially exercise the same general request, as can a change in the type, character, size and placement of the beat.

In fundamental terms, a conductor can indicate loud and soft, and show the gradations lying between. On a higher artistic plane, a conductor is, for example, able to show the type of *forte* he desires – a rich, warm and full chorale-like *forte* or a direct, clearly articulated and fanfare-like *forte*.

The functions of the craft of conducting are therefore numerous. Concerned with the dissemination of fundamental musical information, this technical basis serves as a building block for the display of a heightened degree of musical detail and understanding, alongside providing a platform for individual interpretation and subtleties of expressive and emotional intent – those aspects characterising the art of conducting. This degree of detail and refinement is reflected in the type and quality of the gestures used and Kleiber’s gestures will be subject to such an analysis.

⁴⁷ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, 117.

The Origin and Fundamentals of the Art of Conducting

The art of conducting is a privilege, an opportunity to recreate and create beauty. Being a part of the creative process and emotional experience is complex and virtually impossible to describe with words...It is an honor and a privilege to be able to channel this human energy, to control and to direct it and to have it affect others in a way that will be remembered for a lifetime.⁴⁸

The art of conducting is a rarefied process involving a degree of artistic insight, interpretation and emotional expression not present in a singular consideration of the basic craft of conducting. By virtue of its highly specialised creative niveau, the art of conducting is confined exclusively to the domain of professional practice.

The complexity of the art therefore necessitates skills and abilities encompassing a much wider spectrum than solely competency in technical conducting gestures. In addition to gestural capabilities, an extensive musical knowledge, detailed understanding of the score and excellent aural skills are among the musical prerequisites. Personal traits such as leadership, charisma and the ability to inspire are also components of the skill set pertinent to the art of conducting. The diversity of abilities required of the conductor is thus all encompassing,⁴⁹ indeed perhaps, almost limitless.

This cumulative set of skills and broad musical knowledge is what shapes the conductor's reading of the composer's text. Presented with the score, it is the conductor's responsibility to interpret the composer's text and perceived intentions, translating them into physical gestures in order to elicit the desired musical and expressive response from the orchestra. A conductor's communicative gestures are, in the first instance, thus informed by an intimate knowledge of the score and a consequent thorough intellectual understanding of the music.

⁴⁸ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 201.

⁴⁹ Bailey muses a conductor's attributes include 'musician, juggler, psychologist, historian, theorist and cheerleader.' Wayne Bailey, *Conducting, The Art of Communication* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2009), vii. Schonberg offers a more detailed and multi-faceted account, noting a conductor must be 'of commanding presence, infinite dignity, fabulous memory, vast experience, high temperament and serene wisdom....He is many things: musician, administrator, executive, minister, psychologist, technician, philosopher and dispenser of wrath....he is an egoist. He has to be....Above all, he is a leader of men....He is a father image, the great provider, the fount of inspiration, the teacher who knows all. Perhaps he is half-divine...' Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 15–16.

What constitutes a thorough intellectual understanding of the music, and how, then, does a conductor use this understanding to form an interpretation? With the composer's text as a starting point, a rigorous academic approach to score study and preparation is the foundation of the conductor's work.

He must have an analytical understanding... that provides an interpretation of phrase structures, climaxes, tempo markings, and dynamic, articulation, and ornamental markings. The ability to understand a composition from a musical sense is more important than the development of excellent stick technique. In short, the conductor must be the best-informed musician in the ensemble.⁵⁰

The predominating intellectual and musical aspects underlining the art of conducting, then, take precedence over the physical embodiment of the craft of conducting, that is, stick technique. This specific musical information that the conductor gleans from the composer's score underpins the conception of an interpretation and its consequent gestural expression.

With such a diversity of musical elements and subtle nuances to consider, the conductor's task is very much an investigative one.⁵¹ This major component of the art is undertaken by the conductor during the preparatory stage before the first rehearsal. An array of musical potentialities is considered before an interpretative concept is formed via the application of personal insights. Due to its inherent subjectivity, the area of the conductor's musical interpretation is a very grey one.

This study assumes interpretation pertains to nuances of expression as determined by the conductor – specifics relating to the musical aspects of tempi, articulation, dynamics and phrasing alongside the broader area of mood and character of the music. While guided by the composer's manuscript, this principal aspect of the conductor's art is among the most idiosyncratic and this process of developing an interpretation is, not surprisingly, very difficult to describe in concrete terms. Labuta, for example, unable to offer any guidelines, recommends conductors 'base their interpretation on score study and on the feeling of rightness they have for

⁵⁰ Bailey, *Conducting*, 3-4.

⁵¹ Bowles suggests a conductor, when making interpretative decisions, requires the characteristics of a detective 'sifting thoroughly all the discoverable evidence before adopting final conclusions.' Michael Bowles, *The Art of Conducting* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1975), 56.

a particular composition.⁵² While this opinion is an accurate observation, obviously each conductor's feeling of 'rightness' would constitute something different. As such, the role of the conductor is not dissimilar to that of a stage actor – in the same way ten actors would present the same scene in ten different ways, each conductor forms his own concept based on the score, with no two conductors or interpretations identical.

So while in essence the structural basis of the conductor's interpretation can be traced to the composer's manuscript, the more subtle expressive aspects are not configured on the page in absolute symbols. The conductor's consequent interpretative responsibility is therefore dictated, to an extent, by this phenomenon. Krueger for example, reminds us that the composer can only hint at a kaleidoscope of colour through the notes and rests on the score, stating a successful performance results from the performer's imagination and ability to interpret the composer's directives.⁵³ Farberman too admits 'the ingredients that make the recreation of music magical cannot be fully captured on the printed page.'⁵⁴

Indeed, this is the principal task of the conductor and the defining feature of the art of conducting – to recreate the music, interpreting the information on the page with the intention of presenting an imaginative and inspired performance. As Stokowski confirmed, the primary goal of conducting is 'to achieve the most complete and eloquent expression of the inner spirit of the music and all the potentialities lying dormant on the printed score.'⁵⁵

The somewhat ambiguous nature of the score, this 'inner spirit' and these 'dormant potentialities', afford the conductor a degree of artistic license. As Moran confirms, 'Few would dispute that the conductor is granted wide latitude in the area of interpretation.'⁵⁶ Essentially this freedom means each conductor is entitled to his own individual, and often highly personalised, musical interpretation, largely because the score provides at best, only a guide – the myriad of expressive nuances that

⁵² Joseph A. Labuta, *Basic Conducting Techniques*, 5th Ed (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson Education Inc., 2004), 37.

⁵³ Karl Kreuger, *The Way of the Conductor* (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 21.

⁵⁴ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, 72.

⁵⁵ Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 202

⁵⁶ Walter Raymond Moran III, *In Search of Artistry: A Comparative Study of School Principals and Orchestral Conductors*, Fordham University EdD diss., 2000, 89.

constitute the centrality of the conductor's artistic function cannot be found on the printed page.

In conducting, so many details and subtleties lie *between* the notes, beyond the printed page. Because notation is 'at best, a general outline of the intent of the composer', the conductor 'must add all of the subtle nuances that are not represented in the written music.'⁵⁷ Barra⁵⁸ and Prausnitz⁵⁹ espouse a similar point of view, while Phillips also articulates the need to go beyond the notes on the page explaining that

The conductor must be able to move the ensemble beyond the musical page to capture the composer's musical intent. It should be the desire of every conductor to communicate "feelingful" interpretations.⁶⁰

What then defines a 'feelingful' interpretation, what constitutes subtle nuances, the details between the notes, and how a conductor communicates such is the essence of his role and artistic function. Being able to accurately describe or define this function in clearer terms than those presented above, however, is very difficult. Nuances of dynamics, articulation, tempo and to a certain extent, phrasing, can be observed and analysed – to try to capture and define mood, character, expressiveness or interpretation in words is virtually impossible.⁶¹ Stokowski, for instance, acknowledged that imagination, emotion, the ability to understand and project the inner meaning of the music, evoking its poetry, all factors intrinsic to conducting, are impossible to teach.⁶² The encapsulation of these elements, then, largely defines the art of conducting. Intangible and esoteric in nature, it is impossible to evaluate these aspects in anything but descriptive, subjective terms.

The extent to which individual conductors' approaches, interpretations and gestures vary also makes assessment and comparison virtually impossible. As Bernstein succinctly explains 'No two conductors agree. And if you listen to six different conductors, you hear six different tempi. Yet each conductor is convinced

⁵⁷ Jerry Nowak and Henry Nowak, *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians* (New York, Carl Fischer, 2002), 263.

⁵⁸ Donald Barra, *The Dynamic Performance* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1983), 98.

⁵⁹ Frederik Prausnitz, *Score and Podium* (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), 1.

⁶⁰ Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 167.

⁶¹ 'This process of musical expression and interpretation is among the least understood.' Barra, *The Dynamic Performance*, vii.

⁶² Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 203

that his tempo is the only true one.⁶³ Schonberg also recognises that each conductor will interpret musical symbols differently for each is a different human being who will have his own ideas and instincts.⁶⁴

It is an opinion shared by Barra regarding the interpretation of music in general. That there are differences in interpretation between creative artists is accepted however the interpreter himself can produce a number and varying interpretations on different occasions.

It is generally agreed, that there is no single “correct” way to interpret a particular composition. Indeed, most pieces are amenable to a variety of interpretations, and their performance often varies significantly, even when played by the same performing artist.⁶⁵

The ‘human’ element is a plausible explanation for such variation. Differences in personal mood, feeling and circumstance may all have an effect on the conductor, and as a result, influence his interpretation.

Conductor Bruno Walter cites the uniqueness of personality as a fundamental factor in a conductor’s interpretation, and ‘His spiritual mediation, drawing inspiration from the work, is then needed to give an individual stamp to this actual, that is, sounding unity; the seal of personality must be set upon it.’⁶⁶ Similarly, Farberman highlights the need for personal involvement in interpretation, noting that without it, it is impossible to realise music.⁶⁷ Scherchen also speaks of the importance of a conductor stamping his own personality on a work.⁶⁸

This principal interpretative role of the conductor is therefore very much influenced by personality. As such, it is a role subject to a significant degree of scrutiny given its inherent subjectivity. With no set rules defining a personalised musical approach,⁶⁹ it is also an aspect of a conductor’s work that can attract a great degree of controversy. As James Levine, Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera

⁶³ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 134.

⁶⁴ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 17.

⁶⁵ Barra, *The Dynamic Performance*, vii.

⁶⁶ Bruno Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making*, trans. Paul Hamburger (New York, WW Norton and Company Inc., 1961), 86–87.

⁶⁷ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, 72.

⁶⁸ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 2.

⁶⁹ Maiello *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 65.

muses, 'in my profession, you're subject to criticism pretty much no matter what you do.'⁷⁰

With so much of the processes involved in the art of conducting intangible and unseen, it is little surprise the art is shaped by a significant cerebral component. The conductor's imagination, in conjunction with his interpretation, combines to form a 'sound concept' of the work, that is, an ideal aural image of how the work should sound. This ability, to 'hear the music in one's mind', is central to the art of conducting.

A number of commentators have remarked on this aspect of the conductor's art, and Edwin Gordon coined the term 'audiation' to describe the phenomenon that is this 'inner hearing' ability. Writing some forty years earlier Scherchen also explained, 'To conduct means to make manifest that which one has perfectly heard within oneself.'⁷¹

Audiation is simply the ability to hear and process a score without any physical sound. This skill is essential for the conductor, and to the art of conducting, for the simple reason that the conductor is unable to 'practise' on his instrument, that is, the orchestra, and receive the resultant auditory feedback, in the same way as an instrumentalist. Translating the printed page into imagined sounds is therefore a vital step in the interpretative process.

Inner hearing has been identified by conductors and recognised by numerous writers as fundamental to the conductor's physical rendition of the music, and consequently, it informs the development of the conductor's gestures. Nowak and Nowak explain a conductor 'hears in his mind (imagines) a subtlety, and tries to describe it to the musicians with a gesture,'⁷² maintaining it is a conductor's 'expressive imagery of the music and its phrasing and inflection which brings about the appropriate subtle gestures,'⁷³ as 'our internal auditory system governs all aspects of the art of conducting.'⁷⁴

Similarly, Krueger speaks of the importance of a conductor developing a tonal image 'even before it reaches his hands as raw material' and states the true function

⁷⁰ Robert Chesterman (Ed.), *Conductors in Conversation* (New York, Limelight Editions, 1990), 149.

⁷¹ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 3.

⁷² Nowak and Nowak, *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 260.

of a conductor is to weave a musical tapestry from his internalised tonal image.⁷⁵ Ewen too, mentions bringing to life the concept of the score the conductor hears in his “mind’s ear”⁷⁶ while Barra asserts ‘the performer must continually try to match his actual performance with his mental image of the music.’⁷⁷ Carlo Maria Giulini, Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1978–1984), offered perhaps the clearest explanation stating ‘A conductor has in his mind – I should really say in his body – what he wants to have from an orchestra: the sound, the quality, everything like this.’⁷⁸

Similarly, conductor Bruno Walter also thought the development of a distinct, inner sound-image, or sound-ideal is of paramount importance for the conductor, as it is this internalised concept which ‘exerts a guiding and controlling influence on his practical music making.’⁷⁹ Long also maintains a conductor must conceive elaborate musical pictures in his ear; these imagined images being subsequently realised by the orchestra. Furthermore, Long admonishes conductors who have vague concepts and/or those who are unable to communicate their vision to the orchestra.⁸⁰

These conductors and commentators demonstrate that highly developed inner hearing entails much more than simply the ability to hear the notes of the score. Clearly, the ability to observe and aurally perceive nuances and to derive an expressive concept there from, are fundamental components of the conductor’s art. Furthermore, the translation of this aural image or sound concept into gestures is a defining aspect of the art of conducting.

Precisely how the conductor translates this aural image into communicative gestures, like all aspects comprising the art of conducting, is very difficult to define. The broader area of a conductor’s specific means of gestural expression will be examined in detail in Chapter Two, however it is clear that in order for the conductor to communicate his interpretation, it must be unambiguous in his mind, derived from scholarship and established after careful consideration. Only then can this interpretation be translated into appropriately refined and subtle physical gestures, which elicit the desired musical response from the musicians.

⁷⁵ Karl Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 31.

⁷⁶ David Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton* (Great Neck, New York, Core Collection Books Ltd., 1978), 9.

⁷⁷ Barra, *The Dynamic Performance*, 175.

⁷⁸ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 65–66.

⁷⁹ Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making*, 85.

⁸⁰ Long, *The Conductor’s Workshop*, 1.

This fact is confirmed by Erich Leinsdorf, former Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra (1943–1946) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1962–1969) who explained the understanding behind the gesture is the guiding force for the physical motion.

Gesture is of crucial importance in conducting as long as it carries a message... It is pointless to prepare an eloquent quieting motion for the left hand if one fails to know when or whether it is required.⁸¹

Similarly, Rudolf questions whether conductors really need concern themselves with the conscious development of a repertory of gestures, pondering that when the conductor knows the score, the gestures follow automatically.⁸² Boulez confirms this notion,⁸³ while conversely Bailey warns that ‘gestures cannot be assigned to specific moments in the score then reproduced at the appropriate moment.’⁸⁴ Bernstein supports this notion, confirming a conductor’s gestures ‘must be first and always meaningful in terms of the music.’⁸⁵

Gestures in themselves then, are not of value as a singular entity. Their derivation is contingent on an intimate knowledge and thorough understanding of the musical foundation from which they are drawn. Without such knowledge, gestures lack true and relevant meaning. How, then, are we able to evaluate ‘appropriate’, ‘relevant’ and ‘meaningful’ gestures? This, in fact, is the task of the musician – gestures are appropriate, relevant and meaningful when they correspond to a musical response.

Rather than simply limiting expression to gestural representation, a number of commentators believe the art of conducting is contingent on a process of complete physical assimilation, that is, ‘embodiment’ of the music. Maiello, for example, explains that ‘in order to “show” the music it is imperative to “be” the music,’⁸⁶ ‘a living graphic representation of the actual sounds on the printed page.’⁸⁷ Kiesler agrees, underlining the similarity with the theatre stage, noting ‘a great Othello isn’t realized

⁸¹ Erich Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981), 168–169.

⁸² Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (Belmont, Thomson Schirmer, 1995), 295.

⁸³ ‘With conducting, it’s above all a matter of knowing the score that enables you to find the appropriate gesture to guarantee the best performance of the work.’ Pierre Boulez, *Boulez on Conducting*, trans. Richard Stokes (London, Faber and Faber, 2003), 126.

⁸⁴ Bailey, *Conducting*, 96.

⁸⁵ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 149.

⁸⁶ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

by an actor playing Othello but by an actor who *is* Othello. A great conductor *is* the music.⁸⁸ The dramatic comparison is a popular one, as conductor Erich Leinsdorf explained,

An interpreter must be free of prejudices... A musical performer is like a talented actor, whose greatest accomplishment is to achieve such a degree of identification with a character in a play that his own personality disappears. The musician should "become" Brahms or Debussy or whoever is on his program.⁸⁹

So while such physical embodiment is a difficult concept to define, the means a conductor can use in an effort to achieve this end are reliant, at least to an extent, on gestural expression.

For music to have life, it must first "live" in the musician...so must the conductor convey the "personality" of each musical score. This is done by subtle changes in the physical stance (such as standing tall to communicate power and strength), the style of the conducting gesture and, very important, facial expression.⁹⁰

The effectiveness of a conductor's nonverbal means of communication, therefore, is a central element to effectual musical and interpretative expression, in a way not dissimilar to acting, dance and mime. In the same manner that dance uses graceful body movements, acting uses facial and bodily gestures and mime uses nonverbal physical presentations, conducting is an all-encompassing physical art.⁹¹ Depending on the physique of the conductor involved, this bodily expression may take on starkly varied forms. Coupled with the inherent individuality of interpretation, it is clear that the art of conducting is not a uniform one.

Beyond the use of physical gesture, a conductor's general demeanour and persona play leading roles in his ability to communicate effectively with the musicians, with one conductor observing 'the most experienced musicians can be alienated or exhilarated by the aura, the stance, the charisma of the person on the podium.'⁹² Similarly, Ewen highlights personal magnetism as a necessary ingredient

⁸⁸ Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 137.

⁸⁹ Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate*, 42.

⁹⁰ Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 168.

⁹¹ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach* 7.

⁹² Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate*, 170.

for success,⁹³ Barra believes a sense of authority is required,⁹⁴ and Van Hoesen agreed the conductor must possess a certain force of character.⁹⁵ Bernstein offered some thoughts as to how the conductor may go about achieving these ends, explaining

He must make them want to play. He must exalt them, lift them, start their adrenalin pouring, either through cajoling or demanding or raging... It is not so much imposing his will on them like a dictator; it is more like projecting his feelings around him.⁹⁶

The art of conducting therefore also relies on skills and abilities over and above purely musical ones. Supplementing a conductor's gestural language are associated character traits which support and underline these powers of nonverbal communication.

Of these character traits, leadership is of primary importance. Ostensibly singularly responsible for the entire musical content of a performance, it is obvious a very significant component of the conductor's role is that of leader, a fact recognised by a number of scholars.⁹⁷ Richard Strauss believed a conductor's ability to lead is derived from the strength of his musical conviction, explaining 'If you cannot control the orchestra by the quality of your ideas, you don't belong in front of it.'⁹⁸ Similarly, Nowak and Nowak⁹⁹ and Bailey¹⁰⁰ highlight the ability to motivate and inspire as being fundamental to the role of conductor, alongside possessing a force of will and demeanour capable of inspiring others to follow his commands.

Leadership itself can take various forms. It can be forceful and dictatorial, charismatic and compelling or quietly and politely persuasive. Depending on the particular personality of the conductor involved, any one of these types or variations thereof, may be used to lead an orchestra. It is now generally accepted that while

⁹³ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 11.

⁹⁴ Barra, *The Dynamic Performance*, 169.

⁹⁵ Karl D. Van Hoesen *Handbook of Conducting* (New York; Appleton–Century–Crofts, 1939), 1.

⁹⁶ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 150.

⁹⁷ 'Players expect decisive and knowledgeable leadership' Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 2. 'A conductor must be worthy of leading other musicians, that they must be able to inspire and challenge musicians to perform at their highest possible level.' Donald Hunsberger and Roy E. Ernst, *The Art of Conducting* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 1. Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 204 also highlights the importance of leadership, of players having confidence in a conductor. Maiello maintains the role of conductor is that of musical leader as well as a leader of people. Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 9.

⁹⁸ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 31.

⁹⁹ Nowak and Nowak *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *Conducting*, 4.

leadership remains an essential ingredient, the process of music making is very much a collaborative one, an aspect which has undergone significant transformation since the middle of the last century, until which time tyranny was an accepted part of podium presence.

This notion of the conductor as authoritarian pre-dates the art of podium conducting. Often tempestuous, temperamental and tyrannical characters, the literature on the history of conducting is littered with acrimonious anecdotes and unpleasant accounts of conductors' actions and antics. Gluck was apparently a particularly disagreeable man – 'rude, demanding, arrogant and quarrelsome, as so many conductors have been.'¹⁰¹ Berlioz was also seen 'tearing his hair, smashing batons and music stands.'¹⁰² It is hard to conceive how Gluck and Berlioz could have enjoyed an amicable relationship with their players, and clearly their leadership was of the dictatorial variety.

This concept of 'the maestro' as an autocrat ruling with an iron fist appears diametrically opposed with the notion of an inspirational artistic leader. Indeed, the very forcefulness of this manner of coercion seems to belie the art of conducting. A sensitive, musical and expressive communication of the composer's text appears inconsistent with such an approach, evidencing the development of this component of the interpretative art of conducting from its former rudimentary craft.

Consequently, there has been an evolution from the conductor as dictator to that of democrat. Hart mentions the 'the gradual disappearance of the martinet among conductors' and notes democracy has replaced autocracy in the rehearsal environment.¹⁰³ Sharp and Stiermann, writing in 2008, also explain that attitudes and expectations of conductors have changed to the extent that 'the tyrannical maestro epitomised by Toscanini, Szell, and Reiner would not be tolerated by today's musicians.'¹⁰⁴ They note that even though 'the conductor is still the leader of the orchestra, he can no longer be autocratic in the way that Toscanini and Szell were. A

¹⁰¹ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 45.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰³ Philip Hart, *Conductors: A New Generation* (London, Robson Books, 1980), xiii.

¹⁰⁴ Roderick L. Sharpe and Jeanne Koekkoek Stierman *Maestros in America* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), xv.

different psychology is required...¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Walter underscored the significance of a conductor possessing the ability to deal with people.¹⁰⁶

Leadership, psychology and the ability to deal with people, then, are also significantly important components of the art of conducting. These elements, as key factors in the communicative process are supported by the conductor's nonverbal interactions. However, unlike the specific physical gestures that are the subject of the subsequent chapter, these character traits of the conductor – leadership, psychology, the ability to deal with people – are very difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint in scientific terms. It may be partially because of this difficulty there has arisen a great deal of speculation regarding these, and other intangible elements of the art, aspects of which will be considered in the following section.

Unlike the craft of conducting, then, the art of conducting is largely reliant on intangible elements. First among these is the conductor's academic and scholarly approach to the score, the reading of which results in his expressive interpretation and sound concept of the work. Having devised an appropriate gestural language indicative of the musical and expressive elements he wishes to communicate, the conductor then conveys this meaning, via these gestural signals, to the players. Underlining his musical direction are a great many personal qualities underscored by strength and conviction of character, or the power of personality. The ability to lead married with charisma, the capacity to inspire and power to persuade an orchestra regarding matters of musical interpretation are recurring themes in the literature and will be examined in more detail in the subsequent section, The X Factor.

¹⁰⁵ Roderick L. Sharpe and Jeanne Koekkoek Stierman *Maestros in America* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), 41.

¹⁰⁶ Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making*, 111.

The X Factor: Introduction

The term 'X Factor' is a popular one used to describe a special quality which is often difficult to identify and define. It is used in a variety of contexts and is often used in the performing arts to describe artists possessing certain intangible qualities which characterise and enhance their performance, resulting in one which stands out from that of their peers. The X Factor may pertain to aspects of personality, charm and charisma, a particular yet unidentifiable talent or a person's appearance. It is, for example, impossible to 'define' the electric energy between two opera singers in the role of lovers, an emotional and touching performance by a soloist, or a conductor who magnetises an audience in the way Kleiber was said to. Indeed, accounts of this mysterious X Factor feature prominently in the literature on Carlos Kleiber – it was a quality he possessed in abundance.

As a reading of the following section will reveal, many writers and commentators proffer thoughts, suggestions, insights and attempts at explanation. Conductors too, recognise the prevalence, prominence and importance of such intangible aspects in their art. While the existence and role of this X Factor is not in question, ultimately however, we are still left pondering the question of precisely what it is.

The difficulty in accurately analysing, describing and defining many aspects of the conductor's art, including his ability to communicate through gesture, eye contact and body language, along with the importance of elements including personality, leadership and charisma, has been well documented. As a result, conducting is popularly viewed as a mysterious art with many struggling to pinpoint precisely what it entails. As Leinsdorf confirmed, 'the qualifications for this elusive art and craft are a mystery to all but a very few experts.'¹⁰⁷ Hart cites the mystery of conducting¹⁰⁸ and Jacobson also admits there is a 'touch of mystery' about the way a conductor works.¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Kiesler philosophically ponders 'maybe conducting is similar to the way light is refracted through a prism.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Hart, *Conductors: A New Generation*, x.

¹⁰⁹ Jacobson, *Conductors on Conducting*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 137.

While the art of conducting has evolved significantly from its original perfunctory time-beating function, the task of accurately describing the non-gestural communicative tools and expressive component of the conductor's work remains an elusive one. Mystique surrounding the communicative capabilities of the conductor is not a recent phenomenon – indeed, the conductor has fascinated musicians, critics and the concert-going public for almost two hundred years.

Berlioz, for example, writing in 1856, spoke of the conductor's 'special talent, his indefinable gifts and the invisible link between himself and those he directs.' He continued:

His emotion communicates itself to those whom he directs, his inward fire warms them, his electric glow animates them, his force of impulse excites them; he throws around him the vital irradiations of musical art.¹¹¹

As is clear from such a poetic description, there is much in what a conductor does which defies scientific explanation. As such, there are a great number of similarly abstract descriptions and interpretations of the intangibles of the art of conducting, and a great degree of mystery still shrouds the profession.

With the advent of video recording technology gradually replacing records and radio broadcasts, however, this mysterious art can now be the subject of lasting visual documentation and consequent evaluation. A permanent visual record of a performance either commercially available or posted on the internet ensures it is available to more viewers than ever before. Given the specific purpose of such recordings, the conductor is almost always the centrepiece of the film and the camera is, almost all of the time, focussed on the conductor. As opposed to a concert performance where the audience sees the conductor from the back, we now have the unique possibility to see and evaluate the conductor's gestures as intended for the musicians.

There are, of course, a number of concert halls in which the audience is able to see the conductor from seating behind or adjacent to the orchestra – the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Philharmonie in Berlin and the Sydney Opera House to name a few. In these and such halls however, it is only a minority of the audience privy to this perspective and concert performances are a one-off event. Analysing the craft of conducting and the gestures of a conductor is a task that

¹¹¹ Berlioz, *A Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration*, 245.

consequently, can now be undertaken with relative ease because of video documentation.

Quantifying the art of conducting still presents a myriad of challenges for the intangible aspects of the art remain precisely that, and are, if anything, all the more intangible on a video recording. The vibrance, energy and atmosphere of a live performance and the rapport between conductor and orchestra can, for instance, only be captured to an extent in a recording. As the analysis which forms the centrepiece of this study will show, in spite of being able to analyse the gestures of a conductor with a great deal of precision, there is much that remains impossible to explain, a sort of mysterious 'X Factor.'

Even conductors themselves are unable to pinpoint precisely the factors, over and above the use of gestures, which inform their art. Current Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Sir Simon Rattle attempts to explain this unseen influence however he is clearly vexed by the issue explaining 'A lot is done by gesture, and a lot is done simply by...whatever this weird thing is that happens between conductors and orchestras.'¹¹²

Rattle's 'weird thing' is almost certainly the rapport, the connection and interaction between conductor and orchestra, a phenomenon remarked on by Leonard Bernstein who also highlighted the difficulty in describing the relationship between conductor and orchestra.

The qualities that distinguish great conductors lie far beyond and above... We now begin to deal with intangibles, the deep magical aspect of conducting. It is the mystery of relationships – conductor and orchestra bound together by the tiny but powerful split second.¹¹³

Bernstein and Rattle are not the only conductors mystified by the intricacies of their profession. Chesterman relates a conversation in which he asked Otto Klemperer, Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (1933–1939), why one man can stand in front of an orchestra and produce a special sound.

¹¹² Stephen Cotrell, 'Music, Time, and Dance in Orchestral Performance: The Conductor as Shaman', *Twentieth Century Music*, 2007, 3/1, 82.

¹¹³ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 148.

Klemperer's response after a long pause was 'I don't know. I don't know. This is a very mysterious thing.'¹¹⁴

Wilhelm Furtwängler, Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic (1922–1945), also had no answers.

Why does the same orchestra sound full, rich, and smooth under one conductor, and brittle, hard and angular under another?... There are orchestra leaders under whom the smallest village band plays as if it were the Vienna Philharmonic, and there are those under whom even the Vienna Philharmonic sounds like a village band.¹¹⁵

Erich Leinsdorf, Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1962–1969) was similarly at a loss to explain.

It is a very individual magic. If two accomplished conductors facing an orchestra not previously known to them were to perform the same piece of music without prior rehearsal and without giving verbal directives, the very sound of the orchestra and the music would change from one conductor to the other.¹¹⁶

From such accounts, it is abundantly clear that conducting comprises aspects far beyond the purely gestural. There seems to be some form of unconscious or perhaps more accurately, subconscious communication that occurs between conductor and orchestra. That this factor is highlighted by conductors of renown as intrinsic to the profession confirms the clear distinction between the craft and the art of conducting.

The difficulty in attempting to explain this aspect of the conductor's art is also noted by Krueger who recognises there is much that cannot be explained by words. He too is unable to offer any information regarding these intangible facets but also points out that no two conductors are the same.¹¹⁷ This may explain the enigma of why conductors succeed with certain orchestras and fail with others. As Schuller notes 'It is one of the great mysteries...that a conductor may be deeply loved by one orchestra and despised by another.'¹¹⁸ André Previn, Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (1968–1979) confirms this fact stating,

¹¹⁴ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Furtwängler in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 206

¹¹⁶ Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate*, 168.

¹¹⁷ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 169.

¹¹⁸ Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, 51.

conductors can be very successful with some orchestras and failures with others. I can't really explain this....You can see it happening within the first ten minutes of the first rehearsal and that is what is so mysterious. I never know what predicates it.¹¹⁹

These accounts highlight individual personalities as a major factor in defining the rapport between orchestras and conductors and perhaps relatedly, as influencing the sound of an ensemble. While consideration of individual differences in conductors' gestures forms a component of the subsequent chapter, these descriptions make it clear there is something above and beyond purely physical gestures which shape the conductor's art.

Support for this notion is also found in many writings on the subject. Krueger believes in the existence of an intangible quality stating, 'one cannot judge the quality of a conductor's beat by looking at it, it must be felt.'¹²⁰ To 'feel' the quality of a conductor's beat is unquestionably an esoteric undertaking, once again highlighting the fact that in addition to gesture, further elements of the conductor's art play a highly significant role.

Members of the concert-going public also recognise an added dimension supplementing the conductor's physical gestures. Lebrecht shares his thoughts from an audience perspective observing, 'one man with a physical flourish can elicit an exhilarating response from an orchestra, while another, with precisely the same motions and timing, produces a dull, unexceptional sound.'¹²¹ Another such account is relayed by Cotrell, 'it only takes this man to lift his hands and the orchestra produces for him a sound that it produces for no one else. I can't explain how or why it happens.'¹²²

This mysterious and individualised X Factor therefore seems to be a significant element in the conductor's ability to elicit a certain quality of sound from the orchestra, but also in the response of the players to the conductor and his gestures and the success of the interaction between conductor and orchestra. Carlos' father Erich Kleiber heard an orchestra rehearsing Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* under Arthur Nikisch, concurrently Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhaus (1895–1922), in which the orchestra was

¹¹⁹ Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 226–227.

¹²⁰ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 151.

¹²¹ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 7.

¹²² Cotrell, *Music, Time, and Dance in Orchestral Performance*, 82.

remarkably transformed. Kleiber was unable to understand how Nikisch in one rehearsal was able to

draw from them such beauty of sound and such ecstatic depth of feeling....where other conductors flail away with both arms, Nikisch just slowly raised his left hand until the orchestra roared around him like the sea. It was an effect of art.....¹²³

In this instance Kleiber seems to suggest it was Nikisch's use of a left hand gesture which was responsible for the resulting quality of sound and degree of emotional intensity, however to be able to do so with such conviction in one rehearsal is suggestive of a talent greater than a purely gestural one. Furthermore the description of an orchestra 'roaring around like the sea' implies energy of great magnitude and an ability to exert powerful influence over massive forces.

Similarly Krueger cites the force of a conductor's personality, the power of suggestion and the ability to unite a group towards a common purpose, noting that 'lacking this primary gift, any other talents are meaningless for the conductor. To attempt any analysis of such an attribute seems folly.'¹²⁴ Again, the difficulty in attempting to describe this X Factor is recognised but the question of what precisely constitutes the conductor's 'primary gift' remains.

Whatever this intangible quality is, it seems Arthur Nikisch was in possession of it to a great degree. A player remembered a performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 under Nikisch exclaiming,

The weird part of it (the performance)... was that we played the symphony through – with scarcely a word of direction from Herr Nikisch – quite differently from our several previous performances of the same work. He simply *looked* at us, often scarcely moving his baton and we played as those possessed.¹²⁵

Clearly then it was not only Nikisch's gestural indications which were a factor in his success. While the next chapter will examine the significance of eye contact in conducting, in this instance it seems as though there was an additional dimension of power and influence, this X Factor, exerted through the intensity of Nikisch's eyes.

¹²³ David Wooldridge, *Conductor's World* (London, Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1970), 174.

¹²⁴ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 170.

¹²⁵ Jacobson, *Conductors on Conducting*, 12.

Conversely, the look in musicians' eyes has also revealed information regarding a conductor's effectiveness. Of Carlo Maria Giulini, Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1978–1984) it was said, 'when Giulini walks into a room, there is a sense that he is different. You see that difference reflected in other people's eyes. You could see the effect he was having on the orchestra.'¹²⁶ Just what could be 'seen' in the players' eyes, however, remains a mystery although a reasonable assumption would be a quality reflecting a degree of excitement, intensity or engagement which clearly was not evidenced with other conductors.

Krueger again points out the difficulty in describing such elements, noting 'the techniques of the orchestral conductor seem intangible, impalpable, not to say mysterious.' He continues, 'most essential elements of the conductor's technique are so elusive as to defy analysis.'¹²⁷ Ewen consents, admitting 'the description or analysis sometimes defies the science of a conductor's technique.'¹²⁸ While both accounts explain the difficulty in analysing conducting 'technique' it is clear from the evidence presented that these descriptions apply to the intangibilities of the X Factor, rather than the craft, or technique, of conducting.

Critic and writer Harold Schonberg suggested the conductor's baton as the physical origin of this invisible and indefinable force but also fell short of being able to offer a viable practical explanation as to what it is and how it occurs,

From his baton, from the tips of his fingers, from his very psyche, flows some sort of electric surcharge that shocks a hundred-odd prima donnas into bending their individual wills into a collective effort.¹²⁹

The 'electrical surcharge' descriptor suggests great energy while the 'prima donna' descriptor is a reminder of the difficulties in dealing with orchestras featuring a number of strong personalities, all of whom most certainly have their own musical ideas. Indeed, the ability to influence a great number of people, coercing a multitude of opinions is intrinsic to the art of conducting.

¹²⁶ Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 138.

¹²⁷ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 25.

¹²⁸ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 16.

¹²⁹ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 16.

Van Hoesen too cited the importance of this skill. 'This subordination of the orchestra's multiple personality to that of the conductor demands qualities and capabilities which are not so easily analyzed and which are often the despair of teachers.'¹³⁰ It is the despair of teachers because while the craft of conducting can be taught, the art clearly cannot.

While none of these accounts offer an insight into this grey area or are able to demystify this aspect of a conductor's effectiveness, it is evident that this intangible quality, this X factor, not only exists, but is an intrinsic ingredient in a conductor's communicative ability. Furthermore, it is a component of music making at the highest professional levels.

This mystery has given rise to a number of fantastic accounts of the conductor as a sort of superior or supernatural being, or one at least in possession of associated powers. While undisputedly metaphorical comparisons, such descriptions are rooted in the difficulty of analysing seemingly inexplicable abilities. Ewen ponders, 'what is this strange alchemy which can make a conductor convert orchestral dross into gold?'¹³¹ While 'dross' may be a relatively harsh descriptor for an orchestra, it is clear Ewen's view of the conductor is a particularly grand and glorified one.

Similarly, Lebrecht details an account of Tchaikovsky who, on seeing Nikisch conduct reportedly exclaimed, 'he does not seem to conduct, rather to exercise a mysterious spell.'¹³² Particularly how this apparent spell is exercised and what effect it has, however, remains undisclosed. The implication seems to be one of control, presumably over the music and the musicians. Ewen confirms as much in an account of Mitropoulos remarking 'he has the magic of discharging electric sparks the moment he steps on stage. The orchestra and the audience come under his control, as if under a spell.'¹³³

The magician analogy is a favoured one with a number of individual conductors singled out by critics and writers for particular praise. Lebrecht refers to a 'magic thing' that set Toscanini and Furtwängler apart from other conductors.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Van Hoesen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 94.

¹³¹ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 7.

¹³² Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 31.

¹³³ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 104.

¹³⁴ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 2.

Scherchen agreed the conductor must be a magician and states that true command requires almost superhuman powers.¹³⁵ Lebrecht speaks of Nikisch as conquering great orchestras with the flick of a wrist¹³⁶ and possessing supernatural powers.¹³⁷ US conductor Catherine Comet also noted as a child, the apparent connection between the conductor and magic. 'When the person who stood in front of the orchestra came on stage, the magic began, and when he left, the magic ended.'¹³⁸

The most visible tool of the conductor, the baton, serves to strengthen this association. Cotrell wonders that audiences may subliminally associate the baton with a 'wizard's wand',¹³⁹ a descriptor which likewise, is employed by Lebrecht.¹⁴⁰ Erich Leinsdorf, a former Music Director of the Cleveland and Boston symphonies also recognised the symbolism that is the conductor's baton, offering perhaps the most colourful account,

The mystery of conducting is increased by its one item of paraphernalia, the baton. Reminiscent of the sorcerer's wand, Aaron's rod, the prospector's Geiger counter – in short, the symbols of extraordinary powers – it recalls abracadabra and Open Sesame... Although illusion alone could never ensure success, there is no doubt that even the best conductor owes much to its unfathomable magic.¹⁴¹

As fantastic as his account seems, it proves conductors themselves also struggle to describe the power of their influence. Leinsdorf, then, describes an instrument of immense power, however one which in spite of its influence, does not rely entirely on deception. Bruno Walter, Music Director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (1929–1933), while not resorting to Leinsdorf's hyperbole, suggested a conductor transmits spiritual impulses to the players while Sir Georg Solti, Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1969–1991) saw music making as a mystical subject and wondered 'what sort of incredible physical and non-transcendental things happen.'¹⁴² Such allegorical descriptions penned by highly regarded conductors lend much support to the observations of audiences, critics and musicians alike that conducting in so many ways, defies objective scrutiny.

¹³⁵ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 3.

¹³⁶ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁸ Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 25.

¹³⁹ Cotrell, *Music, Time, and Dance in Orchestral Performance*, 91.

¹⁴⁰ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 2.

¹⁴¹ Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate*, 167-168.

¹⁴² Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 49.

Similarly, spiritual powers are also a popular association. Small remarks on the similarity between the concert dress of orchestral musicians (men) and that of the priest, noting also they share a similar ritualistic function.¹⁴³ Religious comparisons are also favoured by Lebrecht who refers to the role of conductor as ‘leader-priest’,¹⁴⁴ recalls an account of Furtwängler again described as a priest¹⁴⁵ and writes of Celibidache’s fans who consider the conductor a musical saint.¹⁴⁶ A step higher in the religious order appears to be Stokowski, who features as a demi-god in another account penned by Lebrecht.¹⁴⁷ Even more impressive then is Riccardo Muti, allegedly ‘touched by God’, according to the concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, in the literature on Kleiber tabled in Chapter Four, a plethora of such heavenly anecdotes and accounts predominates.

This X Factor, or perhaps more correctly ‘X Factors’, then, remain the most mysterious, intangible and difficult aspects of the conductor’s work to describe, analyse and explain – a fact which has given rise to poetic yet entirely implausible descriptions. While conductors are clearly of this earth, there is much in what they do which is not able to be explained using terrestrial terminology.

¹⁴³ Christopher Small, *Musicking*, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1988, 66.

¹⁴⁴ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 203.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

The Power of Personality

Given the difficulty in identifying and describing the X Factor in clear, physical, and/or gestural terms, there is a great deal of speculation as to the component parts comprising this ability. The influence of a conductor's will, his powers of psychological persuasion and the strength of his personality have all been identified as likely contributors to the X Factor.

Cerebral function, intellectual understanding and psychology interact in the transfer of information from the conductor's mind through the medium of the baton to the performers. As such, Abbado believed Toscanini was the greatest conductor because he was able to get the orchestra to 'play exactly together with his mind'¹⁴⁹ and similarly Sir Charles Mackerras asserted that through simply thinking, he could produce an entirely different performance. Mackerras described the art of conducting as emanation or more precisely, 'how to get all those players to do the interpretation you have in your head.'¹⁵⁰ Furtwängler agreed to an extent, describing the art of conducting as one of transference, claiming however it is not one of mystical science.¹⁵¹

Such abstruse occurrences could be described as almost 'zen-like' with an indefinable osmosis between conductor and orchestra. Green suggests the baton is the conduit for the transference of energy¹⁵² while no specific information is given as to precisely how Toscanini or Mackerras succeeded in this respect. It is possible, even likely, that factors of personality assumed a leading role, as many have highlighted these traits as intrinsic to a conductor's success.

The power of personality, charisma, the ability to lead, persuade and inspire are however, difficult to articulate in concrete terms. Ewen describes an element that is problematic to describe but is one which can be,

electrically felt: an element, which we may speak of as "personality"....a magnetic personality (is) as important to a conductor as is scholarship... Without such a personality, no conductor can hope to achieve greatness.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 85.

¹⁵⁰ Jacobson, *Conductors on Conducting*, 95.

¹⁵¹ Furtwängler in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 205.

¹⁵² Elizabeth Green, *The Modern Conductor*, 7th Edition, (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2004), 21.

¹⁵³ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 9.

While Ewan does not offer any additional explanation as to why personality is an essential ingredient, we can assume it is for the reasons outlined – the necessity of being able to gather a multitude of differing opinions and unite them towards a common objective, along with the ability to inject energy and vitality to a performance.

Composer Igor Stravinsky developed a reputation as a conductor late in his career. Unfortunately, it was not a reputation indicative of his musical genius nor commensurate with his compositional prowess. In fact, it was generally acknowledged that orchestras relied to a large extent on Stravinsky's assistant Robert Craft, who at times, was known to stand behind Stravinsky and communicate basic directions and fundamental technical information to the orchestra.

On the other hand, Stravinsky was a very effective conductor. It was not because of his conducting that orchestras under his direction played very well, rather it was due to the fact that simply, he was Igor Stravinsky. Pierre Boulez explains,

His personality overcame his technical shortcomings; when an orchestra saw him arrive, they knew that this was the composer of *The Rite of Spring*, of *Petrushka*, and *The Firebird*. His personality alone inspired great respect.¹⁵⁴

Of one of the most charismatic conductors of the twentieth-century, Leonard Bernstein's success lay to a large extent in an 'incalculable personality force,'¹⁵⁵ something referred to by conductor Charles Munch as Bernstein's 'magic emanation.'¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Russian conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky, Principal Conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra (1938–1988), was also said to have conveyed his wishes by the force of his personality.¹⁵⁷

Ewan conveys an account of Dimitri Mitropoulos, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1949–1958), explaining 'he magnetizes his audiences not only with a flashing display of pyrotechnics, but also with his personality.'¹⁵⁸ Similarly, Hart believes Toscanini was a success because of the force of his personality¹⁵⁹ and Jacobson speaks of the 'inexplicable communication of personality

¹⁵⁴ Boulez, *Boulez on Conducting*, 57.

¹⁵⁵ Wooldridge, *Conductor's World*, 335.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 94.

¹⁵⁸ Ewan, *Dictators of the Baton*, 104.

¹⁵⁹ Hart, *Conductors: A New Generation*, xii.

that is central to conducting.¹⁶⁰ Jacobson's observation summarises the issue succinctly – the role and function of personality in conducting is quite simply, inexplicable.

Lebrecht suggests the power of a conductor's personality continues past the boundaries of the music and the musicians, and is a factor which extends to the audience. He explains that via a 'god-like authority' conductors are able to exert a powerful influence on a collective group of players and the audience alike. 'By some wordless impulse, an exceptional conductor could change the human chemistry in his orchestra and audience'.¹⁶¹ Of a performance of Brahms' Symphony No. 1 one critic mused 'it was almost as if Karajan himself had turned the switch',¹⁶² suggesting that the particular conductor in question also benefited from a comparable power of personality. In this account it is probable 'the switch' is a descriptor relating to the electrical-type impulse previously alluded to.

While not unanimous, there is a broad consensus of opinion that the component parts of the X Factor are inherent, unable to be learned or taught. As a result, there is a degree of support for the notion of the 'born conductor,' someone endowed with these indefinable gifts at birth.

Among elite conductors of renown, there has been popular support for this premise. Nikisch, for example, believed great conductors are born rather than 'made,' a viewpoint with which Ormandy concurred.¹⁶³ Klemperer also shared a similar opinion, stating conducting cannot be learned, nor can it be taught.¹⁶⁴ Stokowski too, believed no amount of education could compensate for one born without the necessary qualities.¹⁶⁵ Leo Blech drew a similar conclusion on watching Erich Kleiber, 'that is how it is: one day you get up in front of an orchestra, and either you know how to conduct – or nobody will ever be able to teach you.'¹⁶⁶ Bernstein too believed there is much which cannot be taught, referring to the 'intangibles of conducting, the mysteries that no conductor can learn or acquire.'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Jacobson *Conductors on Conducting*, 12.

¹⁶¹ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 2.

¹⁶² Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 13.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶⁵ Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 202.

¹⁶⁶ Wooldridge, *Conductor's World*, 176.

¹⁶⁷ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 149.

That such a proliferation of first-rate conductors share this view is arguably significant. They underline the distinction of the art of conducting as reliant on a diversity of skills beyond the purely technical, the inability to 'acquire' these necessary skills and qualities, and the unquestionable presence of this inexplicable and indefinable X Factor. Indeed it appears that the higher the level at which a conductor works, the more esoteric and intangible the qualities that are required.

Regardless of whether through personality, power, influence, charm, charisma, intangible 'electrical' impulses, osmosis or some natural inborn talent, it is clear there exists an indefinable, non-gestural medium of communication between conductors and orchestras. The specific details of a conductor's nonverbal means of gestural communication will be examined in the subsequent chapter; however, over and above gestural means, it is clear that personality and character traits play a defining role in the art of conducting and in particular, the communicative capabilities of a conductor.

Chapter Two

The Gestures of a Conductor

Nonverbal Communication: Introduction

The art of the theater, especially mime and dance, is heavily dependent upon the universal language of nonverbal signs, as is painting and sculpture...Music and song reflect the influence of paralinguistic effects. Politicians and other persuaders have long known the value of gesture in oratory, and communications research has not neglected nonverbal variables...¹

Nonverbal communication is the cornerstone on which a great number of art forms, including music, depend. The term 'nonverbal communication', as suggested by its inherent definition, is any means of communication that takes a nonverbal format. A seemingly simple concept, the field of nonverbal communication like the broader realm of linguistics, semantics and communication from which it is derived is, however, a complex and multifarious one.

There are a variety of terms used to describe modes of communication other than that which is via speech – nonverbal communication, nonverbal language, nonverbal behaviour and gestural communication. In more scientific studies the terms kinesics, paralanguage and proxemics are also used to describe aspects of nonverbal communication and interaction.

For the purposes of this study, the terms 'nonverbal communication', 'nonverbal language', 'nonverbal behaviour' and 'gestural communication' will be used interchangeably and with the same meaning. These terms will refer to any form of communication using body language and posture, active gestures, along with facial expression and eye contact. This description is underlined by a pioneer in the field of nonverbal communication, Albert Mehrabian, who advocates a similar categorisation.²

Regardless of the chosen descriptor, the area of nonverbal communication presents problems when attempting a precise definition. Benson and Frandsen recognise that 'most definitions imply that nonverbal communication is similar to verbal communication,'³ clearly indicating an opinion regarding the differentiation

¹ Shirley Weitz, *Nonverbal Communication: Readings with Commentary* (New York, Oxford University Press), 1974.

² He explains nonverbal behaviour entails actions 'as distinct from speech. It thus includes facial expressions, hand and arm gestures, postures, positions, and various movements of the body or the legs and feet.' Albert Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication* (Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company, 1972), 1.

³ Thomas W. Benson and Kenneth D. Frandsen, *Nonverbal Communication* (Chicago, Science Research Associates, Inc., 1976), 7.

between the verbal and nonverbal and the problems associated with applying an inaccurate descriptor. Similarly, and perhaps somewhat facetiously, Jordan warns 'there is clear danger in using a lot of words to describe a nonverbal process.'⁴

Nonverbal communication invariably plays a significant role in everyday interaction. Nonverbal information can be combined with speech – for example, emphatic hand gestures and tone of voice may add weight to the conviction with which an idea is communicated – or nonverbal information can be a distinct entity within itself – for example, a nod of the head to indicate agreement.

Nonverbal communication can be enacted with intent or be an unconscious reaction to a situation, for example, fidgeting, losing eye contact and becoming restless and distracted when bored. For the purposes of this study the focus will be on intentional forms of gestural communication, taken to be those representing the means by which a conductor communicates.

As has been mentioned, definitions of 'nonverbal communication' are often problematic. As Benson and Frandsen explain,

as soon as we try to define *nonverbal communication* we are in trouble – because we are attempting to define a negative entity. To define *verbal communication* is hard enough but to define its obverse, *non-verbal communication*, is almost impossible... A definition cannot tell us what nonverbal communication *is*, but only what the *user* of the term means when he or she employs the term.⁵

The meaning of nonverbal communication, therefore, is very much tied to the context from which it is derived. Depending on the situation, the same gesture may be interpreted differently – for example smiling at a party or smiling at a funeral.⁶ Similarly, identical or like hand signals of a conductor may for instance be used in another context but will not hold the same, if any, meaning because the audience for whom the gestures are intended, i.e. the musicians, is lacking.

A leading authority in the field of nonverbal communication, Fernando Poyatos, also highlights context as a defining feature in this explanation of gesture:

⁴ Jordan, *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting and Rehearsing*, 137.

⁵ Benson and Frandsen, *Nonverbal Communication*, 3.

⁶ Mark L. Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 384.

a conscious or unconscious body movement made mainly with the head, the face alone, or the limbs, learned or somatogenic, and serving as a primary communicative tool, dependent or independent from verbal language; either simultaneous or alternating with it, and modified by the conditioning background (smiles, eye movements, a gesture of beckoning, a tic, etc).⁷

Gestural communication may comprise specific nonverbal cues, the nature of which is known to a select audience, or may evidence more general and instantly recognisable signs. Some common manual and physical gestures, for example, can be recognised across a variety of cultures and ethnicities. Holding the index and forefinger in a 'V' formation is generally recognised as a symbol to indicate peace, while standing with one's hands above one's head signifies surrender or a lack of violent intentions. Lifting a hand to one's mouth is suggestive of eating while cupping hands and placing them adjacent to one's ear and tilting the head is indicative of sleep. Such gestures have been found to have a practical application in a variety of cultures.⁸

Conversely, the same gestures can have a variety of meanings according to culture – in Western culture a nod of the head can be used to indicate agreement while in Arab cultures it is used to signal a negative response or disagreement. Similarly the 'thumbs up' sign we recognise as demonstrating approval can be interpreted as rude in certain Asian countries.

Certain contexts also demonstrate, and have given rise to specific nonverbal cues. Hitchhikers thumbing a lift, for instance, use the same hand signal across Europe, Asia, America and Australia. Sport umpires and referees also use a form of coded gestural language, understood by all who are versed in it. Air traffic control signals are internationally recognised as are a similarly organised set of hand signals used by underwater divers.

Sign language is a specific set of physical gestures forming a language for the deaf in the same way it could be argued a conductor's gestures are a language for musicians. Sign language uses symbols to express syllables and words whereas a conductor's gestures express nuances of dynamics, articulation, and phrasing. As in sign language it is a conductor's hands that represent the primary source of

⁷ Fernando Poyatos *Man Beyond Words: Theory and Methodology of Nonverbal Communication* (New York, The New York State English Council, 1976), 128.

⁸ Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 13.

nonverbal signs and signals, however associated body and facial expressions and movement also play a significant role.

Indeed manual gestures, a direct means of nonverbal behaviour, have possibly the widest uses and most extensive connotations of any form of gestural communication:

When a student wants to speak in a classroom, he raises his hand. When the pledge of allegiance begins, the hand covers the heart. A soldier, upon greeting his officer, salutes. When parting at the train station, friends wave their last goodbyes. An audience gives a standing ovation. "Uncle Sam wants you", and points a finger. "Pleased to meet you", he said, while extending his hand. Such performances are routine and commonplace, so that 'handwork', for the most part, goes unnoticed.⁹

While the prevalence of nonverbal behaviour is perhaps not always recognised, the study of nonverbal communication, with all its inherent difficulties, is not a new phenomenon. As Druckman points out, 'historically, the understanding of non-verbal behaviour is one of psychology's oldest problems'¹⁰, continuing to explain that 'nonverbal behaviour is clearly an area of human conduct sufficiently volitional to qualify as problematic to predict.'¹¹

Underpinning all nonverbal communication is the fundamental element of gesture, either in the form of direct, active gestures such as hand signs and signals, or more subtle indicators such as facial expressions and body stance. Gesture itself, as well as the context to which it belongs, has also long been recognised a problematic subject of analysis.

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, in the first century AD, offers the most complete discussion of gesture from Ancient Roman times. In the eleventh book of *Institutio oratoria* (Education of the Orator), he speaks of *gestus* or gesture, in which he refers 'not only to actions of the hands and arms but also to the carriage of the body, the postures it can assume, the actions of the head and face, and the glance.'¹² Interestingly, it is precisely these aspects that Quintilianus describes – hand/arm

⁹ Deborah Schiffrin, 'Handwork as Ceremony: The Case of the Handshake', in Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (General Editors), *Nonverbal Communication, Interaction, and Gesture* (The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1981), 237.

¹⁰ Daniel Druckman, Richard M. Rozelle, James C. Baxter, *Nonverbal Communication: Survey, Theory, and Research* (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1982), 241.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹² Adam Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18.

gestures, body carriage, stance and posture, associated head movements, facial expressions and eye contact – which form the nonverbal communicative vocabulary of the conductor.

Gesture in art, particularly during the Renaissance enjoyed hitherto unprecedented focus, with the first treatises on the representation of emotions through depiction of bodily movements and facial expressions.¹³ The development of still photography during the nineteenth century saw another surge in interest before a complete revival with the development of the motion picture camera and the advent of film in the twentieth century. This new technology revolutionised the way in which the world was exposed to, and perceived, gestural communication. Even though movie frames in these first silent films were interspersed with text-filled dialogue frames, gestural communication was the principal means by which the story was depicted in these early films.

This same combination of verbal and nonverbal means of communication characterises human interaction; however, as in early silent films, it is the nonverbal communicative aspects which predominate and are of far greater significance. Knapp reports that in a conversation between two people ‘the verbal component carries less than 35% of the social meaning of the situation; more than 65% is carried on the nonverbal band.’¹⁴ The view that the influence of nonverbal communication outweighs that of verbal communication is also one shared by Druckman et al.¹⁵

While an intrinsic aspect of conversation and verbal interaction, nonverbal behaviour functions perhaps even more powerfully as an autonomous entity. As Durrant writes, ‘Gestures themselves can mean more than defined words: they have connotations.... Gesture is often more informative than words to indicate changing moods and emotional states.’¹⁶ Herein lies the centrality of gesture as of principal value to the art of conducting. Above and beyond cues, signs and signals specifying instrument entries, dynamics and articulation, the conductor’s art as a gestural one can communicate the details *between* the notes – the thought, feeling, expression

¹³ Leon Battista Alberti (1440) and Leonardo da Vinci (1507) cited in Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*, 28.

¹⁴ Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 30.

¹⁵ Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*, 20.

¹⁶ Durrant, *Choral Conducting*, 137.

and emotion inherent in the music. Kendon explains it another way, 'gesture is a label for actions that have the features of manifest deliberate expressiveness.'¹⁷

Within any form of communication, verbal or nonverbal, interpretation plays a part. Often, we glean information and form opinions based on someone's tone of voice, posture, body language and facial expressions. It is possible that two people observing another will form differing interpretations regarding the person's character, mood, and demeanour based on their perception. For example, a studied look of intense concentration and deep thought may seem to one person to suggest just that, to another it may be perceived as frustration, annoyance or even anger.

Birdwhistell observes, 'There are no universal gestures. As far as we know, there is no single facial expression, stance or body position which conveys the same meaning in all societies.'¹⁸ So while gestural commonalities exist and context largely defines gestural intent, the complexity of analysing gestures remains. This complexity lies in both the subjective nature of the analysis as well as in the interpretation. The study of human gesture is therefore a vast and complex one, and a field of research that raises issues about performance and perception.¹⁹ The aspect of perception, that is interpretation, is therefore one that must be recognised in any gesture-based study.

¹⁷ Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*, 15.

¹⁸ Birdwhistell cited in Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 44.

¹⁹ Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (Editors), *Music and Gesture* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006), xx.

Nonverbal Communication and Conducting

The connection between music and movement has been cultivated since at least classical times, most obviously through the combination of dance and music. Throughout history artists have striven to capture gestures, motion and movement in drawing, painting and sculpture while the earliest caricatures of conductors are consistent with the rise of the art form itself. During the twentieth century, the shift from music as an auditory experience to music as an audio-visual experience, along with advances in visual technology has seen a renewed focus on the association between movement and music.

Disney's landmark 1940 film, *Fantasia*, is a compelling example of music as an audio-visual experience, or perhaps more accurately, a visual-audio experience. Television broadcasts took the place of radio broadcasts with Leonard Bernstein the first conductor to present television lectures on classical music beginning in 1954. Four years later, Bernstein's incredibly popular Young People's Concert Series with the New York Philharmonic was regularly broadcast on prime-time CBS and viewed in over forty countries.

Herbert von Karajan made approximately one hundred visual recordings, an indication of an unprecedented interest in classical music via a visual medium. The phenomenon of music videos to accompany popular songs has also seen the tandem development of similar promotional videos for classical artists and orchestras, while the internet and YouTube in particular mean that these resources are not only readily available but continually evolving.

Consequently, and with the advent of motion capture technology, it is now possible to study and analyse physical movements and gestures in an unprecedented degree of depth and detail. Indeed it is visual representations and recordings that are the most popular and effective means via which a conductor's gestures can be studied and evaluated.

Most commonly associated with the domain of classical music, conducting has a variety of applications in other genres. Carlos Kleiber recommended the beginning of Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* be 'conducted' in the same manner Duke Ellington leads his band.²⁰ Carr and Hand report that Frank Zappa's band were also well

²⁰ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 238.

versed in the art of 'conducting' as they needed to be able to interpret some fifteen to twenty hand signals, 'all of which could subtly or drastically alter the direction of a given piece.'²¹

How, then, does a conductor 'conduct' and precisely what is meant by 'the gestures of a conductor'? As the outward physical manifestation of the art of conducting, any attempt to definitively codify gesture is inherently problematic. As Litman notes 'Limited research has been done on defining gesture (reviewed by Durrant, 2003; see also Garnett, 2005; Wis 1999), perhaps because of its complexity and tendency to ambiguity and difficulty in being translated into words.'²²

Gesture is not only difficult to define, its effectiveness is even more difficult to evaluate. As Bernard explains, 'No one seems able to measure the accuracy of a gesture or codify the power of eye contact.'²³ Particularly in the case of an orchestral conductor, clear gestures often need to be communicated to some one hundred or so players. To 'measure', the 'effectiveness' of these gestures, the conductor's execution of them and the emotional intent behind them is beyond any form of science, as Karpicke highlights,

The cognitive understanding of the orchestra cannot be measured directly during performance. Likewise, the individual emotive intent of the conductor may be esoteric beyond reliable systematic codification. But if the playing response of the performers is seen as contingent upon impulse of will as demonstrated through the gesture of the conductor, then the two, playing response and gesture, are linked in a comparative way.'²⁴

Perception, then, is the key. Perception on the part of the players and to a lesser extent, that of the audience, is the means by which a conductor's gestures, and thereby his 'effectiveness', are 'evaluated.' As was highlighted in the previous section on Nonverbal Communication, the subjective nature of such an interpretation must be remembered.

²¹ Paul Carr and Richard J. Hand, "Twist'n frugg in an arrogant gesture": Frank Zappa and the Musical-Theatrical Gesture Hand', *Popular Musicology Online* (2008).

²² Peter Litman, 'The relationship between gesture and sound: A pilot study of choral conducting behaviour in two related settings.' www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v8n1/vision/Litman_Article.pdf, (accessed March 13, 2012), 6.

²³ Bernard Holland, 'There's More to Conducting Than Fine-tuned Gestures' *The Ottawa Citizen*, (Ottawa, 13 August 1995), C.7.

²⁴ Herbert August Karpicke Jr., 'Development of an Instrument to Assess Conducting Gesture and Validation of its use in Orchestral Performance', (EdD. Diss, University of Houston, 1987), 9-10.

Compounding this problem, the act of conducting itself is characterised by intrinsic ambiguity of gesture. Turning one's back, in the manner a conductor does to an audience, for example, is a gesture which gives rise to a number of potential interpretations. On one hand, to turn one's back on someone may suggest a degree of arrogance or even rudeness, exhibiting a lack of regard for those on whom it is turned. Or, it may be a gesture indicating leadership and authority, suggesting that those behind follow.²⁵ Considering this particular aspect of a conductor's physical presence is an interesting point, for up until the mid-nineteenth century at approximately the same time the interpretative role was gradually replacing the original rhythmic function, conductors had their back to the orchestra and stood much like band leaders, facing the audience. As is typically the case for nonverbal communication in general and the gestural act highlighted in this example, context defines meaning.

To contextualise conducting gestures by the relevant framework is therefore of paramount importance. Jordan cautions pedagogues against an irresponsible approach, criticising the teaching of conducting gesture as a physical entity in isolation, without the relevant musical context.

...many approaches teach gesture separated from the sounds that are evoked by the gesture. Conducting is often taught as geometric gesturing in air, devoid of sound. Taught in this manner, gesture takes on a meaningless and detached role to the music making process.²⁶

The music, that is the composer's score itself, is the foundation from which a conductor's gestures are derived. Conducting pedagogue Gunther Schuller observes, 'all the physical, choreographic skills in the world will amount to nothing if they represent an insufficient (intellectual) knowledge of the score and an inadequate (emotional) feeling for the music.'²⁷ And Otranto confirms,

Expressive conducting gestures are complex and can be understood only when related to a unique musical situation. For instance, there is not one specific gesture for *forte*, but many possible gestures depending on the musical content.²⁸

²⁵ Small, *Musicking*, 79.

²⁶ Jordan, *Evoking Sound*, 97.

²⁷ Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, 10.

²⁸ Otranto, *A Conductor's Guide for Beethoven's Symphony No. 4*, 83–84.

Otranto's observation is a particularly pertinent one to any detailed study of refined gestures and conducting. Textbooks outlining the basics of conducting may, for instance, simplify *forte* to be signaled by a large gesture and *piano* by a smaller size motion, however, such an approach to conducting is merely the tip of the iceberg for there is much that lies beneath. Furthermore, to attempt to put into words a description of the gesture required to produce a certain *type* of *forte* is virtually impossible.

A *forte* in Mozart, for example, is obviously very different to a *forte* in Wagner and arguably the *fortes* found in Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 are of a very different type to those found in his Symphony No. 9. Furthermore, depending on the mood, character and musical content of a work, such comparisons and generalisations as these may even prove to be overly simplistic, with a myriad of possibilities regarding articulation, colour, shading, texture and balance presented by each dynamic marking of the composer. The specific musical content, therefore, is the inspiration and basis from which gestures are derived.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of scientific studies centered on gesture in conducting. This research has focussed on the physical and physiological components of conducting gestures and has included studies which created a conductor–computer interface²⁹ and mapped conductors' gestures³⁰, as well as those which tracked gestures and baton movements³¹. There has even been a 'conductor's jacket', worn by the conductor and designed to electronically measure his gestures, information about which is fed into a computer that generates music resulting from the gestural information received.³²

However as illustrated above, considering conducting gestures in isolation is misguided, a fact confirmed by Leman and Godøy.

Although the notion of gesture as movement is very common in modern scientific approaches, its reduction to movement as such (also called motion) is not entirely satisfying because in many cases music-related movement as such cannot be

²⁹ Shuji Hashimoto and Hideyuki Sawada, A Grasping Device to Sense Hand Gesture for Expressive Sound Generation, *Journal of New Music Research*, 2005, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 115 – 123.

³⁰ Kolesnik, 'Conducting Gesture Recognition, Analysis and Performance System', McGill University, Masters diss., 2004.

³¹ Ingo Gröll, 'conga: A Conducting Gesture Analysis Framework', University of Ulm, Doctoral diss., 2005.

³² Therese Nakra, 'Synthesizing Expressive Music Through the Language of Conducting', *Journal of New Music Research*, 2002, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 11–26.

studied without having additional knowledge of the underlying expression and meaning.³³

So while possible to map, track, follow and measure a conductor's gestures in terms of size, space, direction and so forth – essentially, all the technical and physical aspects pertaining to the craft of conducting – those gestures that supplement this basic information with the higher artistic function of communicating emotion and expression, are impossible to quantify in such scientific terms and cannot be considered or evaluated independently from the context in which they appear.

Durrant offers the following explanation for this obvious dichotomy of the conductor's gestures,

There are two essential ingredients to a conductor's gestures. One is concerned with the more "literal", giving a signal type of gesture: beating time, keeping pulse, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, indicating entries. The other is "connotative" gesture that helps to create the expressive character of the music, by following the musical phrase and providing the musical meaning.³⁴

Essentially Durrant's division corresponds precisely to the principally technical gestures defining the craft of conducting as separated from the more expressive gestures informing the art of conducting. The 'literal' gestures he describes are defined by their execution via manual means and while he doesn't offer any specific indication as to how the 'connotative' gestures are signaled, it is reasonable to assume Durrant's implication is that the conductor uses other modes of nonverbal expression – body posture, facial expression and eye contact. In fact, conductor Leopold Stokowski confirms as much.

Conducting is only to a small extent the beating of time – it is done far more through the eyes – still more it is done through a kind of inner communication between the players and the conductor. If this inner communication does not exist, a conductor is only a time beater...³⁵

³³ Rolf Inge Godøy and Marc Leman (Editors), *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement and Meaning* (New York, Routledge, 2010), 6.

³⁴ Durrant, *Choral Conducting*, 138.

³⁵ Stokowski in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 199.

The difficulty in analysing the conductor's gestural language has resulted in comparisons and parallels with other facets of the arts. MacKay, for instance, compares the art of conducting in its gestural expression to that of mime, noting that conducting gestures and mime movements often resemble each other.³⁶ Farberman too cites pantomime in attempting to analyse the conductor's method of nonverbal communication.

The technique of conducting...concerns the ability to create sound, line, and meaning with physical motion. The baton, the hand, the body, and the eyes – all without words and explanation – must achieve a subtle and differentiated result. Conducting is an elaborate ritual of pantomime, whose underlying grammar is recognized by musicians the world over. The moves made by the conductor are complex and traditional. And at the same time universal and entirely susceptible to personalization.³⁷

Cotrell, on the other hand, wonders that perhaps these complex gestures could better be classified as a type of dance because 'their work is obviously purposeful, intentionally rhythmic, and culturally patterned, and comprises non-verbal movements that are not ordinary motor activities.'³⁸

Indeed the complexity and variety of a conductor's nonverbal powers of communication has been noted by many, and Meier has even coined the term *cosmetics* to group together a conductor's signals, facial expressions, and posture.³⁹ As Schuller explains,

the eyes, the facial expression, indeed the whole demeanour of the body, are important, even crucial expressive elements of the art of conducting... they are far too personal, too subtle, too diverse, to permit any coherent generalizations or suggestions.⁴⁰

The analogies of mime or gesture or the term *cosmetics* all highlight the point that the conductor's communicative vocabulary is a silent one and very much a physical one, encompassing the entire body as a mode of emotional expression. Aside from physical bodily movements, facial expressions and eye contact play a central role in

³⁶ Gillian MacKay, 'Mimes and Conductors: Silent Artists', *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 5, May 2008, 24.

³⁷ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, viii–ix.

³⁸ Cotrell, *Music, Time, and Dance in Orchestral Performance*, 79.

³⁹ Gustav Meier, *The Score, the Orchestra, and the Conductor* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), 342.

⁴⁰ Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, 59.

the communicative process. A conductor's armory of manual gestures is also a primary factor in disseminating basic technical and musical information.

Beethoven's failure as a conductor is well documented but behind his somewhat unorthodox and violent gestures, he used his body as the primary vehicle to convey his will to the players.⁴¹ Saito points out that 'a conductor makes a major impression on the audience through the motion of his body'⁴² although it should be noted that ideally, it is the players on whom the conductor should make a major impression through his body movements. Indeed, the conductor's use of his body – its posture and movement – is a primary element of his nonverbal expressive vocabulary.

Busch also believes the conductor's body, along with his baton, 'must show *nonverbally* all the majesty and grandeur, grace and eloquence, which music is capable of expressing.'⁴³ He recommends using a combination of conducting gestures and nonverbal body and facial expressions to convey what is intended.⁴⁴ Indeed, Busch's description exemplifies the central principle of the art of conducting. The manual gestures provide basic technical and musical information, these being combined with modes of physical expression which strengthen the musical interpretation by transmitting additional emotional and expressive information.

A conductor's hands are traditionally considered the primary vehicle for the dissemination of musical information. These manual gestures of the conductor represent the most obvious physical demonstration of his craft, however as has been noted above, hand signals do not exclusively reflect the art of conducting. Rather, they are a prerequisite to, and a platform for, artistic expression, much in the same way, for instance, good intonation and a sound bow technique are necessary for string players.

Bailey observes, 'Conducting becomes an art when the conductor is able to express the intent of the composer through gesture',⁴⁵ and conducting pedagogue Max Rudolf explains,

⁴¹ May, *Behind the Baton*, 14.

⁴² Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, 217.

⁴³ Brian R. Busch *The Complete Choral Conductor* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984), 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁵ Bailey, *Conducting*, 91.

To obtain an artistic result the conductor must be able to communicate nuances in dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and general expression.... the appropriate gesture to elicit from the players the desired response must be mastered before we can actually speak of *conducting*.⁴⁶

A conductor's ability to communicate therefore hinges largely on the successful use of nonverbal modes of communication. In rehearsal it is possible, and indeed necessary, to issue some information by way of verbal explanation. However as has been reported, nonverbal communication represents a more effective and efficient means of communication. Furthermore, stopping and starting orchestras to issue verbal instructions can be a time-consuming process, making the importance of clear gestures a logistical tool, along with their recognised function of demonstrating musical and expressive intent. Sir Adrian Boult warned, 'never stop the choir and orchestra to say what you can show with a gesture'⁴⁷, a sentiment also echoed by Nowak and Nowak.⁴⁸

The specific facets of a conductor's gestural communicative repertory – body posture, manual gestures, facial expression and eye contact – will be subsequently examined in detail. The cumulative effect and interaction of these non-verbal modes of communication combine to present a definitive and often lasting overall impression.

It ordinarily takes about fifteen minutes for an orchestra faced with a new conductor to determine whether he is a poseur, a phony, a routinier, a good musician or a great one, a negative personality or a forceful one who will impress his ideas over any kind of opposition.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting*, xv.

⁴⁷ Sir Adrian Boult, *A Handbook on Conducting Technique* (Oxford, Hall the Printer Ltd., 1937), 23.

⁴⁸ Nowak and Nowak *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 1.

⁴⁹ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 17.

Posture, Body Language and Movement

We have all met someone who exudes confidence and demands respect from the moment they walk into the room. What is it about these people that say “I am confident”, “I know what I am doing”, “Follow me”? On the other hand why do others give off a sense of uncertainty, shyness, or lack of confidence even before they speak a word?⁵⁰

The questions raised by these observations are central to the area of body language. In what is a very physical profession⁵¹, a conductor’s posture, stance and physicality form part of their repertory of gestural communication, conscious or unconscious. There has been a great deal written regarding these gestural aspects and, in particular, the importance of posture in establishing authority, exuding confidence and communicating leadership.

When we observe someone’s body posture, their way of moving and any associated motions, it is possible to glean a great deal of information from the manner in which they carry themselves. As Kistner explains ‘For example, the act of walking can be done in more than one way. By simply analyzing and describing a person’s physical gait, one can gain insight into the person’s mood, whether angry, sad, happy, etc.’⁵² Druckman too, explains that body movements ‘indicate broad “psychological states”’.⁵³ These remarks are particularly relevant ones in terms of conducting.

Elevated on a podium and the sole musician facing a large ensemble, the conductor, in a position of authority, is the subject of heightened visual attention. Given that the players’ task in interpreting the conductor’s manual gestures is an observational one, it is presumable that their awareness of all his forms of associated nonverbal communication is intensified, particularly during performances. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that musicians, by way of this observational practice, have developed a greater sensitivity to a conductor’s nonverbal cues.

⁵⁰ Andy Kistner, ‘How Physical Gesture can Influence Expressiveness and the Perception of Emotion in Music An Overview & Comparison of Dalcroze Eurhythmics and Laban Movement Analysis.’ [http://web.me.com/tbrimmer/Dr. Tim Brimmer/Psyc_of_Music_files/Dalcroze-Laban%20Term%20Paper.pdf](http://web.me.com/tbrimmer/Dr._Tim_Brimmer/Psyc_of_Music_files/Dalcroze-Laban%20Term%20Paper.pdf), (accessed March 29, 2012), 1.

⁵¹ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 49.

⁵² Kistner, *How Physical Gesture can Influence Expressiveness and the Perception of Emotion in Music*, 1.

⁵³ Druckman et al, *Nonverbal Communication*, 65.

In the first instance, the most obvious nonverbal information is transmitted via the conductor's body. Traits such as confidence, authority and leadership, all proven to be associated with successful conductors, can be clearly exhibited via body language. As Busch explains

Posture transmits the positiveness, strength, and self-confidence of the conductor to the ensemble. The stance should thus appear solid, but not overly forced or locked into position... Your posture must show you are in command of the situation, that you know what to do. As a conductor you are a leader... Your posture alone can do much to communicate this sense of leadership.⁵⁴

The general consensus for conductors is along these lines. The majority of writers advocate an upright, erect and tall position in order to command authority. Green is of this opinion, highlighting poise, dignity, and sincerity as desirable qualities to exhibit.⁵⁵ Meier too, recognises that communication from an erect position is the most effective,⁵⁶ and similar views are held by Phillips⁵⁷, Lumley and Springthorpe⁵⁸ and Maiello, who draws a parallel between the posture of a conductor on the podium to commanding military officers.⁵⁹

Maiello recommends it is important to 'exhibit a positive, welcoming approach via fluid body motion, a secure centered stance, erect posture, displaying confidence with a distinct purpose in mind.'⁶⁰ Hunsberger and Ernst also emphasise giving a general impression of confident leadership, however they highlight artistic elegance as an important factor in considering posture and general stance.⁶¹ The requirement to demonstrate 'fluid body motion' and particularly to display 'artistic elegance' adds additional dimensions to the conductor's body language. Again, it is far easier to recognise and define what is meant by an upright, erect stance than, for example, 'artistic elegance' and 'fluid body motion.'

Arguably, the essential requirement of a commanding, erect posture is a practical consideration, one largely associated with the craft of conducting. Aside from the necessity of being seen by the whole ensemble, demonstrating convincing

⁵⁴ Busch, *The Complete Choral Conductor*, 3-4.

⁵⁵ Green, *The Modern Conductor*, 12-13.

⁵⁶ Meier, *The Score, the Orchestra, and the Conductor*, 343.

⁵⁷ Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 6.

⁵⁸ Lumley and Springthorpe, *The Art of Conducting*, 91.

⁵⁹ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 11.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Donald Hunsberger and Roy E. Ernst, *The Art of Conducting* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 2.

authority and clear musical cues via gestures is required in order to ensure the orchestra play together in a cohesive manner. To enhance this basic function, imbuing all gestures with artistic meaning, is an aspect central to the art of conducting.

Bailey, on the other hand, focuses on another aspect of the art of conducting in his observation that posture and stance communicate energy to the ensemble.⁶² This point regarding the communication of energy to the orchestra is an essential one. Another function above and beyond that of basic ensemble is that of being able to inspire and enthuse the players, to unite them towards a common artistic goal, something which is not possible with anything less than an entirely energised approach.

So combined with general body posture, the stance of the conductor is also of great importance. Nowak and Nowak, for example, point out that standing with the right foot forward 'creates a much stronger and more dominant position as it brings the right shoulder and arm more forward.'⁶³ Stance and the position of a conductor's feet, along with where he stands on the podium also offer gestural clues. Standing further forward, closer to the orchestra, for example, reflects a very different attitude and approach to the music than stepping back, away from the musicians, as Bailey elucidates,

Posture can also be used to cause the ensemble, to create different sounds. If a conductor steps or leans towards the ensemble, the players will generally increase the intensity of the sounds and/or get louder.⁶⁴

This observation regarding posture is not limited exclusively to conductors, as Mehrabian reports. He explains that leaning forward conveys a more positive impression than a reclining position.⁶⁵ Similar to Nowak and Nowak's observation regarding the positioning of the body, Mehrabian observed that when shoulders and legs are turned in the direction of another person, they become more engaged.⁶⁶ This mode of communication is a particularly effective one for conductors. When wishing to communicate specifically with the first violin section, for example, modifying

⁶² Bailey, *Conducting*, 10.

⁶³ Nowak and Nowak, *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 3.

⁶⁴ Bailey, *Conducting*, 12.

⁶⁵ Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

posture and stance so as to direct attention towards them results in a more efficient means of direct communication.

Mehrabian also reports that open-arm gestures are considered warm and accepting whereas closed-arm positions are considered cold and rejecting.⁶⁷ Again, this point is a central one for conductors and one directly observable in this study of Kleiber's performance. The position of a conductor's arms has a direct correlation with the type of sound the orchestra produces. Wide, open arms will result in a relaxed and expansive sound, whereas hands and arms more centered around the body will not.

Indeed, when speaking of a conductor's hand and arm gestures, it is impossible to dissociate these entirely from his body. Depending on the particular conductor, we may see a very active torso with relatively little leg movement; a body which is, in its entirety, the physical manifestation of the music; or a conductor whose precise manual gestures do not result in a great deal of associated body motions. As such, depending on the individual conductor, certain aspects of nonverbal communication may assume a more or less important role however all are at play to some degree.

So while possible to observe varying degrees of body involvement, other physical tools such as facial expression and eye contact also form a very important part of a conductor's repertory of nonverbal cues. As May reports, 'One looks at the conductor, the whole man. The message comes from the balls of his feet, right through to the top of the head, not just what he does with his hands.'⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*, 24.

⁶⁸ May, *Behind the Baton*, 8.

Facial Expression and Eye Contact

When we want to know what someone is thinking, how they are feeling, or what they might do, the first place we frequently look is to their face. This makes considerable sense because the human face is capable of generating expressions associated with a wide range of affective states; the grimace of pain, the sneer of contempt, the glare of anger, the averted eyes of shame, the wide-eyed look of surprise, the intent stare of interest, the quizzical look of puzzlement, the frozen stare of terror, the radiant smile of joy, the sly grin of mischief, and much more, all emanate from the face. Indeed, it could be argued that the face has the only skeletal muscles of the body that are used, not to move ourselves, but to move others.⁶⁹

The importance of facial expressions and eye contact ranks extremely highly in nonverbal communication. In terms of the art of conducting, it is the ability to indicate and convey states of emotion via facial expressions and through eye contact which is particularly relevant. Researchers Russell and Fernandez-Dols explain 'The face is the key to understanding emotion, and emotion is the key to understanding the face.'⁷⁰ Druckman⁷¹ and Knapp⁷² also report that facial expressions are a reliable communicator of emotional states.

Maiello similarly outlines the role of facial expressions in conducting,

The use of facial expression in conducting is the most personal of all gestures as the face generally reflects what is in the heart. The face is one of the most basic and powerful means of communication....The ability of the face to express sensitive feelings and emotions is equivalent to "wearing one's heart on a shirt sleeve".⁷³

The physiognomy of facial expressions or 'face-reading' has been around since antiquity, with examples found in ancient Egypt, Arabia and China.⁷⁴ In more recent times, Charles Darwin's studies and observations of human facial expressions marked the birth of modern anthropological investigations into the area. The emotions and expressions communicated by the face are many and varied, with

⁶⁹ Craig A. Smith and Heather S. Scott, 'A Componential Approach to the Meaning of Facial Expressions', in James A. Russell and José Miguel Fernández-Dols, *The Psychology of Facial Expression* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229.

⁷⁰ Russell and Fernández-Dols, *The Psychology of Facial Expression*, 3.

⁷¹ Daniel Druckman et al, *Nonverbal Communication: Survey, Theory, and Research*, 52.

⁷² Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 285.

⁷³ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 68.

⁷⁴ Alan J. Fridlund, *Human Facial Expression* (San Diego, Academic Press, 1994), 2.

Knapp reporting it is estimated that the muscles of the face are able to produce some twenty thousand facial expressions.⁷⁵

Communication via the medium of facial expressions is a very efficient means of transmission for it is possible to communicate a great deal of information in a short space of time.⁷⁶ Knapp also reports that it is the primary source of information next to human speech.⁷⁷ In an environment where nonverbal communication is the sole means, the information transmitted via a conductor's facial expressions therefore is of primary importance.

In one study, Fuelberth reported that singers were uncomfortable with a conductor's neutral facial expression because they relied heavily on his face for guidance.⁷⁸ Durrant relays an account in a similar vein where during a professional rehearsal of *La Bohème*, the conductor became increasingly irritated with the singer who was unable to sing the phrase as desired, and this irritation was reflected by his facial expressions. After a while he demanded to know, 'Why can't you sing this beautifully?' to which she replied 'How can I possibly sing this beautifully when you are making such an ugly face?'⁷⁹ In both these instances it is difficult to know whether the conductor was aware of the impact of his facial expressions on the singers, however it is clear that on both occasions, the singers clearly had different expectations regarding the information they were hoping to glean from looking at the conductor's facial expressions. As MacKay reminds us,

Conductors need to appreciate how much our face and eyes mean to the ensemble. The potential for clarity and richness of communication is immediately magnified when the conductor's face and eyes are visible to the group.⁸⁰

A principal component of nonverbal communication via facial expressions is that of eye contact. Recognised as a most compelling and highly effective means of communication, eye contact can suggest, imply, demand or dictate.

⁷⁵ Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 199.

⁷⁶ Robert G. Harper, Arthur N. Wiens and Joseph D. Matarazzo *Nonverbal Communication: The State of the Art* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1978), 77.

⁷⁷ Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 263.

⁷⁸ Rhonda J. Vieth Fuelberth, 'The Effect of Various Left hand Conducting Gestures on Perceptions of Anticipated Vocal Tension in Singers', *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* 2(1), 2004, 37.

⁷⁹ Durrant, *Choral Conducting*, 106.

⁸⁰ Gillian MacKay, 'Mimes and Conductors: Silent Artists', *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 5, May 2008, 24.

Eye contact is one of the most direct and powerful forms of nonverbal communication. Authority relationships and sexual encounters are examples of interactions which are often initiated and maintained through visual communication.⁸¹

Especially in terms of establishing authority and exhibiting leadership, eye contact, therefore, is a particularly valuable tool for the conductor. Furthermore, the emotional content of the music can perhaps be most accurately reflected by the look in the conductors' eyes.

Eye contact also occupies a very practical facet of the craft, for example, looking at players to cue them for an entry. Numerous conducting handbooks and student texts focus on the basic function of eye contact, highlighting its importance, particularly in order to commence a performance. Bailey identifies the need to make eye contact with the musicians prior to commencing the preparatory gesture⁸² while Phillips suggests to hold eye contact with the ensemble throughout the preparatory gesture and downbeat of the music,⁸³ and Labuta also insists on maintaining visual contact through the downbeat.⁸⁴

Farberman cites direct eye contact between conductor and performer as the most powerful form of contact and speaks of performances conducted entirely with the eyes.⁸⁵ Krueger believes the eyes are more effective than the hands,⁸⁶ while May also wonders whether eye contact is more powerful than the conductor's beat⁸⁷ and Casals maintains one look is all that is needed in order to establish the relationship between conductor and orchestra.⁸⁸

These instances of eye contact highlighted above are predominantly practical. In order to address someone or gain their attention, there is a far greater likelihood of a response, and indeed a favourable one, if they are engaged via eye contact, and the same holds true for an orchestra comprising a large group of people. Scherchen, for example, offered very specific advice to the conductor regarding the use of eye

⁸¹ Weitz, *Nonverbal Communication: Readings with Commentary*, 16.

⁸² Bailey, *Conducting*, 18.

⁸³ Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 19.

⁸⁴ Labuta, *Basic Conducting Techniques*, 9.

⁸⁵ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, 10. One such example of a performance conducted exclusively with the eyes is that of Leonard Bernstein conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in a performance of Haydn's Symphony No. 88, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlv6ZkiJHcM>, (accessed March 29, 2012).

⁸⁶ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 169.

⁸⁷ May, *Behind the Baton*, 8

⁸⁸ Casals in Bamberg, *The Conductor's Art*, 150.

contact. 'The eyes should be kept quite free, alert, and ready, for they must watch, help, indicate, and encourage the players, and keep the conductor in touch with every one of them.'⁸⁹ While impossible for one person to make eye contact with one hundred simultaneously, the conductor's gaze needs to be suitably comprehensive, able to survey, and communicate with a vast sea of faces.

This communication between conductor and orchestra via visual means is obviously reciprocated, as players need to watch the conductor. Conductors are acutely aware of the necessity for players to engage visually and in an extreme example, Ormandy recounts a story of Stokowski, then Music Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, suddenly and deliberately changing tempi, even in performance, to ensure all players watched the conductor.⁹⁰

Much has been made of the visual interaction between conductor and orchestra by Scherchen who believed eye contact was the measure by which a conductor's effectiveness could be gauged. 'The degree of intimacy of his relations with his players during performance...will be the measure of his efficiency as a conductor.'⁹¹ Presumably Scherchen's premise for this assessment was that effective connection between the conductor and musicians resulted in an accurate reflection of the conductor's musical wishes.

Aside from the practical functions of establishing tempo, guaranteeing ensemble and cueing, Toscanini's son claimed his father was able to exercise another practical function of the craft via eye contact. 'He could balance the orchestra... just by saying a few words, doing it always with his eyes. He could tell men what he wanted with his eyes.'⁹² To balance an orchestra solely with eye contact seems a dubious claim – it is difficult to imagine precisely how Toscanini could have done this without the support of at least some manual gestures and perhaps even verbal instruction. In any case, the power and effectiveness of Toscanini's use of eye contact is not in question.

Like many great conductors, Toscanini conducted more with his eyes than his hands...for Toscanini's eyes were like burning coals, holding his musicians totally in

⁸⁹ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 187.

⁹⁰ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 114.

⁹¹ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 15.

⁹² Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 115.

their sway, through their intense concentration, energizing the music in a way that I never felt quite so powerfully with anyone else.⁹³

Toscanini explained to Abbado the reason eye contact is of fundamental importance in conducting. 'With the expression of the eyes, it is very important to communicate the expression of the music.'⁹⁴

This use of eye contact to communicate the emotional and expressive content of the music is central to the art of conducting. As Nowak and Nowak explain 'If the conductor has an expressive image of the music...it will be reflected in the eyes.'⁹⁵ May made a similar point in describing Wagner's conducting, saying that the whole concept of the work was reflected in his face, that everybody hung on his look and that he seemed to be looking at everybody at the same time.⁹⁶ Knapp points out that eyes 'provide us with a good deal of information about the emotion being expressed'⁹⁷ and Italian maestro Guilini also observed 'so much information comes through the eyes.'⁹⁸ Because the concepts of 'an expressive image of the music' or 'whole concept of the work' are entirely intangible ones, a precise scientific assessment or evaluation of this expressive information conveyed via the use of eye contact, like so many of the facets comprising the art of conducting, is impossible.

Ideally the conductor should know the score as well as possible in order to maximise eye contact with the players.⁹⁹ Conducting by memory has been suggested as an approach to enhance a conductor's eye contact with players. Saito, for example, advocates conducting from memory so as to maximise eye contact.¹⁰⁰ Meier points out that conducting from memory results in increased eye contact with the musicians and hence, 'facilitates sharing the emotional impact of the music.'¹⁰¹ Maiello too, focuses on the musical content afforded by eye contact, 'Visual communication...is absolutely mandatory for maximum phrasing and sensitivity to occur.'¹⁰²

⁹³ Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, 60.

⁹⁴ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 82.

⁹⁵ Nowak and Nowak, *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 2.

⁹⁶ May, *Behind the Baton*, 143.

⁹⁷ Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 300.

⁹⁸ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 62.

⁹⁹ Nowak and Nowak *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, 215.

¹⁰¹ Meier, *The Score, the Orchestra, and the Conductor*, 341.

¹⁰² Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 82.

Conducting by memory or as close to it as is possible, then, has a dual function. A thorough knowledge of the score will result in the conductor being able to offer the musicians much practical assistance regarding cueing and other elementary functions. Furthermore, once liberated from the constraints of the score, the conductor is free to convey expressive content of the music uninhibited. It should be noted that this last point regarding emotional expression of the score is a highly artistic function, and one which requires far more than memory for the notes on the page. Carlos Kleiber, for instance, always conducted from memory.

Manual Conducting Gestures

Gestures do not make sound, but then, neither do notes on a page. And in their primitive way, certain gestures do correspond to music: pointed, crisp movement suggesting shortness, smooth, horizontal movement indicating length; the big gesture indicating loudness or intensity or slowing down, the small gesture the opposite.¹⁰³

The most recognisable aspects of the conductor's work are manual gestures, however as the use of the adjective 'primitive' in the above description indicates, there is a great deal more to conducting gestures than these fundamental hand signals.

In the first instance, hand gestures are responsible for the transference of essential information regarding tempo, ensemble, entries, dynamics and articulation. Using a standardised set of conducting patterns, the conductor generally beats time with a baton in his right hand while the left gives additional information as to the musical and expressive content. This formulaic model is, however, simply that. As this study of Kleiber will show, there are no set rules determining the type of manual gestures used when and how.

The majority of orchestral conductors use a baton; the majority of choral conductors do not, preferring to shape the sound with their hands alone. The reasons for the use of the baton in orchestral contexts are largely practical. As Ewen observes, 'tempo and rhythm can be articulated more precisely and graphically with a stick than with bare hands',¹⁰⁴ a factor of greater significance when dealing with a large instrumental ensemble. A baton offers greater clarity due to a tiny tip which focusses and magnifies the beat, and, as an extension of the conductor's arm¹⁰⁵, the baton has an added advantage in making it is easier for a large group of players to see,¹⁰⁶ particularly helpful to those seated a distance from the podium.

The use of the baton plays a leading role in all orchestral contexts. Arguably however, the set of basic principles underlying manual conducting technique, that is the craft of conducting, is of significantly more direct relevance to conductors working in domains other than the exclusively professional. Professional musicians have a

¹⁰³ Holland, *There's More to Conducting Than Fine-tuned Gestures*, C.7.

¹⁰⁴ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Meier, *The Score, the Orchestra, and the Conductor*, 6.

great deal of experience in reading and interpreting a conductor's gestures, meaning they are far more likely to be able to come to terms with subtle, non-orthodox and unfamiliar gestures, the primary function of which is a musical one. Such experience, however, is outside the realm of the majority of community and student musicians, most of whom rely on a clear and familiar set of standardised conducting patterns in order to feel comfortable. Furthermore, the level of artistic nuance and expressive subtleties in a professional setting are defined by this environment.

This fact is recognised by Long who points out that a conductor's repertory of manual gestures are context-specific. He suggests an uncomplicated conducting style will get best results when working with an amateur orchestra recognising that when working with experienced professional musicians, a conductor is afforded greater freedom in baton technique.¹⁰⁷ Kleiber's performance of the *Fledermaus Overture* is the consummate exemplification of such freedom, which extends beyond baton technique to liberate his every means of gestural expression.

Consequently, in the professional orchestral context that defines the art of conducting, the view of the conductor as a mere time-beater is a very primitive one.¹⁰⁸ While the dissemination of rhythmic information via manual directives remains a prerequisite, elements other than purely technical considerations influence this aspect of the conductor's function. A great deal of musical information can supplement time-beating gestures when executed by skilled professionals. As Krueger highlights, 'Time beating not only echoes the pulse of the music, but it can serve – in expert hands – to delineate melodic and formal contours and to convey accent, stress and relaxation.'¹⁰⁹

At this advanced level, expressive information can, and indeed must, also be purposefully communicated via time-beating signals. Van Hoesen observes, 'Beats in themselves are meaningless and must be adapted to musical expression,'¹¹⁰ explaining that 'all beats derive their size and character from the musical feeling of the sound being produced.'¹¹¹ As the evidence presented in the previous section demonstrates, the most effective gestures reflecting feeling and expression are not manual conducting gestures but those relating to facial expression and body

¹⁰⁷ Long *The Conductor's Workshop*, 68.

¹⁰⁸ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 151.

¹⁰⁹ Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor*, 150.

¹¹⁰ Van Hoesen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

language. As has been explained, however, any assessment of the art of conducting is contingent on considering the cumulative gestural channels of communication.

Aspects of manual indications such as the size and shape of the beat can be analysed in more absolute terms, offering a degree of insight into the broader function of hand gestures in a musical, more so than an artistic, context. In particular, dynamics and articulation lend themselves to observation and description. Varying the size of gestures is an effective communicative tool and is one which most often corresponds to dynamic indications. Perhaps in an oversimplification, large gestures are commonly associated with *forte* and smaller ones with *piano*, with the relative size of gestures indicating all dynamic gradations in between. In terms of analysing a conductor's manual gestures, size is possibly among the easiest to identify for it is clearly distinguishable.

Articulation can also be clearly expressed via manual function, particularly by the motion between the beats. Sharp, angular gestures can, for example, reflect *staccato* while a smooth, uninterrupted, flowing arm motion will result in *legato*. Phillips describes the various types of manual gestures as they apply to articulation.

Legato articulation is communicated by rounded rebound motions that flow in a curvelike fashion from beat to beat... *Staccato* articulation is communicated by angular rebound motions that move in a quick "checkmark" fashion from beat to beat. *Marcato* articulation is communicated by deep angular rebound motions that move in decisive, accented fashion.¹¹²

In terms of describing, measuring and evaluating manual gestures other than basic time-beating signals and those relating to dynamics and articulation, researchers are presented with difficulties typifying the analysis of the art of conducting. Literature offers largely anecdotal and somewhat vague assessments of conductors' manual gestures and as Wöllner and Auhagen confirm, there is a lack of empirical studies of conducting gesture due to the inherent analytical difficulties.¹¹³

As such, the majority of this study's video analysis is focussed on Kleiber's manual gestures where context and correlation to specific textual aspects of Strauss' score ensures a thorough, meaningful and relevant analysis, in a way that a

¹¹² Phillips, *Basic Techniques of Conducting*, 39.

¹¹³ Wolfgang Auhagen and Clemens Wöllner, 'Perceiving Conductors' Expressive Gestures From Different Visual Perspectives. An Exploratory Continuous Response Study', *Music Perception* 26.2, December 2008, 130.

generalised discussion of manual conducting gestures could not.

A Personalised Approach to Gesture

As has been established, textbooks offer much specific advice regarding the mechanics and technical aspects of conducting, i.e. those practical facets of the craft. This fundamental gestural vocabulary of manual conducting signals is the basic tool via which the conductor elucidates his craft. Nevertheless, analysis, assessment and interpretation of these gestures can prove difficult, not only for the reasons outlined previously, but particularly because a conductor's gestures, like a person's mannerisms and general demeanour, are to a significant extent, a product of their personality. Furthermore, when considering that gestures which express the finer points of musicality and emotional intent are borne largely as a result of the conductor's personal interpretation of the score, there exists a fantastic variety of difference in the use of gestural language between conductors. As Maiello explains,

Individual personality comes heavily into focus. The personal signature of each conductor becomes extremely evident when communicating the emotional content of the music to the listener. What looks acceptable when executed by one person may be lacking in detail when performed by someone else.¹¹⁴

Individual differences in physical shape and appearance are thus also a contributing factor to this variety of gestural possibilities. For example, a solidly-built conductor standing over six feet tall would presumably have more body support by which to express a powerful *forte*, whereas a more diminutive conductor may need to rely on varied physical means and/or a different type of manual gesture. Scherchen, for example, cites differing body shapes and sizes as having an impact on the development of a conductor's technique.¹¹⁵ Similarly, women are often unable to use identical conducting gestures as men to achieve the same result for precisely this reason.

It is therefore necessary for each conductor to develop a personalised set of physical gestures with which they feel comfortable, and via which they are able to express the music and their own interpretation thereof. This sentiment is echoed by Saito who admits 'there are no rules'¹¹⁶ as well as Weingartner who warns against

¹¹⁴ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 16.

¹¹⁵ Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, 213.

imitating the gestures of others.¹¹⁷ Ewen¹¹⁸ and Steinberg¹¹⁹ also stressed the importance of developing one's own musical personality and individual repertory of gestures.

Traditionally, a conductor's right hand assumed primary time-beating responsibilities while the left was reserved to show all manner of musical nuance, style, articulation and phrasing. Arguably, it is the conductor's left hand gestures, traditionally reserved for demonstrating these more expressive musical elements, in which a greater variation between conductors can be observed. Conducting pedagogue Maiello likens the vastly differing ways in which conductors use their left hand to the variation found in personal signatures stating, 'motions and gestures are as individualistic as finger prints and openly display the personality of the conductor.'¹²⁰

The notion of the right hand as perfunctorily rhythmic and the left as the sole means of emotional content is also a point of departure for individual conductors. As this study of Kleiber will show, the left and right hands can be used interchangeably, in tandem with the twin conducting functions of time beating and conveying musical expression. Indeed this is an aspect epitomising Kleiber's style – the integration of left and right hands in manual conducting gestures, reinforced also by body posture, facial expression and eye contact to create a unique form of expression, a specific gestural language.

Perhaps in a somewhat similar vein, Steinberg considers standard beat patterns irrelevant, suggesting orchestral players expect not necessarily those recognised gestures but rather, ones that enable them to play well.¹²¹ Precisely what Steinberg means by this comment, and precisely which gestures he believes orchestral players expect is interesting to ponder, as this description raises an important point. Similarly, Bailey also recognises the limited value of manual time-beating gestures, in stating 'once the ensemble no longer needs the beat pattern, it can be abandoned in favor of more expressive gestures.'¹²²

¹¹⁷ Felix Weingartner, *Weingartner on Music and Conducting* (New York; Dover, 1969), 23.

¹¹⁸ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 22.

¹¹⁹ Steinberg in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 306.

¹²⁰ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 51.

¹²¹ Steinberg in Bamberger, *The Conductor's Art*, 306.

¹²² Bailey, *Conducting*, 101.

Inherent in conductors' gestures lies a potential degree of ambiguity regarding the interpretation, even by orchestral musicians skilled in the art of decoding such cues. As Leman and Godøy point out,

For a particular observer, in a particular context, movements may be conceived as having expression and meaning, while for another observer, even in the same context, the same movements may be conceived as having no particular expression or meaning.¹²³

Nowak and Nowak also recognise the inherent idiosyncrasies of each conductor's vernacular. 'Even though we use the same basic craft, our own individual personalities will come through its application reflecting the uniqueness of each of us.'¹²⁴ Carse too, recognises a common gestural basis between all conductors but remarks there are nuances, individual mannerisms and habits associated with certain individuals.¹²⁵

With the development of any highly personalised and idiosyncratic language, therefore, translation, clarification and explanation are often necessary. Stotter recognises this potential for a degree of misunderstanding and/or miscommunication, pointing out that ensembles need training in the interpretation of their conductor's specific repertory of gestures. He acknowledges that although there is a kind of universal language, less mainstream gestures can require a degree of education and possibly even explanation at first.¹²⁶ Busch also maintains it is essential to train musicians in the interpretation of a gestural language in order to avoid confusion and misinterpretation.¹²⁷

On the other hand, Green warns of the dangers of adopting a highly personalised approach to developing a repertory of gestures, 'namely that we do not become so "original" that our gestures are meaningless to the performers.'¹²⁸ This is a sentiment underscored by Busch who warns conductors against too significant a departure from the conventions of conducting, fearing the development

¹²³ Godøy and Leman, *Musical Gestures*, 5.

¹²⁴ Nowak and Nowak, *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*, 2.

¹²⁵ Adam Carse, *Orchestral Conducting* (London, Augener Ltd., 1935), 14.

¹²⁶ Stotter, *Methods and Materials for Conducting*, 60.

¹²⁷ Busch, *The Complete Choral Conductor*, 245.

¹²⁸ Elizabeth A. H. Green *The Modern Conductor* 6th Ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1997), 152.

of a 'nonverbal language which nobody understands.'¹²⁹ Saito also warns of using unfamiliar gestures which players will not be able to interpret.¹³⁰

Again, it is difficult to know precisely what Green, Busch and Saito have in mind when they refer to gestures that are meaningless, unfamiliar and result in an indecipherable language. One can reasonably assume they speak of the broader categories of expressive physical gestures referred to, rather than standard right hand time-beating gestures in which there is limited scope for misinterpretation. Busch's reminder 'not to stray too far from the conventions of conducting'¹³¹ also leads us to believe he is referring to gestures other than standard time-beating patterns, which can be taken as the 'conventions of conducting'.

This broader issue regarding the translation, understanding and interpretation of gestures remains a vexing one. To what extent, for example, can conductors be 'responsible' for the interpretation of their gestures? For instance, it could be that a conductor's gestures are perfectly clear and sensible however a particular player or group of players may have difficulty in interpretation simply because such gestures lie outside their realm of experience. By default, any conductor working with an ensemble for the first time will be using 'unfamiliar' gestures simply because the ensemble has not worked with the conductor previously. Saito (above) links a lack of familiarity with an inability to interpret, something that amounts to a tenuous connection. Furthermore, he does not consider the logical recommendations of Stotter and Busch regarding explaining and clarifying gestures, as well as training the ensemble to respond accordingly. Anecdotal evidence from great conductors confirms the existence of an acutely idiosyncratic gestural language and further adds to the vexing issue that is the interpretation of this language.

Kurt Masur, Kapellmeister of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (1970–1997), Music Director of the New York Philharmonic (1991–2002) and Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (2000–2007) believes that a period with one orchestra results in them developing an understanding of the conductor's gestures. 'My orchestra and I... know each other very well. They know exactly how I want the music to sound. They know what I want if I move my hand, head or eyes in

¹²⁹ Busch, *The Complete Choral Conductor*, 113.

¹³⁰ Saito, *The Saito Conducting Method*, 220.

¹³¹ Busch, *The Complete Choral Conductor*, 113.

a certain way.¹³² In saying this, Masur confirms it is the connection between manual conducting signals and other physical gestures that collectively form a nonverbal language, the vehicle by which a conductor communicates. The idiosyncratic nature of Masur's gestures is implied while it is clear his orchestra possesses the ability to respond to them – either by training, familiarity or possibly a combination of both.

A guest conductor to the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra during the tenure of Sir Simon Rattle (1980–1998) experienced a similar phenomenon, lamenting that the orchestra only play in a certain way for their chief conductor. But rather than analyse his own gestures in terms of the orchestral response, he recognised that Rattle, as chief conductor was afforded the ability to communicate in a very different way. 'He has developed a shorthand language with that orchestra that no other musician can emulate' and Rattle himself admits 'So much of the ground level is unsaid.'¹³³

Conductor Eugene Ormandy, Music Director of The Philadelphia Orchestra (1936–1980) become aware of his own idiosyncratic gestural language when engaged as guest conductor with other orchestras, experiencing problems in getting these orchestras respond to his gestures as he would have liked. In offering a possible explanation, Ormandy cited a high turnover of guest conductors meaning orchestras are exposed to a different conductor exhibiting a different gestural language, each week. Ormandy explained he had to 'start from scratch and really work with them' in order that they play his way.¹³⁴ By this statement, we can assume Ormandy meant that the orchestra interprets his gestures as he had in mind.

Ormandy's Hungarian compatriot George Szell, Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra (1946–1969) encountered similar issues as a guest conductor. Farberman related a story about Szell, whose preparatory gesture was unable to be interpreted by the New York Philharmonic. 'His wonderful orchestra in Cleveland had no trouble deciphering his upbeat: he had trained them to respond to his movements over a period of twenty-plus years. But in New York he was a one-week guest.'¹³⁵ While highlighting the individual differences in conducting gesture, these examples

¹³² Wagar, *Conductors in Conversation*, 159.

¹³³ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 296.

¹³⁴ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 117.

¹³⁵ Farberman, *The Art of Conducting Technique*, 59.

reinforce the need for players to be trained in the response to a particular conductor's gestural language.

Hart also related an account of Pierre Monteux, Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1919–1924) and of the San Francisco Symphony (1935–1952) describing the difficulties he had in communicating his renowned clear downbeat to the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, during a rehearsal of Beethoven *Symphony No. 1*. 'No matter how I tried to beat it, we couldn't begin the first movement together.'¹³⁶ Hart also described a concert by the orchestra playing the same work but under Wilhelm Furtwängler, Music Director (1922–1945, 1952–54). 'You know how his downbeat was – a sort of shudder sometimes. That's what he did, and they all came in perfectly.'¹³⁷ In these accounts of Szell and Monteux it appears a difference in gestural language related to a purely technical rather than an interpretative aspect – namely that of interpreting an upbeat and downbeat in order to establish ensemble at the start of a piece. Nonetheless, significant difficulties in interpretation and translation resulted.

Schonberg too, wrote of the process involved in getting an orchestra to interpret a conductor's idiosyncrasies¹³⁸ while Weingartner explained Hans von Bülow's orchestras in Hamburg and Berlin followed him in every detail because they knew him thoroughly. In particular, Weingartner highlighted the difficulty a conductor faces in front of an unfamiliar orchestra, especially when he has a new or different interpretation in mind.¹³⁹

Exacerbating conductors' individual differences in gestural expression is indeed this issue of musical interpretation. For instance, two conductors with a similar musical interpretation in mind may use very different gestures to express this ideal. Consequently Maiello recognises that, 'no two people make the same exact motion to achieve similar results from the performers and/or ensemble.'¹⁴⁰ With different conductors potentially using varying gestures to express the same musical concept, the challenge faced by orchestral musicians in translating gesture into

¹³⁶ Hart, *Conductors: A New Generation*, ix.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ 'It may take years before each is attuned to the other's idiosyncrasies.' Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 17.

¹³⁹ Weingartner, *Weingartner on Music and Conducting*, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Maiello, *Conducting, A Hands-On Approach*, 65.

sound, as they perceive it intended by the gestures demonstrated by the conductor, is a highly significant one.

Regardless, Ewen believes skilled conductors can transfer their wishes to players when their gestures are effective enough and that a great conductor is capable of the same with an unfamiliar orchestra.¹⁴¹ Indeed Wooldridge highlights this precise point as defining Karajan as a great conductor: namely that he was able to communicate his artistic intentions to a strange orchestra.¹⁴² Wooldridge does however note that a process of familiarisation involving Karajan and the orchestra is first necessary. On the other hand legendary conductor Fritz Reiner, somewhat implausibly perhaps, boasted that his students having completed a course with him, are able to stand before a new orchestra and conduct a new piece without verbal explanation.¹⁴³

Such a view however, does appear to be at odds with the experiences of those conductors described above and contrary to general opinion. That conductors such as Monteux, Szell and Ormandy, arguably great conductors, all of whom worked at the highest levels internationally, experienced difficulty in the effective communication of their gestures to these world class orchestras appears to make Ewen's claim doubtful. The view of Wooldridge and others, in recognising that a degree of familiarity and understanding between conductor and orchestra is first necessary, confirms this more widely accepted view.

¹⁴¹ Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, 19.

¹⁴² Wooldridge, *Conductor's World*, 251.

¹⁴³ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 336.

Chapter Three

Carlos Kleiber

Introduction

This was the rarest of musicians, and most influential of conductors. He was a complex and self-doubting genius who never gave an interview, published virtually nothing under his own name, avoided the usual forums of public debate and scrutiny, for decades held no regular appointment, over time gave few and fewer concerts, and happily and sardonically contributed to the mystery-cult which surrounded him. For all of this he had *such* an influence on our profession, and our audience.¹

Karl Ludwig Bonifacious Kleiber (1930–2004), better known as Carlos Kleiber, was an Austrian conductor. A profoundly gifted conductor and deeply private man, any study of Kleiber's life and work seems to pose more questions than it answers. An enigmatic genius, Kleiber's renown was as revered as it was notorious. This is no doubt due largely in part to the combination of superlative musicianship, a supreme intellect, unparalleled conducting ability and great charisma alongside eccentric demands, excessive fees, a reputation for being difficult and rare appearances, all of which gave rise to a degree of mystery and intrigue. *New York Times* writer Henahan believes 'celebrity caught up with Mr. Kleiber in spite of – or because of – his reputation as a difficult fellow'² while *Los Angeles Times* critic Mark Swed explains, Kleiber was 'a conductor of tremendous mystique whose personal elusiveness made him one of the most enigmatic stars of the classical music world.'³

An alleged recluse who reportedly never gave a media interview⁴, Kleiber's appearances as conductor were also an event in themselves because as he once famously admitted to Karajan, he only conducted when his fridge was empty.⁵ Hewitt explains 'his rare performances particularly at the Munich opera acquired a legendary

¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, xviii.

² Donal Henahan, 'The Opera: Pavarotti and Freni in 'La Bohème', *The New York Times*, January 24, 1988, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE0DA113AF937A15752C0A96E948260> (accessed February 21, 2011).

³ Mark Swed, Carlos Kleiber, 74; Brilliant, Reclusive, Conductor, *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 2004, <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/jul/20/local/me-kleiber20>, (accessed December 31, 2010).

⁴ This is not quite true. The one exception was a very early radio interview which has only recently resurfaced. Recorded in 1960 when Kleiber was Kapellmeister at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, excerpts from this interview can be heard in the documentary *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*. The complete interview has also been released on a recent CD, Hänssler Profil Medien, PH11031, released October 17, 2011.

⁵ '(angeblich eine Äußerung Karajans), Kleiber, der nur dirigiert, wenn der Kühlschrank wieder gefüllt werden muß.' Jens Malte Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*. (Goettingen, Wallstein, 2008), 13.

reputation based almost as much on absence as presence⁶ and as Lebrecht muses, 'Carlos Kleiber was not famous for conducting so much as he was famous for not conducting.'⁷ Von Umbach too, describes Kleiber as 'a virtuoso of refusal and one who was more phantom than present.'⁸ In fact, the majority of the performances for which he was booked did not take place.⁹

His reputation was also one of a man who, in spite of his talents, did not like to conduct. This fact is, however, a contentious one. While Kleiber stated he only conducted when his fridge was empty, it was Karajan who interpreted and publicised this comment as meaning Kleiber disliked conducting.¹⁰ Kleiber scholar Charles Barber has questioned the validity of this quote,¹¹ while Sir Peter Jonas, a former colleague and close friend, has rejected it outright.¹² Rather, evidence seems to point to Kleiber's preference to prioritise life and lifestyle, as opposed to any dislike of, or disdain for work. Fellow conductor Michael Gielen agrees with this perspective saying that Kleiber preferred to walk with his son in the forest rather than learn a new score.¹³ Kleiber also admitted to Bernstein, 'I want to grow in a garden. I want to have the sun. I want to eat and drink and sleep and make love and that's it.'¹⁴ In apparent contrast to these admissions, Kleiber's uncompromising dedication to his art resulted in a work ethic and degree of dedication almost beyond compare.

An obsessive perfectionist of the highest order, Kleiber's extreme fanaticism and fastidiousness are well documented. Lebrecht reports that for his Covent Garden

⁶ Interviewer Ivan Hewitt in *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, broadcast 26 September 2009. <http://www.carlos-kleiber.com/res/56/transcript-of-bbc-radio-program-on-carlos-kleiber-broadcast-september-26-2009>, (accessed April 12, 2012).

⁷ Norman Lebrecht, *Carlos Kleiber: Not a Great Conductor*, July 30, 2004, <http://www.scena.org/columns/lebrecht/040730-NL-kleiber.html> (accessed December 27, 2010).

⁸ 'Er war der Maestro mit dem Nicht-Repertoire, der Virtuose der Verweigerung, mehr Phantom als präsent in der Treitmühle des Musikbetriebs und im Supermarkt der CD-Industrie.' Klaus von Umbach, Der begnadete Eremit, *Der Spiegel*, July 26, 2004. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-31617165.html>, (accessed January 19, 2011).

⁹ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, Director, Eric Schulz (ArtHaus Musik 101553, 2010), Liner Notes.

¹⁰ Carlos Kleiber, *The Telegraph*, London, July 21 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1467455/Carlos-Kleiber.html>, (accessed January 8, 2012).

¹¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 124.

¹² Jonas 'He was too serious an artist to do something like that' in *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*. Director, Georg Wuebbolt (Berlin, C Major 705608, 2011).

¹³ 'er halt lieber mit seinem Sohn im Wald spazieren ginge, als ein neues Stück zu lernen.' Interview with Michael Gielen, <http://www.carlos-kleiber.de/interview/michael-gielen.html>, (accessed January 8, 2012).

¹⁴ Carlos Kleiber, *The Telegraph*, London, July 21 2004.

debut in 1974 Kleiber spent three hours rehearsing 80 seconds of music.¹⁵ Giulio Franzetti, concertmaster of La Scala remembers a similar experience during a production of *Otello*, where Kleiber 'never rehearsed more than two or three consecutive bars without stopping, telling everyone what they had to do note by note, something which stemmed from incredible research.'¹⁶

Fischer reports famed tenor Placido Domingo remarking on Kleiber's scrupulous attention and fidelity to each and every minute detail of the score. Domingo, with whom Kleiber shared a very close association, stresses however that Kleiber's meticulousness was fundamentally borne of artistic conviction rather than any sense of pedantry.¹⁷ Sir Peter Jonas also explains Kleiber's demands and the apparent associated hassles of working with him were the result of a search for perfection and a desire to make 'truly artistic statements.'¹⁸

This desire for supreme and absolute artistic perfection had a profound impact on Kleiber in personal terms. Richard Trimborn, a repetiteur and friend of Carlos' believed 'he was a person at risk, he wasn't ill, but he also wasn't healthy, he was on the edge. Carlos, like all geniuses, was a border crosser and always on the brink.'¹⁹ Klaus König, an oboist who frequently played under Kleiber agrees, suggesting Kleiber constantly lived on a tightrope.²⁰ The frequency and polarity of Kleiber's emotional extremes have also been reported by Barber,²¹ while friend and music critic Christine Lemke-Matwey believed him to be manic-depressive.²² This tag however, was one that was rejected and resented by the conductor's son, Marko.²³

This most significant aspect of Kleiber's psyche featured profoundly in his work, as Sachs explains,

He was a tormented man, an almost terrifyingly gifted interpreter whose self-dissatisfaction eventually took the form of self-laceration. The legends about him

¹⁵ Lebrecht, *Carlos Kleiber: Not a Great Conductor*, 2004.

¹⁶ Andrea Ottonello, *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series. <http://www.carlos-kleiber.com/res/57/translation-of-transcript-of-rai-series-on-ck>, (accessed April 13, 2012).

¹⁷ 'Er ist von peinlichster Genauigkeit in jedem Detail, aber er ist es aus künstlerische Überzeugung, nicht weil er ein Pedant wäre.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 62.

¹⁸ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 113.

¹⁹ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

²⁰ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

²¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 76.

²² *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²³ Charles Barber, Personal Conversation, 25 April, 2011.

made him seem almost psychotic, and one celebrated performer who worked with him often and admired him greatly described him as "deeply sick."²⁴

Brug maintains Kleiber's self-destructive character trait stemmed from the difficult relationship with his father Erich²⁵, one of the most pre-eminent conductors of the first half of the twentieth century. Fellow conductor Claudio Abbado tells of Carlos' suffering at his father's lack of respect²⁶ and Werner reports Erich impressed on Carlos 'mediocrity was not acceptable for a Kleiber.'²⁷ He also admonished, 'Ein Kleiber is genug'.²⁸ Erich Kleiber's biographer John Russell wrote that Erich was very disparaging towards his son however he suggests this was more a result of Erich's own vanity and a feeling that the musical world didn't appreciate or acknowledge him as it should.²⁹ Whatever the motivation, such words undoubtedly had a lasting effect coming from a man described as a 'tough, stubborn, difficult disciplinarian.'³⁰

In the only interview he ever gave Carlos confirmed his father was against him pursuing a conducting career. Speaking to NDR Radio in 1960 he was asked whether Erich supported him in this regard. Carlos responded, 'No, quite the opposite. He was against the idea. He suggested I should choose a more sensible profession.'³¹ Carlos' sister Veronika verifies this claim admitting Erich initially attempted to dissuade him from a career in music, once locking the piano and throwing the key into a lake.³² However on seeing Carlos conduct, he recognised his son's talent and henceforth encouraged him. She also unequivocally denied reports that Erich was hard on Carlos, remembering it was a very happy family.³³

²⁴ Harvey Sachs, 'The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error', *The New York Times*, July 25 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/25/arts/music-the-conductor-who-could-not-tolerate-error.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>, (accessed December 29, 2010).

²⁵ 'Immer wieder hat man diesen selbstzerstörerischen Charakterzug aus seinem schwierigen Verhältnis zu seinem österreichischen Vater Erich abgeleitet.' Manuel Brug, *Eine janusköpfige Figur*, *Die Welt Online*, July 20, 2004, http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article328729/Eine_janusköpfige_Figur.html, (accessed December 14, 2011).

²⁶ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

²⁷ 'Und Mittelmäßigkeit, das schärfte er Carlos ein, durfte es bei einem Kleiber nicht geben.' Alexander Werner, 'Der Mythos Carlos Kleiber: Auf der Suche nach dem Ideal', *Partituren*, 2007, 13, 6.

²⁸ 'One Kleiber is enough.' Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 40.

²⁹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 5.

³⁰ Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, 320.

³¹ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

³² *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

³³ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

Either way, the shadow of his famous father loomed large over Carlos' life and in particular, his career. 'Erich was a monumental figure in his life, controlling and compelling, inescapable, and central to his whole way of perceiving music.'³⁴ Carlos' debut as a conductor in Potsdam in 1955 was made under a pseudonym, Karl Keller, presumably not to cause any family embarrassment, however Erich reportedly wished his son luck for the performance.³⁵

This problematic Oedipal relationship was widely reported and has been remarked on by Barber³⁶, Blyth³⁷, Goetz³⁸, Kenyon³⁹, Lebrecht⁴⁰, Laurson⁴¹, Osterhaus⁴², Sachs⁴³ and von Umbach.⁴⁴ Kleiber's biographer Alexander Werner refers to Erich as an 'Übervater'⁴⁵, a term also used by Kaiser.⁴⁶ Werner also makes mention of 'the widely rumoured dysfunctional relationship between father and son,'⁴⁷ while long-time friend and associate Charles Barber confirms Kleiber had 'very mixed feelings about his father' and reports being specifically instructed never to raise this subject in conversations with Kleiber.⁴⁸

While a difficult relationship, Barber however believes far too much has been made of it and reports it was Carlos who first raised the subject with him.⁴⁹ He also

³⁴ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 2.

³⁵ Erich sent a telegram to Carlos signed 'The Old Keller.' Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 42.

³⁶ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

³⁷ Alan Blyth, 'Carlos Kleiber: Mercurial Master of the Conductor's Art', *The Guardian UK*, July 21, 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2004/jul/21/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries>, (accessed December 31, 2010).

³⁸ W. Goetz, 'Zartheit und Entfesselung', *Zeit Online*, July 22, 2004, http://www.zeit.de/2004/31/Nachruf_Kleiber, (accessed January 20, 2011).

³⁹ Kenyon, 'Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma', *New York Times*, New York, October 15, 1989.

⁴⁰ Lebrecht, *Carlos Kleiber: Not a Great Conductor*, 2004.

⁴¹ Jens F. Laurson, 'In Memoriam Carlos Kleiber', July 21, 2004, <http://ionarts.blogspot.com/2004/07/in-memoriam-carlos-kleiber.html>, (accessed December 30 2010).

⁴² Stefan Osterhaus, 'Opern-Enigma Kleiber, Der mysteriöse Maestro', *Spiegel Online*, July 26 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/0,1518,495249,00.html>, (accessed February 14, 2011).

⁴³ Sachs, 'The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error', 2004.

⁴⁴ Umbach, 'Der begnadete Eremit', *Der Spiegel*, July 26, 2004.

⁴⁵ Alexander Werner, *Carlos Kleiber: Eine Biografie*. (Mainz, Schott, 2008), 15.

⁴⁶ Joachim Kaiser, 'Ein Vulkan am Opernpult', *Die Süddeutsche*, July 19, 2004, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/der-dirigent-carlos-kleiber-ist-tot-ein-vulkan-am-opernpult-1.435504>, (accessed February 3, 2011).

⁴⁷ Alexander Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, (Rehearsal and Performance, Overtures: Carl Maria Von Weber: Der Freischütz Johann Strauss: Die Fledermaus, 2007, DVD Liner notes.

⁴⁸ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

⁴⁹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 2.

felt 'Carlos had to put up with a good deal of rubbish about the supposed meaning of his relationship with Erich'⁵⁰ and explains,

The first and cruelest commonplace about Carlos was that he stood in the shadow, and aped the conducting, of his father Erich. Subsidized by it is the claim that Carlos' reclusiveness was an attempt to escape that shadow by creating his own, and withdrawing into it.⁵¹

This view is supported by conductor Manfred Honeck who agrees Carlos 'did not merely repeat what he had learned from his father.'⁵² Honeck explains Carlos' uncompromising work ethic was borne out of a desire to be as good, if not better, than his father.⁵³ Former orchestra manager Kurt Meister also believed Erich set the bar so high for Carlos that he tried to do everything to surpass it.⁵⁴

Barber continues, 'the second commonplace is that he suffered a fundamental antagonism toward his father, one of mysterious origin and implacable coldness.'⁵⁵ This view is also shared by another biographer, Jens Malte Fischer who also maintains Kleiber's 'father complex' was not as traumatic as is often claimed, citing instances where Kleiber was reportedly good-humoured regarding the subject. One such example was the occasion on which an audience member in Vienna mistook Carlos for his father, congratulating him on such an energetic performance despite his advanced years!⁵⁶

Despite this difficult relationship, Carlos' reverence for his father is not in question. Among Carlos' most treasured possessions were Erich's marked scores⁵⁷, he revered his father's recordings⁵⁸ and publicly acknowledged his father was able to conduct certain things much better than he.

⁵⁰ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵² *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ | *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁵⁵ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 2.

⁵⁶ 'dieses verbürgte Lachen zeigt, daß der Vaterkomplex nicht so traumatisch gewesen sein kann, wie immer wieder behauptet wird.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 20.

⁵⁷ Peter Jonas in *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Werner espouses the view Erich was Carlos' musical idol and one he continually worked towards emulating⁵⁹, while a record producer explained it another way:

The problem with Carlos is that once Erich was dead, he saw the entire musical world as a surrogate. When he cancels a concert, he is killing his father, when he conducts a great performance, he is identifying with him.⁶⁰

Otto Staindl, Carlos' doctor and friend also remembers 'most of the time he spoke about his father. He was like a god as a man and conductor for him.' He speculates that perhaps because Erich neglected him, Carlos idolised him even more,⁶¹ while director Otto Schenk too remembers Carlos' blind veneration for his father.⁶²

Either way, it is probable Carlos' explicit refusal to openly discuss the subject of his father has given rise to a degree of speculation regarding their relationship. Barber confirms as much, explaining Carlos refused to talk to the press because of his ambivalent relationship with his father and because he knew they would compare him to Erich.⁶³

The clear consensus is that it was largely a troubled relationship and one Carlos struggled with throughout his life, even after the death of his father. Furthermore, it appears at least to a degree to have been a significant contributing factor in shaping Carlos' character and informing his relationships with others, as well as influencing his approach to work. This view is supported by Theodor Lessing who claimed Kleiber's 'extreme attitude was by no means play acting or put on, rather it was the natural protective mechanism of an injured yet all-pervading soul which was unable to thrive in normal, everyday life.'⁶⁴

Noted soprano Brigitte Fassbänder often observed a similar phenomenon in regards to his conducting. She says Kleiber

experiences the work in its full perfection so intensely in his mind, that when something goes wrong and disturbs or shatters this image, he feels a deep, sharp,

⁵⁹ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

⁶⁰ Carols Kleiber, *The Telegraph*, London, 21 July 2004.

⁶¹ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁶² *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, Director, 2010.

⁶³ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 4.

⁶⁴ 'Diese großen Attitüden waren aber nicht gespielt, sondern waren der natürliche Schutz einer verletzlichen Seele, die sich umzirkt, weil sie im Alltag nicht blühen kann.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 54.

almost physical pain...and acute misery and anguish afterwards. Sometimes, he can even stay looking forlorn and dejected for days.⁶⁵

Star director of stage and screen Franco Zeffirelli, with whom Kleiber had a very close and successful working relationship concurs. 'He is self-destructive most of the time and needs encouragement because he gets so very depressed at times, desperate like a child.'⁶⁶

Domingo also speaks of Kleiber's suffering when his intentions are not understood⁶⁷ and Weizsäcker noted his 'extreme sensitivity made it difficult to bear the imperfection of the world.'⁶⁸ Indeed, the former Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker is directly responsible for the only occasions, two concerts, on which Kleiber conducted the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Kleiber relenting and agreeing only after a personal request to perform from the German Federal President. Rudolf Watzel, a musician who played under Kleiber only in these two concerts also made similar observations, regarding hypersensitivity and hyper-nervousness as the traits which characterised Kleiber.⁶⁹

Unfortunately this sensitivity and Kleiber's insistence on uncompromisingly high musical standards above all else led to him being labeled 'difficult.' A former colleague who worked with him at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein finds the 'difficult' tag grossly unfair. 'He is not difficult... provided you understand what he wants, which is the Absolute! He was an idealist who always tried not to compromise.'⁷⁰ Goetz too defends Kleiber, maintaining he was not petulant due to any sense of vanity.⁷¹ This opinion is supported by Plácido Domingo, with whom Kleiber often worked. Domingo believed Kleiber cancelled and walked out of rehearsals 'not out of capriciousness, but as a manifestation of his overall dissatisfaction.'⁷² Another musician also

⁶⁵ Helena Matheopoulos, *Maestro: Encounters with Conductors of Today* (London, Hutchison, 1982), 459.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁶⁷ 'Kleiber leidet, wenn man ihn nicht versteht.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 62.

⁶⁸ 'In seinem Empfinden trug er unendlich schwer an der Unvollkommenheit der welt.' Werner, *Carlos Kleiber Eine Biografie*, 11.

⁶⁹ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁷⁰ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 447.

⁷¹ 'Kleiber war nicht aus Eitelkeit launisch oder im pubertären Sinne schwierig...'
Goetz, Zartheit und Entfesselung, *Zeit Online*, July 22, 2004.

⁷² Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 91.

recognised 'there was always a definite reason for what he did...even if it was his own uncertainty.'⁷³

Kleiber was particularly fearful about people observing his rehearsals, which more often than not were closed to even the closest of friends, colleagues and supporters. For his only Berlin Philharmonic performances, additional security measures were put in place to ensure nobody could sneak in and hide in the hall. Charles Barber, hopeful of being an exception to such protocol, was also disappointed when he timidly enquired regarding observing Kleiber's rehearsals at *The Met*.

I won't have any musicians – especially talented ones like yourself – entertaining themselves with my fumbling preparations. Plumbers, laundrywomen, bouncers, dealers, carpenters: OK. (Maybe!)⁷⁴

Consequently Kleiber quickly developed a reputation for being eccentric. Schudel believes 'his brilliant interpretations were surpassed only by his eccentric, often baffling behaviour,'⁷⁵ a view supported by biographer Alexander Werner who notes Kleiber's reputation for being difficult is matched only by his talent.⁷⁶ Kaiser too, is perplexed by the combination of 'daemonic talent and a daemonic inability to function,'⁷⁷ while Laurson reports Kleiber was difficult and 'almost autistic in his shyness.'⁷⁸

Famously shy and plagued by self-doubt, Kleiber's insecurities were legendary, with it being reported he once vomited on a score of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* in a typical case of pre-performance nerves.⁷⁹ During another production of *Tristan* at La Scala Kleiber bemoaned 'Why do I keep trying to conduct? I can't get

⁷³ Klaus König in *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

⁷⁴ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 185.

⁷⁵ Matt Schudel, 'Gifted, Eccentric Conductor Carlos Kleiber Dies at 74', *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A63106-2004Jul19.html>, (accessed February 21, 2011).

⁷⁶ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

⁷⁷ 'spürt man erschrocken die bizarre Beziehung, wie sie zwischen dämonischer Begabung und dämonischen Nichtfunktionieren-Wollen zu bestehen scheint.' In Kaiser, 'Ein Vulkan am Operpult', *Die Süddeutsche*, July 19, 2004.

⁷⁸ Laurson, *In Memoriam Carlos Kleiber*, July 21, 2004.

⁷⁹ Michael Walsh and Franz Spelman, 'Music: Unvarnished Symphonies', *Time Magazine*, June 13, 1983, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,952033,00.html>, (accessed December 29, 2010).

them to understand what I want. I shouldn't be conducting at all.'⁸⁰ Sir Peter Jonas also revealed Kleiber 'was always absolutely in a panic before a concert, working himself up into a frenzy of fear, panic and paranoia.'⁸¹

At the Bavarian State Opera where he conducted most frequently, Kleiber's anxiety was legendary. Prior to a performance of Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* he claimed to have forgotten to bring the score and had to be literally physically pushed and shoved to the podium, only to conduct the work sublimely.⁸² It was Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera (1971–1993), Wolfgang Sawallisch who pushed him on stage and was well used to such occurrences. On another occasion Kleiber refused to come out of his Munich dressing room, claiming if he conducted, it would have to be better than last time and this was something he couldn't do.⁸³ Sawallisch remembers 'he was extremely shy, timid, and almost never convinced of himself...he was so hypersensitive and nervous he would not go on stage.'⁸⁴

Werner Resiel, a musician in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra also remembers seeing Kleiber before a concert 'wanting to run away like a little child' but recalls 'this great man achieved wonderful things that almost came down from heaven.'⁸⁵ Regardless of his own misgivings, the public opinion of Kleiber was overwhelming. Barber cites near-universal acclaim⁸⁶ and Ioan Holender speaks of Kleiber's enduring quest for perfection describing a conductor who was the 'perfect mediator between God and mankind.'⁸⁷

Even though perfection was the ideal to which he aspired, Geitel observed Kleiber was never satisfied with it,⁸⁸ nor with his own abilities. Kaiser reports that Kleiber, at that time already a famous conductor, sat and watched Karajan's *Siegfried*

⁸⁰ Sachs, 'The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error', 2004.

⁸¹ Interviewer Ivan Hewitt in *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

⁸² '...behauptete er, die Partitur vergessen zu haben, und mußte buchstäblich ans Pult gestoßen werden – um wie ein Gott zu dirigieren.' Dieter Borchmeyer in Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 12.

⁸³ Wolfgang Sawallisch in *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁸⁴ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 56.

⁸⁵ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁸⁶ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 281.

⁸⁷ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁸⁸ 'Es begnügt sich nicht mit Perfektion, obwohl es sie natürlich anstrebt.' in Klaus Geitel, 'Carlos Kleiber traut sich wieder vor ein Orchester', *Die Welt Online*, January 12, 1999, http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article564339/Carlos_Kleiber_traut_sich_wieder_vor_ein_Orchester.html, (accessed February 3, 2011).

rehearsals in Salzburg every day for two weeks ‘in order to learn.’⁸⁹ Kleiber very much revered the older conductor and also went to consult Karajan on Strauss’ *Elektra*. The meeting was a revelation for Karajan who claimed ‘never to have learned so much in four hours as he did in those four hours with Carlos Kleiber because he had taught him the entire score.’⁹⁰

Matheopoulos notes this apparent discrepancy between personal and public opinion suggesting Kleiber’s characteristic lack of self-confidence ‘puzzles all who fall under the spell of his electrifying personality when they hear and see him conduct.’⁹¹ Great piano virtuoso Sviatoslav Richter experienced this contradiction first hand. Following a performance of *Tristan* Kleiber appeared depressed and dissatisfied. Richter relayed his thoughts regarding the fine performance and Kleiber, ‘suddenly, like a child, made a jump of joy in the air. “But then, it truly went well?”...Such a titan, so insecure of himself.’⁹²

Barber too refers to this inconsistency explaining, ‘He didn’t think he was any good. He knew full well what the world thought of him, he was well aware of the esteem in which he was held in the music profession.’⁹³ Barber suggests the reasons behind Kleiber’s self-doubt are cerebral ones when he points out ‘nothing he did ever reached what it was he had already reached in that extraordinary mind of his.’⁹⁴

Indeed, it appears self-doubt was often a major factor in Kleiber’s many and frequent cancellations. Friend and fellow conductor Ricardo Muti believed Carlos cancelled when he didn’t feel he could deliver a performance of the quality that he himself, and the audience, expected.⁹⁵ Barber too, cites self-doubt as the major reason he did not perform more frequently,⁹⁶ confirming he was ‘profoundly unsure of his own talents.’⁹⁷ Otto Staindl, friend and confidant concurs, believing Kleiber feared he could no longer live up to his own legend or standards.⁹⁸ Director Otto Schenk supports this view suggesting ‘it was an act of desperation when he cancelled...a

⁸⁹ Kaiser, ‘Ein Vulkan am Operpult’, *Die Süddeutsche*, July 19, 2004.

⁹⁰ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos* (Lanhan, Scarecrow Press, 2011), 62.

⁹¹ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 442.

⁹² *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

⁹³ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Ricardo Muti in *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁹⁶ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

⁹⁷ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 45.

⁹⁸ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010

helplessness to deal with his own success.⁹⁹ This intrinsic sensitivity became very public following Kleiber's only orchestral performances in the UK, with the London Symphony Orchestra. Critics were universally harsh in their opinion and Kleiber vowed never to conduct a concert in London again. He didn't.

In terms of everyday dealings regarding rehearsals and performances, Kleiber had little time for logistical and practical considerations. He absolutely abhorred the 'business' of conducting and hated contracts and negotiations, preferring to settle the engagement with a handshake. Celebrity for the sake of celebrity was something in which Kleiber was not at all interested, and he actively worked to avoid any association therewith. As his fame spread and he was increasingly in demand, Kleiber's response was a contrary one, rejecting offers and withdrawing progressively into seclusion.

Barber recalls the global demand for this most sought-after of conductors, Kleiber's knowledge thereof and reluctance to commit to engagements. 'He knew that companies abroad wanted him. He was not sure he wanted them.'¹⁰⁰ In contrast to the vast majority of conductors who conduct well into their seventies and even eighties, Kleiber did not conduct at all in the last five years of his life, and very rarely from 1990 onwards.

Werner maintains Kleiber's quest for optimum working conditions whereby he could attempt to realise his perfectly conceived artistic goals was the driving force behind this increasing withdrawal from concert life:

By the 1990s, his disillusionment was such that he retreated further from the music industry that continued to court him like no other, but which had ground him down in a never-ending struggle over optimum working conditions.¹⁰¹

Kleiber himself was well aware of the public consternation caused by his actions and seemed to take a great deal of joy in the situation, frequently joking about his lack of public appearances, and that he was retired and lazy.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Otto Schenk in *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011

¹⁰⁰ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 70.

¹⁰¹ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

¹⁰² In letters to Charles Barber: 'Wanna hear about me? I actually conducted something!' February 1994 p233, 'Would you believe it: I conducted!' July 1994 p238. A great admirer of the poet Emily Dickenson, Kleiber frequently joked about being her pet dog. In a letter of 1994, 'Woof, Woof, says Carlo, frantically wagging his tail instead of his baton.' p235 In 1996: 'I've given up music, incidentally. But maybe I'll still conduct. That would make me...what? A professional?' p255. In 1996 he signed a

Excessively long rehearsal schedules were a defining characteristic of Kleiber's stringent artistic stipulations. On one occasion for instance, Kleiber requested, and was granted 36 orchestral rehearsals only to cancel the performance at short notice.¹⁰³ Of this cancellation Barber explains it occurred when 'someone failed to keep their word. 'When this happened, Carlos took the view he was no longer obligated to keep his.'¹⁰⁴

Such sudden cancellations were not unusual and stemmed from artistic conditions being anything other than Kleiber's perceived ideal. As Matheopoulos confirms, 'he is a fanatic and a perfectionist who only agrees to appear when he feels that conditions are right and offer him a chance, at least, of realizing his vision of a work.'¹⁰⁵ Fellow conductor Manfred Honeck observed 'no other conductor in the world had such high standards.'¹⁰⁶ Somewhat paradoxically, Kleiber was also known to perform with very few or no rehearsals, when it was familiar repertoire with an orchestra he liked.¹⁰⁷ Aware of this apparent irony Kleiber confessed, 'either I have to have stacks of rehearsals, or none at all.'¹⁰⁸

Noted for astronomical fees and eccentric demands, Kleiber's whims were always catered to by management who were thrilled to have secured his services but nervously aware of the risks associated with engaging him. Ioan Holender, Director of the Vienna Staatsoper reportedly kept a cheque for over a million dollars in his safe, should Kleiber ever wish to return to conduct. For his 1996 concert with the Bavarian State Orchestra Kleiber requested and received 100,000 Deutschmarks and a new Audi A8 with the vehicle fitted to his specifications. When invited to conduct at Covent Garden on one occasion he insisted on a hotel with a swimming pool because he was teaching his son to swim. His son was also highly significant in what was to be Kleiber's premiere US opera production – he cancelled his scheduled 1977 San Francisco Opera engagement because he claimed he had to take his son to the dentist.¹⁰⁹ The conductor's sister confirms he would accept engagements if the

letter 'All the best from your CK who is trying, like Yeltsin, to give the impression he isn't dead!' p259. Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*.

¹⁰³ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 442-43.

¹⁰⁶ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

location was beautiful and also offers an interesting insight into Carlos' mode of operation, suggesting he considered his high fees a measure of his own importance.¹¹⁰

With such eccentricities far more widely known and publicised than his artistic ideals, it is little wonder the public view of Kleiber was an imbalanced one. Biographer Werner sums up the common perception or indeed, misperception, regarding Kleiber's motives:

This highly intelligent, well-read, sensitive, charming, disarmingly humorous, occasionally cynical and irascible man was all too easily dismissed as an eccentric, his spectacular cancellations, curiously limited discography and outright rejection of publicity often interpreted not as the expression of a profound artistic sensitivity, but as the capriciousness of an exceptionally gifted but flamboyant personality.¹¹¹

In spite of such contradictions, or indeed perhaps because of them, Kleiber maintains a premier position among the greatest conductors of all time with one commentator declaring 'this eccentric genius is the greatest conductor of all time, first among equals, despite the paucity of his appearances.'¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

¹¹¹ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

¹¹² *Austrian Conductors* (Memphis, Tennessee, Books LLC, 2010), 27.

The Dalai Lama of Music

Praise for Kleiber was universal and unparalleled. In most accounts, it seems observers struggle to find enough and appropriately far-reaching superlatives. 'Genius' seems to be the base point from which evaluations begin. Comparisons to God, and descriptions of a God-like ability abound, Kleiber was the object of divine worship from singers, players, other conductors, music business professionals and audiences alike. An Italian opera superintendant gushes, 'he was a kind of Dalai Lama of music.'¹¹³

In a recent radio documentary it was reported that Kleiber's rare appearances were considered quasi-religious events by his fervent admirers.¹¹⁴ 'He lifts the music to other spheres...He was reaching for the stars'¹¹⁵ enthused another. Brigitte Fassbänder thought of Kleiber's conducting it was 'so God-given, so utterly natural.'¹¹⁶ It seems Kleiber spent much time in, and travelling through heavenly domains. Famed tenor Neil Shicoff effused, 'he conducted as if he came from another planet,'¹¹⁷ while Barbara Bonney experienced being swept along on a magic carpet of inspiration.¹¹⁸

So marked was the difference between Kleiber and other conductors Kenyon recounts a report of a musician who stated Kleiber 'makes other conductors look like fools.'¹¹⁹ Domingo, who described Kleiber as a wizard¹²⁰, concurs that Kleiber was beyond comparison. He enthuses:

The multitude of his gifts – musical and dramatic perception, analytical aptitude, conducting technique, the means he used to convey his imagination – make him the greatest conductor of our time.¹²¹

¹¹³ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

¹¹⁴ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹¹⁵ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

¹¹⁶ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

¹¹⁷ 'Er dirigiere, als käme er "von einem anderen Planeten"', 'Stardirigent Carlos Kleiber gestorben'. *Der Spiegel Online*, July 19, 2004, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/0,1518,309368,00.html>, (accessed April 23, 2011).

¹¹⁸ Charles Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos* (Lanhan, Scarecrow Press, 2011), 56.

¹¹⁹ Kenyon, 'Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma', 1989.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ 'Die Vielzahl seiner Begabungen – musikalische und dramatische Erkenntnisse, analytische Fähigkeiten, Dirigiertechnik, die Methode, seine Vorstellungen anderen deutlich zu machen – macht ihn zum größten Dirigenten unserer Zeit.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 62.

An array of other observers also shares this view. Kleiber was ‘unique in his art, a singular phenomenon as a person and as conductor.’¹²² Virtuoso pianist Alfred Brendel, one of the few soloists to ever work with Kleiber recalled, ‘the technical talent and perfection was so staggering that no one could get near it.’¹²³ An orchestral player remembers, ‘Making music with Carlos Kleiber was incomparable. He was in a class by himself.’¹²⁴ From an opera intendant, ‘Certainly one of the greatest conductors of the twentieth century, and also something more...he represents something unequalled.’¹²⁵ Indeed, the entire literature on Kleiber is unanimous in agreeing he was peerless.

Conductors in particular, believed Kleiber was in a class of his own. Kenyon relays an account of esteemed Dutch conductor Sir Bernard Haitink describing Kleiber as ‘a genius, an extraordinary man.’¹²⁶ Haitink, then Music Director of The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, on observing Kleiber’s work in *Otello* (1990) said to Sir Simon Rattle, ‘I don’t know about you, but I think my studies in this art have only just begun.’¹²⁷

Leonard Bernstein told his New York Philharmonic colleagues: ‘I have just heard the greatest living conductor in the world — Carlos Kleiber. You owe it to yourselves to hear him.’¹²⁸ Claudio Abbado, Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (1990–2002) also concurred, maintaining Kleiber was one of the greatest conductors.¹²⁹ Karajan hailed him as a genius,¹³⁰ stating ‘he was the best of all; head and shoulders above all the rest,’ an opinion shared by Sir Mark Elder.¹³¹

¹²² ‘Einzig war er in seiner Art – eine singuläre Erscheinung, als Mensch wie als Dirigent.’ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber Eine Biografie*, 11.

¹²³ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 59.

¹²⁴ James Kreger, ‘Making Music with Carlos Kleiber, Elusive Titan of the Podium’, <http://www.carlos-kleiber.com/firstperson/?pg=2>, (accessed April 19, 2012.)

¹²⁵ Maurizio Pollini in *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

¹²⁶ Kenyon, ‘Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma’, 1989.

¹²⁷ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 37.

¹²⁸ James Kreger, ‘Making Music with Carlos Kleiber, Elusive Titan of the Podium’, 2004.

¹²⁹ Chesterman, *Conductors in Conversation*, 94.

¹³⁰ Kenyon, ‘Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma’, 1989.

¹³¹ Elder maintains Kleiber was ‘head and shoulders above the rest of us, the best conductor in the world.’ Martin Kettle, A Rare Touch of Musical Magic, *The Guardian*, January 1 1990, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/1990/jan/01/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures>, (accessed December 30, 2010).

Ioan Holender, Director of the Vienna State Opera said of Kleiber's death in 2004 that 'the greatest living conductor has left us.'¹³² Music Director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester Riccardo Chailly also agreed, noting Kleiber was one of the greatest geniuses of many generations of conductors, possessing an elegance and clarity that surpassed even Toscanini.¹³³ The best *Tristan*, the best *Bohème*, the best *Otello*, the list goes on

¹³² John Rockwell, 'Carlos Kleiber is Dead at 74; Music's Perfectionist Recluse', *The New York Times*, July 20, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/20/arts/carlos-kleiber-is-dead-at-74-music-s-perfectionist-recluse.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>, (accessed December 27, 2010).

¹³³ 'Carlos Kleiber. Er war eines der größten Genies aller Generationen. Toscaninis Schlagtechnik war genial, aber die Eleganz und Klarheit von Carlos Kleiber hatte er nicht.' Kai Luehrs-Kaiser, 'Die Opersaenger von heute sind pervers', *Die Welt*, <http://www.welt.de/kultur/musik/article11760655/Die-Opersaenger-von-heute-sind-pervers.html>, (accessed February 13, 2011).

Biography

Carlos Kleiber was the son of feted conductor Erich Kleiber and his American wife Ruth Goodrich, although this fact has been a disputed one.¹³⁴ Born in Berlin where Erich was Music Director of the Berlin State Opera, the exact date of Kleiber's birth is also a point of uncertainty – most often reported as 3 July 1930, although July 20 and July 30 have also been suggested.¹³⁵ In 1940 Erich moved the family to Buenos Aires in self-imposed ideological exile and protest at the nazification of Germany, where young Karl's name became Carlos.

Growing up in English boarding schools, he went to high school in New York before commencing chemistry studies in Zurich, the result of fatherly persuasion stemming from a fervent belief Carlos should not follow in his footsteps. Erich's reasons for counselling Carlos against a conducting career were, at least in part, rooted in pragmatism. Quite simply Erich recognised that in the unrest and instability of the post-war years, a conducting career would not be a secure one. Werner also maintains Erich was all too aware of the burden he and his career were for his son.¹³⁶

Erich, on noticing his son's obvious musical talent attempted to dissuade him from a professional career, lamenting 'what a pity the boy is musically talented.'¹³⁷ Musical studies were never far from the fore however and Carlos was trained in piano, percussion and voice. Chemistry studies were abandoned after a matter of months in order to pursue a professional career in music.

A conducting training in the traditional manner followed – as repetiteur and Kapellmeister in German opera houses:

¹³⁴ Kleiber's father was rumoured to have been the composer, Alban Berg. Werner states 'Viele Jahre später sollten Gerüchte Zweifel nähren, ob hier wirklich ein Kleiber getauft wurde, oder nicht eher ein Sohn Alban Bergs.' Werner, *Carlos Kleiber: Eine Biografie*, 2008, 19. Werner however also says that over the course of his research for Kleiber's biography, he found no evidence to support this claim: <http://www.carlos-kleiber.de/component/blog/comments.html?pid=20> See the post in German, <http://www.carlos-kleiber.de/die-alban-berg-aeffaere.html> for a more detailed discussion of the subject. Charles Barber also reports this rumour along with another – that Ruth was not Carlos' real mother. The story goes that Erich allegedly had an affair with a Czech ballet dancer, Zdenka Podhajska, with the resulting child, Carlos, being adopted by Ruth. This opinion was held by a number of people, among them Sir Charles Mackerras. Podhajska is interred in the Kleiber family tomb in Vienna's Zentralfriedhof, giving weight to this argument. Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 61.

¹³⁵ Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 15.

¹³⁶ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

¹³⁷ *Austrian Conductors* (Memphis, Tennessee, Books LLC, 2010), 25.

- Gartnerplatz Theatre Munich, Repetiteur, 1952
- Potsdam, Kapellmeister, 1954
- Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Düsseldorf and Duisburg, Kapellmeister 1958–1964
- Zurich Opera, Kapellmeister 1964–1966
- Stuttgart Opera, First Kapellmeister 1966–1973

Thereafter Kleiber conducted frequently at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich but never again held a permanent post and indeed, his appearances became increasingly infrequent. Following the departure of Herbert von Karajan as Music Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1990 Kleiber was offered, but declined, the post.

1966 marked Kleiber's British debut with an Edinburgh Festival performance of Berg's *Wozzeck*, a work premiered by his father in 1925 and 1974-76 saw his now legendary *Tristan and Isolde* performances at the Bayreuth Festival. Of this same work, there is a famous recording made in Dresden in 1980 however it is one of which Kleiber did not approve. Its existence stems principally from an innovative sound engineer who, unknown to Kleiber, recorded every detail of rehearsals – particularly fortuitous because Kleiber walked out in the middle of recording following a dispute with one of the principals and the project was not completed. Kleiber was reported to have been furious at his record company for releasing it and he never set foot inside a recording studio thereafter.¹³⁸ Incidentally, this recording of the opera is generally regarded as one of the finest ever made.

Primarily active in Europe, Kleiber's operatic engagements saw him conduct at the revered international houses of Covent Garden, La Scala and the Vienna and Bavarian State Opera companies, while his symphonic work encompassed the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic and Amsterdam's famed Concertgebouw Orchestra. He conducted only occasionally in the United States despite frequent invitations. His US symphonic debut was in 1978 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In 1988 he conducted *La Bohème* for the New York Metropolitan Opera with *La Traviata*, *Otello* and *Der Rosenkavalier* following in successive years. Clearly at home at The Met, Lebrecht reports that at a break in rehearsal orchestra and

¹³⁸ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

singers stood in spontaneous ovation with one player remarking ‘I have never seen conducting like this, so supple, so versatile.’¹³⁹

Kleiber’s repertoire was highly specialised, limited to a few key composers and works but spanning both operatic and symphonic realms. Similarly Kleiber’s recorded output is comparatively small but each work is generally regarded as a masterpiece. Particularly noteworthy are his interpretations of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 and Symphony No. 7 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra¹⁴⁰ and of the same composer’s Symphony No. 4 and Symphony No. 7 in live performances with the Concertgebouw Orchestra.¹⁴¹ Carlos Kleiber died at the age of 74 on July 20, 2004 although his last public concert appearance was in 1999 and in the last decade of his life he performed only a handful of times. Fortunately Kleiber’s conducting is also preserved on a number of authorised DVD concert performances of note and in particular, the New Year’s Day Concerts of 1989 and 1992 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the former being the recording at the centre of this study.

¹³⁹ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 237.

¹⁴⁰ Beethoven : Symphony No.5, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, released 1974; re-released 1984, Deutsche Grammophone 415 861–2

Beethoven : Symphony No.7, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, released 1976, re-released 1984. Deutsche Grammophone 415 862–2.

¹⁴¹ Beethoven : Symphony No.4, Beethoven : Symphony No.7, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, live performances 1983; re-released 1988, Philips: 070 300–1.

Repertory

Kleiber's repertoire as documented by his performance history is perhaps as vexing as the man himself. Becoming increasingly specialised and conducting less repertoire as he matured, Kleiber's repertoire is characterised by a notable absence of much of what is considered standard symphonic literature. For instance, Kleiber never performed any symphonies or orchestral music of Tchaikovsky, Sibelius or Shostakovich. Von Umbach also points out Kleiber died without having conducted 'a bar of Bach, Bruckner, Schumann, Stravinsky or Schönberg.'¹⁴²

Of Dvorak's music, Kleiber performed the *Carnival Overture* and recorded the little-known Piano Concerto but not any of the more popular late symphonies. Similarly, his only performance of a work by Mahler was *Das Lied von der Erde* even though Kenyon reports Kleiber was able to discuss specific points of detail in all the Mahler symphonies.¹⁴³ Kaiser¹⁴⁴ also confirms this view, stating Kleiber knew every Mahler symphony note-for-note, but that he chose not to conduct any.

Of Haydn's 104 symphonies, only one, Symphony No. 94, was ever performed by Kleiber. Of Mozart's 41, he chose only two, the not oft performed Symphony No. 33 and the more popular Symphony No. 36, nicknamed the 'Linz'. Of these, he performed the former on twenty-two occasions and the latter eleven times.

Feted for his recordings of Beethoven's symphonies and in particular that of the Fifth, Kleiber's recording of this work is now regarded as a benchmark.¹⁴⁵ This 1975 recording was so startlingly original in its conception that the recording engineer on the project referred to this version of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as 'Kleiber's First.'¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Kleiber only conducted Symphonies 4-7 of Beethoven, never once having performed the *Eroica* or the Ninth. The Seventh was a particular favourite, having been performed on thirty occasions, more than any other orchestral work in Kleiber's repertory.¹⁴⁷ Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* was another popular

¹⁴² Umbach, Der begnadete Eremit, *Der Spiegel*, July 26, 2004.

¹⁴³ Kenyon, 'Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma' 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Kaiser, 'Ein Vulkan am Operpult', *Die Süddeutsche*, July 19, 2004.

¹⁴⁵ Beethoven : Symphony No.5, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, released 1974 ; re-released 1984, Deutsche Grammophone 415 861-2.

¹⁴⁶ Schallplatte, *Zeit Online*, April 18, 1975, <http://www.zeit.de/1975/17/schallplatte>, (accessed February 6, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ See Appendix 3

choice, conducted on fourteen occasions. The more recognised *Egmont*, *Fidelio* and *Leonore* Overtures, however, did not form part of his repertoire list.

Similarly, Kleiber's recordings of Brahms symphonies were hailed as masterpieces with the German newspaper *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine* titling Kleiber's obituary 'the conductor who composed Brahms' Second.'¹⁴⁸ Yet in spite of such apparent success, Kleiber didn't ever perform nor record Brahms' First or Third Symphonies.

A sought-after interpreter of opera, Kleiber's repertory included *Wozzeck*, *Carmen*, *Otello*, *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Der Freischütz*. Yet aside from two concert performances of Mozart's *Overture to The Marriage of Figaro*, Kleiber's repertory did not include any of this composer's operatic works. Of Puccini's oeuvre, *Tosca* and *Turandot* did not feature and of Wagner's operas, only *Tristan and Isolde* formed part of Kleiber's repertoire.

Interestingly, the light orchestral miniatures of the Viennese father and son duo Johann Strauss and Johann Strauss II feature prominently in Kleiber's output. Twenty-four such works were performed repeatedly throughout the course of Kleiber's career – the relative frequency of these compositions alongside the notable omission of standard works of more recognised composers is indeed remarkable.

A number of commentators have remarked on the similarity between Kleiber's repertoire and that of his father. Kenyon notes that over the years Kleiber's repertory contracted to be very similar to that of his father¹⁴⁹, a commonality also observed by Blyth¹⁵⁰ and Kaiser.¹⁵¹ Sir Peter Jonas also agrees 'it is no coincidence the pieces he actually performed were those his father performed'¹⁵² while friend and fellow conductor Michael Gielen explained that Carlos almost always only ever conducted repertoire for which he had material of his father's – a recording, a set of orchestral parts, a score or most preferably, his father's marked score.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Wolfgang Sandner, 'Der Dirigent, der die Zweite von Brahms komponierte', *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, July 19, 2004, <http://www.faz.net/s/Rub4D7EDEF6BB3438E85981C05ED63D788/Doc%7EE6925397BE6CF4A4E901BABC9C86C68%7EATpl%7EEcommon%7EScontent.html>, (accessed January 12, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Kenyon, 'Carlos Kleiber: Genius Wrapped in an Enigma', 1989.

¹⁵⁰ Blyth, 'Carlos Kleiber: Mercurial Master of the Conductor's Art', 2004.

¹⁵¹ Kaiser, 'Ein Vulkan am Operpult', *Die Süddeutsche*, July 19, 2004.

¹⁵² Peter Jonas in *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹⁵³ 'Und Carlos dirigiert ja nur Stücke, von denen er irgendein Dokument vom Vater besaß, sei es ein ganzes Orchestermaterial, eine Aufnahme oder eine Partitur oder, das ist natürlich am Besten, eine vom Vater eingerichtete Partitur. Ich glaube, das war der Grund für seine Gebundenheit, dass sein

Kleiber's early career, particularly his years in Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Zurich began eclectically enough, with repertoire including works by composers as diverse as Delibes, Egk, Henze, Leoncavallo, Lortzing, Millöcker, Wolf-Ferrari and Zeller. This in itself was probably largely as a result of circumstance – as Kapellmeister in an opera house, conducting the bulk of the house performances is essentially *de rigueur*. Indicative of Kleiber's early open-mindedness was a recent release featuring music by Telemann and CPE Bach.¹⁵⁴

Franz Willauer, former dramatic advisor to the Staatstheatre Stuttgart confirmed that when they first met, Kleiber had a huge repertoire including more than sixty operas. By the last five years of his career (1994–1999) however, this had shrunk to only two standard concert programs.¹⁵⁵ Interestingly it is when Kleiber was free to pick and choose his freelance conducting engagements and associated repertoire that he honed his famously narrow repertoire, a fact also noticed by Uehling.¹⁵⁶

Biographer Jens Malte Fischer states that Kleiber's repertoire was an incredibly limited one, the smallest of any of the great conductors,¹⁵⁷ a fact echoed by Schudel, who agrees Kleiber's repertoire was 'an unusually small one for a major conductor.'¹⁵⁸ Walsh and Spelman note that 'no other major conductor has built an international reputation on as small an output as Kleiber's'¹⁵⁹, Lebrecht describes his repertoire as 'severely restricted'¹⁶⁰ and Spahn 'miniscule.'¹⁶¹ Von Umbach calls

Repertoire so winzig klein war.' Interview with Michael Gielen, <http://www.carlos-kleiber.de/interview/michael-gielen.html>, (accessed January 8, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ CPE Bach Cello Concerto in B flat Major, Telemann Tafelmusik: Suite in B Flat, Hamburger Rundfunk Orchester, recorded December 1960, released October 17 2011, Hänssler Profil Medien, PH11031. The disc also features the only known interview given by Kleiber which also features in the documentary 'I am Lost to the World.'

¹⁵⁵ Programme 1: Beethoven, Coriolan Overture, Mozart Symphony 33 and Brahms Symphony No. 4. Programme 2: Beethoven Symphony No. 4, Beethoven Symphony No. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Uehling, 'Musik unter ihm war Leben schlechtin' *Berliner Zeitung*, July 20, 2004, <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2004/0720/feuilleton/0005/index.html>, (accessed January 20, 2011).

¹⁵⁷ 'der Dirigent mit dem kleinsten Repertoire aller bekannten Pultlöwen' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Schudel, 'Gifted, Eccentric Conductor Carlos Kleiber Dies at 74', *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2004.

¹⁵⁹ Walsh and Spelman, 'Music: Unvarnished Symphonies', 1983.

¹⁶⁰ Lebrecht, *Carlos Kleiber: Not a Great Conductor*, 2004.

¹⁶¹ Claus Spahn, 'Sensibler Außenseiter', *Online Focus*, Nr. 11, 1996, http://www.focus.de/kultur/musik/musik-sensibler-aussenseiter_aid_156857.html, (accessed January 20, 2011).

Kleiber the maestro with a 'non-repertoire',¹⁶² and Laurson goes even further, maintaining that 'to describe his repertoire as narrow would be euphemistic: he conducted the same works over and over to the point of obsession.'¹⁶³

Otto Staindl suggested that in maintaining this small a repertoire, Kleiber had a very good sense of where his particular strengths lay.¹⁶⁴ This opinion is backed by Fassbänder who believed he only conducted those works with which he could identify 1000%. She believes Kleiber's decision to restrict his repertoire was a conscious one, perhaps due to scruples, personal preference or the most-oft cited reason, his fanatic self-criticism.¹⁶⁵ Borchmeyer also noted that over the course of his career Kleiber increasingly believed there were only very few works he was really able to conduct, a symptom of pathological self-doubt and overly harsh self-criticism,¹⁶⁶ these masochistic factors of torment also cited by Pollini.¹⁶⁷ Barber too observed a decline over time saying Kleiber became 'less enamored of the profession and less enamored of his gift within it.'¹⁶⁸

This pursuit of uncompromising and ever further reaching artistic perfection was undoubtedly a major contributing factor in Kleiber's ever-shrinking body of works. He brushed off his limited repertory as laziness but others clearly saw the detrimental effect of his own high, and seemingly unattainable standards. Sachs noted the 'maniacal perfectionism and sense of desolating frustration that overwhelmed him when his goals were not met.'¹⁶⁹ This claim is supported by Matheopoulos who believes Kleiber saw little point in conducting works which would be anything other than his perfectly conceived ideal. 'Find me a *Salome*' was his reported response when questioned as to why he didn't conduct that Strauss opera.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² Umbach, 'Der begnadete Eremit', *Der Spiegel*, July 26, 2004.

¹⁶³ Laurson, *In Memoriam Carlos Kleiber*, July 21, 2004.

¹⁶⁴ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ 'war ein fast krankhafter Selbstskeptiker, übersensibler Selbstkritiker, der im Laufe seiner Karriere, die rechtvielseitig begonnen hatte, glaubte, nur noch wenigen Werken gerecht werden zu können.'

Dieter Borchmeyer in Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 12.

¹⁶⁷ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Sachs, 'The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error,' 2004.

¹⁷⁰ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 448.

As limited as Kleiber's performing repertory was the scarcity of his appearances. In a career spanning forty-seven years (1952–1999), he conducted 89 concerts, 620 opera performances, 37 ballet, and authorised 12 recordings. Kleiber's oeuvre, when measured against that of Karajan – 2260 concerts, 1020 operas and 91 films – simply does not compare. Bernstein too, for example, made 826 recordings while Stokowski premiered more than 400 works.¹⁷¹ From a purely numeric perspective, Kleiber's output is not in the same league.

Infrequent appearances with predictable offerings from a stagnant pool of repertoire masked Kleiber's extensive knowledge of the broader orchestral and operatic repertory. Contextualised by the very limited body of works he performed publicly, this lesser-known fact is a seemingly incongruous one. Hellsberg tells that in spite of being familiar with virtually all known repertoire, Kleiber chose to focus on a few selected works.¹⁷² Barber too, reveals that 'perhaps paradoxically, he mastered dozens of scores he would never conduct – but that was beside the point. He conducted *all* internally.'¹⁷³ Kettle was similarly perplexed:

The smallness of Kleiber's performing repertoire remains a perpetual enigma. Yet it masks the extent of his scholarship and sympathies. 'He studies a great deal,' says a friend. 'He knows everything. He knows every piece. I know he does. I've seen the scores.'¹⁷⁴

Furthermore it seems that learning these scores for Kleiber was not at all difficult. Friend and pianist Maurizio Pollini remembers Kleiber was able to instantly understand a score, immediately forming expressive and interpretative ideas on seeing the work. Pollini also recalled Kleiber's extreme dedication to his art, and was of the opinion Kleiber would have been able to conduct any given piece at any given time, for he knew them all.¹⁷⁵ Haitink also warned against evaluating Kleiber based on his performing repertoire.¹⁷⁶

So once again, the question of 'why' is a most pertinent one. We are left trying to solve this enigma, wondering why the greatest conductor of his generation chose not to conduct more repertoire, nor to conduct more often. Compounding the

¹⁷¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 158.

¹⁷² Clemens Hellsberg, 'In Memory of Carlos Kleiber', *Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra*.

¹⁷³ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 57.

¹⁷⁴ Kettle, 'A Rare Touch of Musical Magic', 1990.

¹⁷⁵ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

¹⁷⁶ Haitink: 'Don't be fooled by the small repertoire. His knowledge of music is immense.' Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 72.

confusion is the fact he, by all accounts, amassed a vast knowledge which in practical terms, went unused.

In principal at least, it seems Kleiber was not opposed to the idea of performing repertoire other than that which became his trademark. Former General Manager of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sir Peter Jonas managed to persuade Kleiber in 1983 to perform a relatively unknown work, George Butterworth's *First English Idyll*,¹⁷⁷ a work Kleiber admitted he enjoyed conducting. Jonas remembers Kleiber also once surprised him by expressing a wish to conduct *The Mikado*.¹⁷⁸

Given that Kleiber didn't publicly explain his decisions, it is difficult to undisputedly establish the reasons behind these repertoire choices and the rationale supporting them. What is undeniably clear is that his repertory was a very limited one, comprising a number of oft-repeated favourite works, performed time and time again. Accounts discussed above seem to indicate that psychological rather than musical factors were a predominating influence – Kleiber's well-documented extreme perfectionism and chronic self-doubt the most likely and significant contributors.

¹⁷⁷ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 113.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Kleiber the Conductor

Kleiber was a man who set himself enormously high standards, a musician who answered only to the music, striving intensely – obsessively, almost – after months poring meticulously over scores, to make each work sound as the composer would have wanted it to sound and as befitted his ideals.¹⁷⁹

Former intendant of the Vienna State Opera, Ioan Holender confirms that for these reasons outlined above by Werner, the most exceptional musical experience he remembers was Kleiber's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Holender explains that Kleiber's quest for the meaning behind and between the notes, his scrupulous examination of and attention to the composer's original intentions were unparalleled. Holender also highlights Kleiber's unique combination of musical intuition and painstaking score study, reporting that he arrived five days in advance of rehearsals to edit and correct the orchestra parts.¹⁸⁰ Jonas tells a similar story of Kleiber's Chicago performances, where he arrived a week early and spent days with the librarians checking that each specific bowing had been correctly transcribed to the orchestral parts.¹⁸¹

Kleiber's fastidious attention to the tiniest of details was a particularly defining element of his work, and one which again seems borne out of reverence for his father whose orchestral parts were also meticulously marked.¹⁸² Of Kleiber's marked parts Barber reports that 'players...had never seen anything like it and were astonished by the insight – and sheer industry – they revealed.'¹⁸³ Interestingly, while Kleiber's

¹⁷⁹ Alexander Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Ioan Holender, former Intendant of the Wiener Staatsoper "Welt am Sonntag: Was waren die schönsten Abende in Ihrer Wiener Amtszeit? Holender: Musikalisch sicher "Der Rosenkavalier" unter Carlos Kleiber. Er hat die nächste Nähe zum Absoluten erreicht. Kleibers Suche nach dem, was hinter und zwischen den Noten steht, was die Komponisten veranlasst hat, so und nicht anders zu komponieren, war einzigartig. Die Verbindung von akribischem Partiturstudium und intuitiver Erfassung.' Weinzierl, 'Ich suche nach der verlorenen Jugend', *Welt Online*, June 26 2010, <http://www.welt.de/die-welt/kultur/literatur/article8194859/Ich-suche-nach-der-verlorenen-Jugend.html>, (accessed February 13, 2011).

¹⁸¹ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹⁸² Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 6, and Richard Trimborn in *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

¹⁸³ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 39.

scrupulously-prepared parts left no margin for misinterpretation, his scores were entirely bare and very rarely used during performance, if at all.¹⁸⁴

On hiring Kleiber in 1966, then Deputy Intendant of the Stuttgart Opera Franz Willnauer remarked 'I don't think I have ever come across a conductor with a greater musical imagination' ... 'he has a composer's gift for visualizing sound.'¹⁸⁵ Willnauer also notes the meticulous planning which went into all rehearsals 'like a general who plans his tactics after deciding on basic strategy, (he) proceeded to put every element in its place, piece by piece.'¹⁸⁶ On that occasion, Kleiber even went so far as to personally mark and check every musician's part. Bram Gay, a former orchestral manager at Covent Garden, also agrees that with Kleiber, the combination of imagination, musical intelligence and scholarship was a unique one, saying of him in *Otello*:

I have never encountered such an intellect at work. How many conductors have told us what is in the Shakespeare which the librettist Boito omits and where exactly we must remember this because it is important to Verdi? Working with him is an electric experience. The orchestra is never relaxed. The better the work goes, the greater the tension because the more fragile the creation. An evening with him is one of the great lifetime opportunities for self-realisation.¹⁸⁷

Characterising Kleiber's performances therefore was an absolute fidelity to the printed score and the composer's intentions. As a result, even with frequently performed, well-known repertoire, listeners had the impression these were new works, heard for first time.¹⁸⁸ Forbes shares this view, suggesting it was Kleiber's 'incandescent, passionate, stimulating and shattering performances, which could turn the most hackneyed score into something entirely new, both in detail and in its overall conception.'¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Barber, on seeing Kleiber's score of *Otello* – untouched by Kleiber and not opened once during the performance. Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 6.

¹⁸⁵ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 451.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Carlos Kleiber, *The Telegraph*, London, July 21, 2004,

¹⁸⁸ Sachs, 'The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error', 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Elizabeth Forbes, 'Carlos Kleiber: Controversial Operatic Conductor of Originality and Passion', *he Independent*, July 21, 2004, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/carlos-kleiber-550132.html>, (accessed December 31, 2010).

One critic wrote of a Kleiber performance that he felt ‘completely enlightened, despite having known the work very well.’¹⁹⁰ Chicago Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Victor Aitay enthused, ‘under him, every note comes alive. That’s why we are here, not to play the Brahms Second Symphony for the 2,000th time, but for the first time.’¹⁹¹ Principal Flute in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Dieter Flury, remembers a similar experience. Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony* is a cornerstone of the standard repertoire, played frequently by the orchestra but with Kleiber, it was as though for the first time.¹⁹²

Such an approach was in stark contrast to the highly personalised interpretations which hitherto, had characterised the work of great conductors of that and of preceding eras. Reviewers Walsh and Spelman recognise Kleiber’s kind of ‘back-to-basics’ approach was something of an unprecedented novelty.

Like an expert art restorer who clears away centuries of grime to reveal a painting in its native, pristine glory, Kleiber strips away the varnish from some of music’s most tradition-encrusted masterworks to expose the vital creation still lurking beneath.¹⁹³

Sachs speaks of ‘straightforward interpretations, ones which were never gimmicky or exaggerated, neither experimental nor given to deconstruction,’ echoing that Kleiber was consumed by a ‘desire to come as close as possible to the composer’s original vision.’¹⁹⁴ He summarises Kleiber’s approach: ‘If one were to try to reduce his quest to a question, it would be: “What is this work?” not “What can I do with this work?”’¹⁹⁵ As such, Kleiber was a true servant of the composer and of the work.

Walsh and Spelman describe performances as broad, expansive and sometimes ferociously radiant.¹⁹⁶ They suggest that principally for Kleiber, the musical line is of paramount importance and that it is coloured and heightened with

¹⁹⁰ ‘Ein Kritiker schrieb, er fühle sich nach einer Kleiber-Aufführung „restlos aufgeklärt“, obwohl er das Werk doch gut gekannt zu haben meinte.’ Michael Klonovsky, ‘Phantom der Oper’, *Online Focus*, Nr. 31, 2004, http://www.focus.de/kultur/medien/nachruf-phantom-der-oper_aid_198849.html, (accessed January 2011).

¹⁹¹ Walsh and Spelman, ‘Music: Unvarnished Symphonies’, 1983.

¹⁹² *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

¹⁹³ Walsh and Spelman, ‘Music: Unvarnished Symphonies’, 1983.

¹⁹⁴ Sachs, ‘The Conductor Who Could Not Tolerate Error’, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Walsh and Spelman, ‘Music: Unvarnished Symphonies’, 1983.

innumerable fine details.¹⁹⁷ Kreger also mentions Kleiber's long, *cantilena* line,¹⁹⁸ Laurson too, speaks of an unsurpassed sense of musical architecture,¹⁹⁹ while Blyth also highlights Kleiber's focus on the subtleties of phrasing:

His manner of conducting combined a wonderful control of flow, rhythm and movement with an uncanny ability to know when to create tension and when to release it. He conveyed this to his musicians with a rare fluency of movement and a rich palette of nuance as regards phrasing.²⁰⁰

Furthermore, Uehling writes of an orchestral sound of unsurpassed lightness and transparency.²⁰¹

German newspaper *Zeit Online* also reports 'an abundance of unheard nuances' and likens the transparency of Kleiber's performances to a 'chamber music approach.' The review also speaks of 'cheeky brass interludes, delicately discreet string lines, contrast between almost neurotic quick tempi and phrases of contemplative, introverted melancholy.'²⁰²

Musicians also enjoyed Kleiber's fresh and invigorating approach and in spite of unusually long rehearsal periods, his performances remained vital and exciting. One player explained that even though a performance under Kleiber was 'exceedingly well rehearsal to the nth degree, there was this wonderful sense of freedom about it.'²⁰³ Matheopoulos interprets this degree of freedom as Kleiber's willingness to take risks, a factor to which she attributes the success of his performances while another commentator echoes the sentiment of 'meticulously rehearsed but ever spontaneous and inspired performances.'²⁰⁴

Matheopoulos believes it is Kleiber's genius, beginning at the performance that sees 'all those carefully, analytically prepared results happening seemingly

¹⁹⁷ Walsh and Spelman, 'Music: Unvarnished Symphonies', 1983.

¹⁹⁸ Kreger, 'Making Music with Carlos Kleiber, Elusive Titan of the Podium', 2004.

¹⁹⁹ Laurson, *In Memoriam Carlos Kleiber*, July 21, 2004.

²⁰⁰ Blyth, 'Carlos Kleiber: Mercurial Master of the Conductor's Art', 2004.

²⁰¹ 'achtete Kleiber auf einen Orchesterklang von größtmöglicher Helligkeit und Transparenz.' Uehling, 'Musik unter ihm war Leben schlechtin', 2004.

²⁰² 'Und eben Carlos Kleiber, Schon um der kammermusikalisch auf eine ungehörte Fülle von Nuancen gebrachten Einleitung zum 2. Akt oder der Klangbalance zwischen frechen Bläserwürfen und zärtlich vorsichtigen Streicherlinien, zwischen fast neurotisch hektischen Tempi und in beschaulich introvertierte Melancholie zurückgenommenen Phasen willen möchte man diese Aufführung nicht mehr vergessen.) Josef Herbort, 'Oper als Kino', *Zeit Online*, December 15 1978, <http://www.zeit.de/1978/51/oper-als-kino>, (accessed February 7 2011).

²⁰³ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 449.

²⁰⁴ *Austrian Conductors* (Memphis, Tennessee, Books LLC, 2010), 27.

spontaneously, as though improvised, and the music comes out alive and free.²⁰⁵

John Brown, former concertmaster of Covent Garden agrees it is the combination of a thorough knowledge of the score and a degree of unpredictability that makes Kleiber's performances unique, explaining:

He takes what is written in the score and makes poetry out of it. He studies his score very, very hard and knows them more deeply than anyone I've ever come across, but he is prepared to let the devil in, just a wee bit, by introducing the element of chance. This unpredictability is an essential feature of his art and the reason every Kleiber performance is a new and different happening.²⁰⁶

Sachs explains it similarly.

He fights to realize every detail of a work and then fights harder still to obliterate all traces of constraint...the intensely emotional elements in his music making usually function in perfect accord with his questioning intelligence and magnificent grasp of musical architecture.²⁰⁷

Placido Domingo too remembers performances which changed every night, seemingly in an improvisatory manner.²⁰⁸ He effused that working with Kleiber 'makes it possible to fly, to reach the zenith of music.'²⁰⁹ Domingo also was struck by Kleiber's ability to assimilate the score to such an extent it was possible to read *through* the notes and uncover the drama and feeling of the music. 'It seems so natural and simple, yet even with all the preparation it sounds spontaneous.'²¹⁰

Domingo also explains that Kleiber's ability in this regard was not confined to his own individual role as conductor. In following the score so absolutely meticulously and methodically, Kleiber exerted an incomparable degree of insight into the composer's intentions and, therefore, artistic mastery over a production. Domingo said as a result of working with Kleiber, he understood exactly how the role (*Otello*) should be sung.²¹¹ Indeed this unique combination of fastidious attention to minute details during rehearsals married with a degree of risk, freedom and spontaneity during performances characterises Kleiber's work.

²⁰⁵ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 452.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 450.

²⁰⁷ Cited in Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 37.

²⁰⁸ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²⁰⁹ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 458.

²¹⁰ Carlos Kleiber, *The Telegraph*, London, July 21, 2004.

²¹¹ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 458.

Kleiber's ability to go beyond the information on the printed page, to make the music come alive is explained by a former player.

His genius lies in the fact he works to an extent that he can read even what is not written... But he *knows*, he hears in his mind, what kind of sound the *composer* was hearing. And, unlike most other conductors, he is incapable of producing 'grey' sound. The music he makes is always 'blue', 'red', 'green', never 'grey', and when it has to be grey because the text says so, there is always a trace, a soupcon of 'blue', or 'pink', something that brings life and movement even to greyness.²¹²

This capacity of Kleiber's for such a refined degree of inner hearing is also highlighted as intrinsic to his success by Barber.²¹³ Attention to detail, clarity and the aforementioned 'back to basics' approach have been hallmarks of Kleiber's approach throughout his career. Storming to international attention in 1975 through his recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Gramophone magazine stated Kleiber's version gave a distinct feeling of the music being born anew.²¹⁴ Of the same recording Walsh and Spelman also enthuse:

Kleiber fashioned a performance that unfolded with the clarity of a Euclidean proposition, yet had the intensity of a hammer blow. Hailed as a revelation, it was, more accurately, a literal re-creation of what the composer put down on paper: it was as if Homer had come back to recite the Iliad.²¹⁵

Goetz too praises Kleiber's famed recording of Beethoven 5, suggesting it is a synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian elements.²¹⁶ Similar lavish praise and accolades can be found frequently in accounts and reviews of Kleiber's performances. Of his two concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1989 and 1994, divine comparisons again seemed popular with one audience member declaring, 'In these hours Polyhymnia, muse of music, kissed the room.'²¹⁷

Attempting to deconstruct the magic in more concrete musical terms, Alexander Werner explains precisely through which specific means Kleiber achieved such extraordinary results.

²¹² Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 454.

²¹³ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²¹⁴ Richard Osborne, 'Carlos Kleiber's VPO Beethoven's Fifth' Gramophone, June 1975, <http://www.gramophone.net/ClassicReview/View/82>, (accessed March 3, 2011).

²¹⁵ Walsh and Spelman, 'Music: Unvarnished Symphonies', 1983.

²¹⁶ Goetz, 'Zartheit und Entfesselung', *Zeit Online*, July 22 2004.

²¹⁷ 'In jenen Stunden hat Polyhymnia, Muse der Musik, den Saal geküsst'. Werner, *Carlos Kleiber: Eine Biografie*, 12.

Opening up scores to reveal previously unheard nuances, creating mesmerising links and transitions, developing clean structures and captivating audiences with his impassioned verve, colourful poetry, beguiling dynamism and incisive rhythm.²¹⁸

Kleiber's 1989 New Year's Day Concert in Vienna from which the work chosen for this study is drawn, exemplifies this stripped down, 'back to basics' approach. A popular program largely comprising the works of Johann Strauss and sons, this was music with which Kleiber had a great affinity. These light and dance-inspired compositions provided the perfect vehicle for Kleiber to combine all the elements of his trademark style. As such, Kettle describes Kleiber's 1989 performance as 'pieces of music often encrusted with performance clichés and sloppy interpretation being served up fresh, sharp and ravishing.'²¹⁹

So aside from a painstakingly considered approach and a towering musical intellect, precisely what set Kleiber apart and what made his performances and recordings so spellbinding is more difficult to describe. Indeed, the vast majority of top-level international conductors, singers and soloists could well boast such attributes. Again in this regard, it seems Kleiber was in a class of his own, with an 'X Factor' beyond comparison.

Klonovsky, for example, admits he struggles to translate his chosen descriptors – inspirational, unfathomable, electrifying, magic – into more concrete terms.²²⁰ Matheopoulos also, is at a loss to describe precisely what differentiates and elevates Kleiber's conducting remarking:

...however hard one might try to pinpoint and define some of the main characteristics of his conducting there is still something more, something extra, which eludes definition: a Dionysian element, a 'divine madness'...²²¹

This Dionysian element may be explained at least to an extent by the power of personality, or Kleiber's charm. Werner explains that Kleiber was very charismatic, a fact echoed by Barber who says 'his was charisma beyond any human definition of

²¹⁸ Werner, *Carlos Kleiber – Flamboyant Star, Enigmatic Genius*, 2007.

²¹⁹ Kettle, 'A Rare Touch of Musical Magic', 1990.

²²⁰ 'Kleibers musikalische Ausnahmestellung ist schwer zu verbalisieren. Inspiriert, abgründig, elektrisierend, magisch – das sind eben nur Worte. Evidenzerlebnisse haben die Eigenart, sich nicht jedermann mitzuteilen. Kleiber produzierte Evidenzerlebnisse wie andere Allerweltsaufnahmen.'

Klonovsky, 'Phantom der Oper', *Online Focus*, Nr. 31, 2004.

²²¹ Matheopoulos, *Maestro*, 443.

it,²²² explaining ‘you could not take your eyes off him, you simply could not.’²²³ Former Artistic Director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Pamela Rosenberg blushing admits she had never been so charmed by anyone.²²⁴ Domingo too, recounts an almost implausible event while waiting to go on stage during a performance at *The Met*. Looking out from the wings to a clearly mesmerized audience, he saw all eyes transfixed on Kleiber. Nobody was watching the stage at all.²²⁵

Cellist at the Met, James Kreger also remembers the Kleiber phenomenon, ‘when it was happening, you just knew you were in the presence of a powerful, charismatic force, someone guiding you, opening that special door to an experience never to be forgotten.’²²⁶ Clemens Hellsberg, former concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra writes similarly of Kleiber’s VPO performances that there was a ‘feeling with him of not only reaching, but also surpassing one’s own limits.’²²⁷ This ability of Kleiber’s to ‘seduce people musically’²²⁸ extended the realms of what was possible, somehow ‘inspiring performers to heights they didn’t think they could reach.’²²⁹ The ability to seduce, inspire and coerce, significant factors determining a conductor’s success, were therefore aspects in which Kleiber clearly excelled.

While any evaluation of a musician and a musical performance is a thoroughly subjective one, reviews and reports are unanimous in their reverence of Kleiber. His apparent charm, charisma and power of personality were clearly major factors in his success, given this profusion of rave reviews. Furthermore, he clearly exuded phenomenal people skills, somehow instilling in players, singers and orchestras confidence and abilities which enabled them to produce outstanding results. As singer Brigitte Fassbänder put it, ‘everyone did their best for him because he just swept them off their feet.’²³⁰

Yet whatever he did and how he did it, it is indisputable he achieved results others did not and that Kleiber was a more extraordinary conductor than most.

²²² *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

²²⁵ Plácido Domingo in *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²²⁶ Kreger, ‘Making Music with Carlos Kleiber, Elusive Titan of the Podium’, 2004.

²²⁷ Hellsberg, ‘In Memory of Carlos Kleiber’, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

²²⁸ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

Indeed, so concentrated was Kleiber during a performance of *Der Rosenkavalier* at La Scala that he failed to notice an earthquake which shook the theatre, remarking afterwards only there seemed to be a period during which the orchestra was very unconcentrated and nervous, at which time he was told of the event.²³¹ With such an impenetrable degree of focus, it is little wonder Kleiber's performances were astounding.

²³¹ 'beklagte er sich hinterher, daß das Orchester eine Zeitlang während der Vorstellung nervös und unkonzentriert gewesen sei. Man mußte ihn darüber erklären, daß gerade das Erdbeben in Friaul stattgefunden hat..' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber – der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 36.

Chapter Four

Kleiber and
Die Fledermaus

Introduction to Die Fledermaus

Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* (*The Bat*) is an operetta that was premiered on April 5, 1874 at the Theater an der Wien under the baton of the composer. *Die Fledermaus* was based on a French play of 1872, *Le réveillon*, itself based on an earlier German play by Julius Roderich Benedix, *Das Gefängnis* (*The Prison*), first performed in 1851.

The writers of *Le réveillon* were Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. This literary combination was a particularly fruitful one, one probably better known to music-lovers by their most famous collaboration – the libretto of Bizet's *Carmen*. Strauss' libretto was also written in partnership by Karl Haffner and Richard Genée.

Following the initial successful Viennese season which entailed fifteen shows, subsequent performances of the operetta in New York, London and Berlin contributed to its popularity. Interestingly, it was Gustav Mahler who was among the first to champion the work, and under Mahler's musical direction at the Hamburg State Opera (1891-1897) *Die Fledermaus* enjoyed its first performances in a mainstage opera company. Since then it has retained a popular place in the repertoire.

In three acts, the operetta runs for approximately two and a half hours. Originally with a German libretto, the work is also commonly performed in English and French translations. A comprehensive synopsis can be found on the website of the Bavarian State Opera, the company with whom Kleiber conducted the vast majority of his performances of *Die Fledermaus*.¹

A work of great wit, *Die Fledermaus* features a comic storyline. Musically it comprises an eclectic mix of styles including parodies of Italian operatic arias, a Hungarian Csárdás, a ballet and the required combination of pathos-filled expressions of love and devotion alternating with party scenes of unbridled good times which were expected by audiences of that time.²

¹ Bavarian State Opera, *Die Fledermaus - Synopsis*, <http://www.bayerische.staatsoper.de/885-ZG9tPWRvbTEmaWQ9MzkmbD1IbiZ0ZXJtaW49MTA2MDc~spielplan~oper~veranstaltungen~inhalt.html>, (accessed January 20, 2012).

² A comprehensive musical analysis of the complete opera lies outside the scope of this study.

Overture to Die Fledermaus

Strauss' eight minute overture to the operetta is a well-liked work, arguably one of the most popular compositions of this genre. *Overture to Die Fledermaus* is often performed as a concert work in its own right.

The overture draws on the material of the operetta proper as well as incorporating new music specifically composed for this purpose. The transition section (bar 110) has its origin in the Finale of Act I. The Andante Con Moto (bar 201) corresponds to Rosalinda's *So muss ich allein bleiben* lament from the penultimate number of Act I. Also from this same trio is the subsequent Allegro Molto Moderato (bar 227 and in repetition, 373), *O je, o je, wie rührt mich dies*. The Tempo di Valse (bars 122, 316) is drawn from the Act II Finale where it appears in a party scene. The clock striking six to interrupt party celebrations makes its way into the overture in the Lento at bar 41. From the trio preceding the Act III Finale is derived from the Allegretto at bar 47 and Eisenstein's *Ja ich bin's* becomes the Allegretto at bar 13. The Finale of the operetta also gives the overture the Meno Mosso at bar 74 and the Tempo Ritenuto Grazioso at 280.

The *Overture to Die Fledermaus* links fifteen separate sections, designated by double bar lines and/or tempo indications. Within these sections, there are some twelve distinct tempi and a diversity of musical styles and characters. The variety, frequency of changes and the transitions make it an excellent example by which to observe a conductor's skill. Perhaps even more so than the variety of tempi it is the contrasts of styles, moods and characters which call on a highly refined degree of gestural ability, these aspects a definitive measure of a conductor's effectiveness.

In addition to the information given by Strauss' hand are numerous subtle tempo modifications or rubati – information not contained in the score but nuances generally observed in performance. In particular, the Viennese waltz tradition of a slightly anticipated second beat followed by a slightly delayed third beat is very much a feature of the performance of Strauss waltzes – a phenomenon which can be clearly identified in the chosen recording. The ability to convey such refined details and elements of

interpretation requires a vastly skilled and effective means of gestural communication, as this analysis will demonstrate.

The structure of the overture can be set out as follows:

Tempo	Bar Numbers	Time Signature
Allegro Vivace	1-12	♩
Allegretto	13-32	C
Tempo 1	33-40	♩
Lento	41-46	2/4
Allegretto	47-68	2/4
Allegretto	69-73	2/4
Poco Meno Mosso/ A tempo	74-109/ 110-121	2/4
Tempo di Valse	122-180	3/4
Allegro	181-200	2/4
Andante con moto	201-226	3/4
Allegro molto moderato	227-279	2/4
Tempo ritenuto grazioso	280-315	2/4
Tempo di Valse	316-350	3/4
Allegro Moderato	351-387	2/4
Piu Vivo	388-420	2/4

Kleiber and Die Fledermaus

Johann Strauss II's opera, or more accurately operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, is the composer's best-known work and was among the compositions Kleiber performed most frequently. Indeed it became very much one of Kleiber's signature pieces and a work with which he was closely associated throughout his career.

So synonymous are Kleiber and *Fledermaus*, this work was featured as the signature music for the 10-part radio programme, *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*.³ Similarly the documentary film *Traces to Nowhere*⁴ features his *Fledermaus Overture* to accompany the DVD menu. As one player explained 'He made it into a crazy masterpiece.'⁵

Kleiber performed and recorded the *Overture to Die Fledermaus* more than any other work with the exception of *Der Rosenkavalier*.⁶ He conducted the complete operetta on seventy-eight occasions, the overture in concert on twenty-two occasions and recorded it some ten times.⁷ Of these twenty-two concert performances, he performed the work as an encore on sixteen occasions.⁸

A favoured way to spend his New Year's Eve, Kleiber conducted *Fledermaus* at the Bavarian State Opera on nine such occasions between 1974 and 1987, described by Charles Barber as 'the longest personal tradition of Carlos' professional life.'⁹ Kleiber's 1989 New Year's Day performance has become legendary; one musician reports being astounded from the outset.¹⁰

Kleiber conducted the overture and/or the opera every year from 1980-1989 and the overture concluded his last ever concert appearances. His last

³ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

⁴ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

⁵ Marco Postinghel in *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008

⁶ See Appendix 3

⁷ See Appendix 3

⁸ *Carlos Kleiber: Opera and Concert Listing*, http://www.thrsw.com/mt/mt-search.cgi?tag=J.Strauss%20II%20%3A%20Die%20Fledermaus%20-%20overture&blog_id=5, (accessed December 29, 2010).

⁹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 112.

¹⁰ 'I find that it's an inspired thing. That is, to enter in their world, in that world there...probably he is the only one who did that did it.' Marco Postinghel on Kleiber's 1989 New Year's Concert, Episode 9, in *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

concert of February 1999, conducted when Kleiber was obviously quite ill, was not up to his usual standard according to one critic, however *Fledermaus* remained a stand-out. 'Only in the encore, did the magic touch return. It was all swirling and perfect.'¹¹

It was also a work which had a defining impact on Kleiber's career, serving as the catalyst for his only North American concert appearances. His 1974 recording of the Overture was played by the then Manager of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sir Peter Jonas to the Music Director, Sir Georg Solti. On hearing the work Solti agreed with Jonas, 'You know, you're right, you must try and get him, and do whatever it takes.'¹²

Operetta in general, was a genre in which Kleiber felt very much at home and in many ways, it brought out the best in him. It was a perfect match for his character, which was characterised by wit and an almost childlike sense of humour. It seems as though Erich Kleiber was at least partly responsible for his son's love affair with operetta, with Carlos admitting 'my father said I could learn the most if I conducted operetta.'¹³ Carlos' conducting debut at Potsdam (1955) set the tone – Millöcker's three-act operetta *Gasparone*. Charles Barber explains,

From the beginning he had an affinity for operetta, never thinking it beneath him, but always determined to bring out the drama and power that so often lay within... He dug deeper than anyone else in this light repertoire and found riches there.¹⁴

Barber continues,

Carlos had a deft hand, a very light touch with the sweetly comic. His ear caught the ironic underline of any score that found ways to poke fun, with affection. He always responded to absurdity. He found humane truth in laughter. When all of this might be graced by music with those verities in aim, it was a near-perfect marriage.¹⁵

¹¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 158.

¹² *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹³ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

¹⁴ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 47.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 76.

Kleiber's first complete *Fledermaus* was in Geneva in 1965, where it was performed in French, *La Chauvre-Souris*, and the work was evidently one with which he felt very comfortable. Frequently engaged to conduct it for performances at the Bavarian State Opera during Fasching (Carnival), Kleiber exploited the humour of the work and the occasion. He enjoyed appearing on the podium particularly after interval, dressed as someone else. His characters and costumes included a construction worker, an Indian yogi and Boris Becker, on which occasion he used a tennis racquet to conduct.¹⁶ Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera, Wolfgang Sawallisch on conducting the same work in performance recalls looking up to the stage during the party scene to discover Carlos onstage, dressed as Johann Strauss II.

Charles Barber observes that 'it (*Fledermaus*) would bring out the silliness, cantabile, and intuitive hunt for secret longing at the heart of things which so qualified his work.'¹⁷ As such, Strauss' *Overture to Die Fledermaus* perhaps exemplifies Kleiber's conducting better than any other work.

¹⁶ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 283.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 76.

Kleiber's *Fledermaus*

'You can do it differently, but you definitely can't do it better... Actually, I don't even think you can do it differently!'¹⁸ For Klaus König, an oboist who performed the work with him on a number of occasions, Kleiber's *Fledermaus* was a revelation.

Despite having produced what for many is the definitive interpretation of the work, Kleiber was unsure of his own talents. In a letter of 1993 he confessed with typical self-deprecation:

Re – style, I'm in the dark. But it seems that the devil is hidden in details and that which details [sic] demand insistency isn't ever clear... It's dry like VERY fine French Champagne, which, as we know doesn't "taste" as "good" as cheaper imitations. Maybe it's a dialect! I, for one, can't bring it off; nor that style. But I'm "Japanese" and can do a pretty good...imitation? Maybe.¹⁹

The champagne analogy is one that offers a great deal of insight regarding Kleiber's approach to *Fledermaus* – bubbly, light and dry. These elements have a direct practical application to his interpretation of the work – most obviously in articulation and dynamics, and Kleiber's *Fledermaus* is one renowned for its lightness and buoyancy.

Despite claiming not to have any understanding of the style, Kleiber proffers specific stylistic advice regarding the interpretation of the Csárdás in Act 2. Ever faithful to the composer's intentions, he warns against unnecessary exaggeration. 'Friska – is that the last of the Csardas? (they) mislead people, who at all costs want to appear Hungarian [sic] than the Hungarians, like to start that reprise real slow and build it up. Me, I don't like that. Aargh!'²⁰ While no clarification of who 'they' are is included, it is reasonable to assume Kleiber is speaking of other conductors.

Kleiber's letters to Charles Barber reveal a great deal about his thoughts on the work. Barber, who was in the process of preparing *Fledermaus*, took the rare opportunity to ask Kleiber's advice on a number of points. Kleiber considered *Fledermaus* a difficult piece to conduct, describing it

¹⁸ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

¹⁹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 202.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

as a 'supremely persnickety piece'²¹ Kleiber's preferred recording was that of Clemens Krauss, which he recommended on a number of occasions.²²

Kleiber wrote to Barber,

Take care approaching "The Bat". Listen to Clemens Krauss and fix your orch. material + or – what you hear there. Take out a lot of the "fortes" and reduce them to "pianos". Don't do the ballet which is in the score. Never beat the "3" in a Waltz. Rosalinde's Csárdás is difficult until you know it well. Krauss is great there. Take it seriously, it's a HOMESICK piece, the Csárdás.²³

From this description we have an insight into Kleiber's thoughts regarding the work, and in particular his editorial amendments. Kleiber didn't use Strauss' original ballet in *Fledermaus* because he considered it boring, preferring to substitute the composer's *Unter Donner und Blitz*. He never once performed *Fledermaus* with the original ballet music.²⁴

Kleiber's recommendation to never beat the 3 in a waltz is self-explanatory and something we clearly see in the overture in this recording where he favours a pulse of one in a bar.²⁵ His suggestion to take out the *fortes* and substitute a *piano* dynamic is an element that contributes to the lightness that characterised Kleiber's *Fledermaus*. Kleiber's gestural elucidation of this element however, goes far beyond indicating a simple *piano* dynamic.

In the documentary *Traces to Nowhere*, conductor Manfred Honeck considers the means by which Kleiber achieved this lightness in gestural terms. Taking the *Fledermaus Overture*, Honeck analyses Kleiber's gestures in bars 248-249, 256-257, 361-362, 369-370 all of which feature an identical motif. He explains,

He holds the baton like a circus director...He knew exactly what to do to get an airy staccato. With a downward gesture this could never succeed – the effect would be too lugubrious. A downward gesture is always a little despondent and melancholy. An upward gesture is much sharper and he was fully aware of that.²⁶

²¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 79.

²² *Ibid* 79, 194, 202

²³ *Ibid*, 194.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 105.

²⁵ *Tempo di Valse* (bar 123), *Tempo di Valse* (bar 316)

²⁶ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, Director, Eric Schulz (ArtHaus Musik 101553, 2010).

Kleiber's attention to the finest and most explicit details was also at play in rehearsals, one player recalling in a production of *Fledermaus* the overture alone received 'three, four, five rehearsals.'²⁷ Of the six bell chimes in the piece, Kleiber knew which timbre he definitely didn't want. 'This one was too crystal, this knows too much of gold, this one too much of silver, more clearly, more darkly, he changes the bell, more the Croatian bell...'²⁸

Regarding the performance material he used, Kleiber also offered much detailed information. He admits in a letter his score of *Fledermaus* has 'almost nothing in it except what Joe S. composed (or what has been relayed to us as such.)'²⁹ Clearly then, Kleiber was not a conductor to mark his scores with reminders pertaining to cues or dynamics, a consequence of meticulous study and preparation. His attention to detail is confirmed by this warning 'Be careful: there are mistakes in there galore.'³⁰

Rather, Kleiber felt the players' parts should include all the detailed information. He states

I have always, maybe mistakenly, had the notion that, since the PARTS are what players play from, the parts have to be perfectly in order. Scores, I believe, are irrelevant. UNLESS you mark the score and give it to a copyist with instructions to transfer the markings to the parts. This is not my method, though. With "bat", if the players are Viennese it's less important to mark and/or bow everything. But with a Senegalese orchestra it might be a good idea. (No offence meant!)³¹

Kleiber's wry humour aside, he offers an interesting insight regarding the Viennese musicians, who he clearly feels have a degree of understanding of the stylistic characteristics of this work. One can reasonably assume this is also a factor in the success of Kleiber's Vienna *Fledermaus*.

Kleiber generously offered to send Barber his marked parts, an offer Barber declined.³² Kleiber did not in fact own a set of parts, but rather he had photocopied those belonging to the Bavarian State Opera which he had

²⁷ Marco Postinghel in Episode 9, *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 78.

³⁰ Most logically the Kalmus Edition of *Fledermaus*. Ibid., 206.

³¹ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 78.

³² Ibid., 79.

carefully marked. Amusingly Kleiber explains, 'I had my own private parts (OK, OK) fotocopied [sic] once and they are lying around somewhere, weighing a ton or more, dusty and completely loose (unbound, I mean).'³³

It can be assumed that the score from which Kleiber worked was that published by Kalmus, for he used his own heavily edited Kalmus parts. He explains, 'I used the material by the (expletive) Kalmus, which I had already prepared with lots of Eintragen (by me)... Look carefully at the Kalmus parts. They are seething with mistakes.'³⁴ In the time which had elapsed since Kleiber marked these parts, a new authoritative version of the work came on the market, the Neue Johann Strauss Gesamtausgabe,³⁵ and this was the definitive source Kleiber recommended.

³³ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 197.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁵ Strauss, Johann. *Die Fledermaus*, ed. Michael Rot, Neue Johann Strauss Gesamtausgabe, Strauss Edition Wien, RV 503, revised 1999.

Kleiber and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

As has been documented, Kleiber did not have a lasting working relationship with a large number of performing ensembles however one which was most favoured and feted was his connection with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. An enduring relationship between Kleiber and any performing organisation was a rarity so his twenty-one year association (1974–1994) with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra – the longest of any – is highly significant.

Concertmaster Clemens Hellsberg and his colleagues held Kleiber in unparalleled esteem.

The musical cosmos into which Kleiber tapped in each of his concerts, and the feeling with him of not only reaching, but also surpassing one's own limits will remain unforgettable for all those fortunate enough to have experienced it.³⁶

Former intendant Ioan Holender concurred, expressing it succinctly, 'Nobody in the State Opera's long history has conducted here so rarely and influenced the house so profoundly and lastingly as Carlos Kleiber.'³⁷ Accordingly, Kleiber's legacy lives on in Vienna where a rehearsal space in the opera house was dedicated to him.

Kleiber performed on 55 occasions with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, in 30 concerts and 25 operatic performances. It should be pointed out that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is part of the Vienna State Opera, whereby the orchestra that accompanies operatic performances is the same orchestra that appears on the concert platform.

Kleiber's VPO association was a rich one, particularly in terms of his recorded legacy. It was Kleiber's 1975 premiere recording of Beethoven's Fifth with this ensemble that launched his international career – their collaboration on Beethoven's Seventh the following year cemented it. Alongside these two landmark recordings is also Kleiber's renowned release of Schubert Symphony No. 3 and No. 8 – the only recording he made of the *Unfinished*.

³⁶ Clemens Hellsberg, 'In Memory of Carlos Kleiber', Wiener Philharmoniker.

³⁷ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 292.

Brahms' Symphonies 2 and 4 were both recorded on two occasions, as were Mozart Symphonies 33 and 36. Particularly well-known operatic masterpieces also formed part of their collaboration – *Carmen* (1978) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1994), both fortunately available on DVD. When combined with New Year's Day Concerts of 1989 and 1992, these works represent the substantial majority of Kleiber's repertoire.

While enduring, the relationship with the VPO was not always a happy one and in December 1982, it fractured almost beyond repair. Kleiber famously stormed out during a rehearsal of Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 and the concert was cancelled. The audio of this rehearsal can be heard in the documentary, *I am Lost to the World*. Kleiber becomes increasingly frustrated when he is unable to get the sound he is looking for at the beginning of the second movement. He eventually loses his temper, throws his baton down and gives up. He then walked out.

All was forgiven after some time and Kleiber continued to work with the VPO, perhaps most famously in the 1989 and 1992 New Year's Day concerts which were televised and broadcast across the globe. The 1989 concert in particular, was a happy affair. Musician Peter Schmidl said he rarely saw Kleiber as relaxed as on this occasion. 'He was so happy about conducting this concert...and if you see it today, you can see just how comfortable he felt.'³⁸ Former Chairman of the orchestra Werner Resel also noticed Kleiber's obvious enthusiasm, possibly because 'this concert with Kleiber was long overdue.'³⁹

Actually from 1991–1993, Kleiber conducted only the Vienna Philharmonic. 1993 saw an historic performance – Strauss' *Heldenleben*. Not only was it the only time in his career he conducted this work⁴⁰, for Kleiber to perform a completely new work at such a late stage in his career – when he was well on the way to a complete withdrawal from public life – was highly uncharacteristic.

³⁸ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 149.

Analysis of Kleiber's Conducting in Overture to Die Fledermaus

The analysis of Kleiber's conducting is organised according to the musical divisions outlined. His conducting is considered in terms of the three categories of nonverbal communication outlined in Chapter Two, namely:

1. Posture, Body Language and Movement
2. Facial Expression and Eye Contact
3. Manual Conducting Gestures

An additional category has been reserved for general observations and/or other remarks.

As the information presented hitherto confirms, any attempt at analysing nonverbal communication presents a number of challenges. Furthermore, while a DVD recording can be a perfect tool by which to evaluate a conductor's gestures, it is unable to fully capture aspects pertaining to charm, charisma, personality, energy and the rapport between conductor and players – the X Factor, or factors, in other words.

This analysis therefore, does not seek to explain those intangibles that comprise and contribute to the art of conducting. Rather, the focus is on the more obvious modes of physical gestural expression and seeking, insofar as is possible, to evaluate these in more precise terms.

When considering the category of Posture, Body Language and Movement, it is possible, for example, to observe changes in exactly where on the podium Kleiber stands, and whether he stands upright, leans over or crouches down. The position of his body relative to the orchestra is another point which can be assessed, along with all manner of physical motions such as nods of the head. The category of Manual Conducting Gestures will be evaluated similarly. Whether Kleiber uses both hands together or independently, the height at which they are placed and the spatial movement on vertical and horizontal planes are all identifiable aspects. Specific gestures as they relate to Strauss' score can also be clearly seen.

To attempt to analyse eye contact and facial expressions is, however, more challenging, primarily because the vast majority of information

communicated via these modes of expressions pertains to emotion, feeling, mood and character – all arguably subtle and elusive elements. Certain common gestures are obvious to identify – a smile, for example – however even an expression as seemingly obvious as this one can have a variety of meanings according to context.

For this reason, and indeed for all three categories therefore, I have contextualised my gestural analysis by reference to the specific and corresponding musical elements in the score. There are, of course, observable gestural generalisations at times and these are also noted; however, to highlight the correlation between precise textual aspects and conducting gestures is largely the aim of this analysis. In doing so, information will be gleaned as to the nature of the physical gestures employed by Kleiber as they correspond to Strauss' score. In addition to this *Fledermaus*-specific gestural analysis, a number of recognisable traits of Kleiber's conducting can be observed. These traits have been described by others, and this literature also forms part of the discussion of the analysis in Chapter Five.

Inasmuch as it is possible given the parameters outlined above, this analysis aims to be as objective as possible and is therefore the first assessment of Kleiber's conducting in such terms.

Video Analysis: Kleiber's 1989 Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Day Concert Performance

Allegro Vivace Bars 1-12

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relaxed, happy, open confident • erect with head held high • whole body jumps a little on preparation to upbeat • upbeat is reinforced by a fast nod of the head • final cut off is accompanied by a swing and turn of the body towards the viola section who commence the next phrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smiles • eye contact with the orchestra is of a very generalised nature, looking at the group as a whole rather than individual players or sections – obvious reflection of the tutti nature of this opening passage • purses lips for the opening chord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sweeping, confident two-handed up/down gesture to begin • repetition of opening motif in bar 3 is clearly rearticulated using a higher i.e. more elevated hand position • exclusively right hand gestures from bar 6 • <i>piano</i> dynamic in bar 7 is virtually non-conducted • <i>forte</i> dynamic in bar 8 effected by a moderate downward motion of the baton • phrase ends with a sweeping circular left hand gesture • right wrist is also completely free as can be seen bars 7-12 • final note of melodic phrase (approached from above by a leap of a 12th) is clearly indicated by an obvious and dramatic downturn of the point of the baton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baton held loosely in the fingertips • a wide variety of direction in terms of the tip of the baton • left wrist is completely flexible

Allegretto Bars 13-32

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole body rises and falls in line with the oboe melody • whole body travels from right to left during the oboe melody in b15-16 and left to right during the restatement of this theme two bars later • cello pizzicato at b23 clearly indicated by small, slightly jerky, energised upwards body movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used to great effect. Kleiber's eyes seem to follow the oboe melody b15-18 • breaks into a smile on restatement of oboe melody in b17-18 • flirtatious look to the First Violins prior to and throughout their entry at b19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baton connects the pulse in the violas at b13 with the oboe melody at b15 • from b15, the baton used essentially to indicate phrasing and musical details rather than conduct the pulse • contour of the oboe melody b15-18 clearly reflected in the direction and height of the baton • left hand dropped to his side in b16 corresponding with downward contour of oboe melody • left hand is used to reinforce the repetition of the oboe phrase in b8-19 • sweeping line of the left hand clearly indicates the legato to the First Violins in b19 • Violin II solo in b20 shaped by the baton • florid ascending left hand gesture reflects the dynamics and contour of the Violin I phrase b19-22 • flick of the wrist with the left hand and the baton in the right used to indicate the dotted rhythm and semiquaver upbeat to b22 • descending melodic scale in b24 is afforded more breadth, indicated via a more expansive gesture than that in b26 • twisting from right to left of the left 	

		<p>hand used to indicate the playful violin phrase in b27-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• left hand used to show the dialogue between the woodwinds and the strings in b29-30. Thumb and forefinger of the left hand are joined in a gesture which focusses the articulation. It is placed higher and further forward when indicating the woodwinds. Kleiber also moves his hand faster towards the conclusion of this gesture when communicating with the woodwinds than the strings. This results in a more pronounced attack and a shortened last quaver from the woodwinds than from the strings.• b31-32 are beat very passively – Kleiber almost seems to follow the orchestra here before reclaiming control at the Tempo I.	
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Tempo 1 Bars 33-40

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authority reasserted in b33 with an emphatic downbeat • the same fast nod of the head as was used at the opening of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • downbeat of b33 is pre-empted by a smile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in b33-34, hands are moving in a circular motion inwards towards the body, this changes to an outward motion in b35-36 to show the accents in the violins • b37-39 are conducted exclusively by changing both wrists between up and down positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Lento Bars 41-46

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arms open out and come apart in b41 – presumably to indicate the breadth and resonance of this opening chord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sudden, sharp downward movement of the left hand to indicate the <i>fortepiano</i> on the downbeat of b41 • left hand significantly elevated i.e. above head height, presumably to communicate with the trombones • horizontal left hand gesture in b41-42 suggests a legato connection between the trombone chords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from b42 onwards, this passage is unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

Allegretto Bars 47-68

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very free body, which seems to dance with the music • knees often bend, in contrast to previous upright posture • significant spatial movement from right to left • slight articulation of the downbeats in b66-69 with the head to reinforce the stringendo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expression of joyous happiness which heightens parallel with the stringendo and crescendo from b58 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two circular left hand motions correspond to the trills on beats one and two of b55, 57, 63, 65 • sustained minim in b56 is clearly indicated by a horizontal left hand gesture • in general, very large and expansive right hand gestures – it looks almost as though he is painting b58-62 • right hand and baton are completely inactive during the stringendo in b66-68 – it is effected by the circular left hand motions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b47-54 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

Allegretto Bars 69-73

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more relaxed and less intense than in the previous section • head turns slightly to indicate the dynamic change in b71 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eye contact directed more specifically towards the woodwinds in b71, corresponding with the change in dynamic from <i>forte</i> to <i>piano</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • downbeat of b69 is significantly less energised than the preceding 3 bars • right hand reassumes involvement at b69 • the beating in b69-70 is relatively passive, with a light and/or lifted quality – it is almost as though Kleiber is following the orchestra • active responsibility assumed in b71 to indicate the dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change. A slightly more forward right hand indicates this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Poco Meno Mosso Bars 74-109

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • body generally centered on the podium with very little movement – arms are however used very expressively • accompanying the expressive left hand gesture in b82-83, Kleiber lowers his head and raises his shoulders slightly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a generally relaxed, peaceful and serene expression throughout this section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mirrored two hand gestures used to establish the pulse in b74-75 • from b75, right hand is completely inactive until b97 when it is used to indicate the cello entry • left hand used in a floating horizontal motion from left to right and vice versa to indicate the line of the violin melody in b75-79 • slight <i>accelerando</i> – not marked in the score but traditionally performed – in b79-83 is effected by small circular left hand motions • for the climax of this <i>accelerando</i> and subsequent relaxation – beat two of b82 to beat one of b83 - Kleiber opens both hands in a welcoming type of gesture which seems to bring together this variation in tempo • the repetition of this melody is conducted similarly except for the climax of the <i>accelerando</i> beat two of b94 to beat one of b95 – in which Kleiber brings his left hand to his lips in a gesture which suggests tasting or savouring the moment. Concurrently, the right hand is extended slightly to the orchestra in a gesture which seems to indicate he is offering or sharing this moment with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b98-109 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

A tempo Bars 110-121

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • erect until b121 when Kleiber crouches down, corresponding to the <i>ppp</i> dynamic marking • b119 nods on every quaver beat as if to suggest the <i>ritardando</i> – not marked in the score – should not be too exaggerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a happy, almost childlike and playful facial expression • b119 looks to the flute and clarinet as if to encourage them to make a <i>ritardando</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b110 baton in an unusually elevated vertical position, in order to indicate a light staccato and character • gestures mirrored in both hands b110-116 • b110 both hands held at approximately shoulder height. Hands gradually move lower throughout b110-116, in line with the decreasing dynamic marking and the descending tessitura of the melody. • b110-121 features a two bar phrase repeated six times. The first bar is characterised by essentially static melodic movement and repeated pitches while the second features a descending triad. The descending pitches of this triad are clearly mirrored by Kleiber's hands in bars 111, 113 and 115, in each of which his hands lower with the melody. Correspondingly, bars 110, 112 and 114 featuring the repeated pitches are demonstrated by hand gestures on the same horizontal plane. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Tempo di Valse Bars 122-180

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleiber steps and leans back with his left hand holding the railing of the podium b130-135, removing himself from direct responsibility and giving the leadership over to the orchestra – an example of anticonducting • steps forward in b136 to reassert control, again giving emphasis to the ascending melodic line and final accented crotchet • steps back again b140-149 • return of the Valse theme in b150 is accompanied by a small dance-like step and motion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new tempo is established by a mirrored gesture using both hands • crescendo b122-125 is indicated by increasingly large right hand circular motions • downbeat of b126 indicated by a large circular left hand motion • b126-127 conducted exclusively by the left hand • b128-129 conducted exclusively by the right hand • ascending melodic figure in b128 indicated by both hands rising in elevation. • final accented crotchet beat of b128 is indicated by a flick of the baton. • b141-146 conducted by clockwise circular movements. The pedal point leading into the return of the Valse theme b147-150 sees these circular motions change to an anti-clockwise direction. • b166-180 feature a repeated four bar phrase, conducted with decreasing energy and smaller gestures with each successive repetition. • downbeat of b166 features a highly energised, large motion • an elevated horizontal floating gesture at head height with both hands b168-169 and with the baton b172-173 and b176-177 is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b150-165 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

		used to indicate the desired sostenuto of these bars. It also serves to highlight the pitch relationship of these bars to those preceding, i.e. much higher.	
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Allegro Bars 181-200

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emphasises the lower string pizzicato in b197 by leaning slightly forward and lowering his head extends this forward position in communicating the <i>pianissimo</i> dynamic and slight slow down to the bassoons in b198 returns to an upright standing position in b199 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b189-196 a very passive, almost disinterested facial expression bassoon entry in 198 gets a wry smile and the continuation of the <i>ritardando</i> in this bar seems to be completely led by Kleiber's eye contact with the players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b189-196 a static left hand is held at the same level as the right which beats time in a seemingly perfunctory manner Kleiber's left hand is raised to touch his lips in b201, presumably as a reminder to the oboe that the forthcoming melody should not be too loud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b181-188 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

Andante con moto Bars 201-226

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leans forward and crouches slightly in b201 towards the oboe • a great deal of whole body involvement b222-225 • physically very agitated b222-223 on the anacrusis of these bars leading into 223 and 224 • b224 sees a very exaggerated crouching and bent over posture, leaning into the accents on each beat of this bar • b226-227 Kleiber relaxes, steps back and holds the railing of the podium, another instance of anticonducting • a slight turn of the head corresponds with the clarinet echo in b226 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • closes his eyes briefly before the oboe entry in b201 • an almost pained expression on Kleiber's face in b224, suggestive of the pathos of this bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the left hand makes a sort of stroking gesture precipitating the oboe solo in b201, seemingly to coax the sound from the player • a very large two-handed circular gesture reflects the crescendo in b222 leading to the downbeat of 223. This gesture seems to somehow scoop up the anacrusis to the following bar and place it on the downbeat of the next bar • b224 sees almost stabbing motions with both hands, the intensity of which decreases throughout the bar • final beat of b224, on which the <i>ritardando</i> is most significant, is shown by a large circular motion of the left hand leading to the downbeat of the following bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b202-221 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

Allegro molto moderato Bars 227-279

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • left shoulder is brought slightly forward in b229, where it remains until b236 • downbeat of 237 sees Kleiber bring his right shoulder forward in exchange for the left, perhaps highlighting the tutti orchestral entry • crouches down in order to point out the violin response to the orchestra in b245 and 253 • body used to reinforce legato b260-264 • seems to jump slightly accompanying the trumpet entries in 264 and 266. This slightly elevated height is more pronounced in the second entry in b266 which is a tone higher than the preceding one • leans backwards with an almost contemplative expression during the held the bassoon and clarinet chord in 278. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upbeat to b229 is clearly conveyed by Kleiber's eyes and facial expression – raised eyebrows and a smile • head is lowered and expression changing in b236 • exuberance of b268-274 very clear • a smile used to introduce the new section at b280 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upbeat to bar 229 is literally 'lifted' by a two handed gesture in which the hands seem to lift the sound. • downbeat of b229 is flicked up in the air with a two handed motion resulting in a dotted quaver significantly shorter and more separated than is notated • the musical shape of b229-230 is indicated by a linear left hand gesture • b229-235 generally very small gestures, corresponding to the <i>pianissimo</i> dynamic marking • b231-235 right hand held passively, almost not beating • string accents in b233 and 234 are clearly articulated with the left hand • <i>forte</i> First Violin flourish in b236 designated by a confident left hand circular motion • right hand assumes responsibility for the full orchestral <i>forte</i> tutti in b237 • downbeat accents in 237 and 238 clearly marked by a forward pointed gesture with the baton. The other beats of these bars receive little attention. • a sort of windscreen wiper motion with the baton characterises b239-240 • b241-243 which are a repeat of b237-239 are not conducted with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

		<p>the same energy as in the first instance and in fact are almost not conducted, Kleiber seeming to rely on the orchestra here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>fortissimo</i> at b244 is designated by a very fast, clear downbeat with the baton• dialogue between the violins and the full orchestra, b244-247, 253-256 clearly shown with Kleiber pointing the baton directly at the centre of the orchestra before leaning into the violins• descending melodic motif b248-249 shown with a sort of bird-like horizontal left hand gesture.• b256-257, the repeat of 248-249 are this time shown with the baton tip pointing directly upwards, indicative of the lightness with which the figure should be played• legato phrasing of b260-264 clearly shown with horizontal sweeping gestures using both hands• trumpet entries in 264 and 266 clearly indicated by two handed staccato gestures marking the rhythm• the two handed legato gestures used in 268-271 increase in size and intensity over these four bars leading into the <i>fortissimo</i> of 272• cut off in 274 sees both hands brought to Kleiber's chest to stop the sound	
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Tempo ritenuto grazioso Bars 280-315

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b280-281 Kleiber's light, bouncy and dance-like motions very much in the character of this section • hunches forward in 315, presumably to alert attention to the <i>ritardando</i> in this bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • happy, smiling expression b280-281 • a clear look to the first violins in b315 to help place this final quaver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b280 both hands mirror the gestures which establish the pulse • b280 Kleiber abandons the baton in favour of the left hand which is used to presumably indicate the legato phrasing of the flute melody • when the camera returns at b297, Kleiber again is conducting only with the left hand • legato violin phrasing in 297-298 clearly shown with a horizontal left hand gesture moving from left to right and vice versa • upbeat to and b300 also conducted clearly and exclusively with the left hand • b302 Kleiber shifts the focus of his left hand gestures to the entry of the first horn, whose melodic line is indicated with a horizontal right to left gesture • b307 brings his left hand in to his chest with this violin phrase • downbeat of b310 clearly marks the end of the preceding phrase with a downwards left hand gesture • violin trills b310-313 shown with small, flutter-like left hand circles • right hand inactive b310-313 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b282-296 unfortunately largely obscured by camera angle

Tempo di Valse Bars 316-350

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gradually assumes an upright standing position through bars 316-319 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasingly animated expression through bars 316-319 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the same large circular left handed gesture used to indicate the return of the waltz theme in 320 as in the corresponding section at b126 large circular right hand motions used b331-335 <i>fortissimo</i> in 336 marked by a large right hand gesture which sees the hand lifted to head height before being released and dropped large double handed upwards circular gestures mark b337-442 b442-443 sees a horizontal floating gesture employed, suggestive of the legato line and repeated pitch repeat of the phrase b344-350 not conducted with the same energy as b336-343 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b320-330 largely obscured by camera angle

Allegro Moderato Bars 351-387

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crouches down b357-360, gradually becoming more upright over the ensuing bars. He leans to the left and directs his attention towards the violins in 358 and 360, doing the same in the corresponding bars of 366 and 368. In this gesture he is clearly listening to the violins, and seems to be encouraging the players to do the same. • crouches down through 371 to 372 in an obvious indication of the <i>diminuendo</i> in the lower strings • he remains crouched down for the return of the theme at 373, remaining in that position until the <i>forte</i> in bar 380 • head is raised in 383, a bar where Kleiber stops conducting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouth slightly open, a generally relaxed and contented facial expression from bars 357-372 • Eyes are directed to the orchestra in general rather than any specific section even when directing attention towards the violins in 358, 360, 366, 368. • Clearly dissatisfied with the <i>pianissimo</i> dynamic he is hearing at 375, Kleiber raises his right hand to his lips in a sign to indicate softer. He closes his eyes and appears to be almost wincing in an attempt to get the desired degree of <i>pianissimo</i> • The <i>forte</i> at 380 corresponds with a happier facial expression and a smile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly indicates the dialogue between the violins and orchestra in bars 358 and 360. In bar 358 he uses his left hand to indicate the violins, in 360 he directs the baton with the right hand in a pointed gesture towards them • Similarly in 376 and 378 he uses the baton on both occasions, moving and lowering it from the woodwinds – directly in front, to the violins to his left • the same upward position of the baton used in 256-257 is also seen here again in 361-362 whereas on the repeat in 369-370, the baton is used to beat these bars in a more conventional fashion • after being used in 358, Kleiber lowers his left hand to his side, bringing it into effect again in b371 to effect and better control the <i>ritardando</i> • from 373 he stops beating with the right hand, rather using it in contrary motion with the left hand which leads. The left hand is used in a horizontal motion from left to right and back again, perhaps reflecting the static melodic movement of this melody – only a tone – in 373-374 • In the repeat of this melody starting at 378, Kleiber virtually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b351-356 largely obscured by camera angle

		<p>stops conducting, holding right and left hands still</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The melodic flourish in 380 is indicated by a left hand gesture which perfectly reflects the melodic contour, a sort of scooping gesture which goes down before rising up in an arc• The left hand in a sort of flicking gesture is used to clearly show the accents in 381 and 382• bars 383-384 are unconduted. The right hand remains inactive, simply holding the baton until the upbeat to 388• a clear cue with an elevated left hand is given to the trumpets at 385-386 to indicate the change of harmony	
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Piu Vivo Bars 388-

Posture, Body Language and Movement	Facial Expression and Eye Contact	Manual Conducting Gestures	General/ Other remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the arrival point at 388 is evidenced by the raising of the head which had been lowered in the preceding bar • significant spatial use by both arms b388-391, thereafter of the right arm only • bars 416-419 Kleiber seems to be chomping his teeth along with the very articulated quavers punctuating these bars • slightly lowers his body and throws it from left to right in the final bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an expression of happiness is evident from bar 388. • Kleiber's smile widens and becomes much more convincing from the downbeat of this bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from bar 388 Kleiber's attention is focused on the bigger picture, in particular shaping the longer phrases. Consequently he beats in one using very expansive legato motions of both hands • bar 391 sees the left hand raised to the level of his face in a motion which indicates a <i>piano</i> dynamic and/or not too much. We can assume this is an indication for the bass drum that enters the following bar. • bar 416 we see the right hand move across the body from right to left. • from 416 conducts in two, using a short, sharp downward striking motion with the baton, presumably to indicate the length of the quavers on these beats. • The final bar sees a definitive slashing motion of the baton from his left shoulder, across the body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bb404-415 largely obscured by camera angle

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

He's not conducting in an academic sense. He is conveying characters and only characters. And it's so difficult to really put your finger on why it is so different from the others. But he has a technical vocabulary that is so individual and yet so expressive. He is able to show certain things with his eyes and with his hands and with his physical movements that leave no doubt of what has to happen. *He is the piece* and one cannot possibly do it any other way than he shows.¹

Kleiber's perfect gestural language as the consummate manifestation of his musicality earns superlatives beyond compare. To translate into physical forms of expression all manner of musical preparation, scholarship, interpretation, thought and expression is the essence of the art of conducting, and no conductor has perfected this to a greater degree than Carlos Kleiber. It is the combination of body language, manual gestures, facial expression and eye contact in order to synthesise the various technical, musical and expressive elements that constitutes a conductor's physical gestural expression.

Typically, and as Järvi's assessment highlights, there is much in Kleiber's conducting which defies explanation, description or analysis. Indeed, the difficulty in describing these intangible elements is not limited to Kleiber: however, it is clear that given the extent by which his effectiveness outshone that of his colleagues, these intangibles assume a significantly more prominent role.

Kleiber's approach was a unique one. Kai Bernhöft, a musician with the Bavarian State Orchestra remembers the focus of Kleiber's work was different to that of other conductors. 'He didn't conduct in an academic style. Rather, he tried to draw an atmosphere by his movement.'² Similarly Dieter Flury, Principal Flute of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra recalls one of the means by which Kleiber achieved this success, remembering 'he worked on the meaning of the music, on the psychology, on the state of feeling. And technical perfection resulted; he worked with the souls, not with the instruments.'³

Perhaps in the same way an artist paints a huge canvass, this overriding expressive framework was the context in which Kleiber operated. On this canvass, within this broader musical architecture, exists a plethora of minute details, each the subject of painstaking attention. As a viewing of Kleiber's *Fledermaus* confirms,

¹ Conductor Paavo Järvi in Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 127.

² *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

³ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

virtually every element of the composer's score is accorded attention and conveyed via judicious and specific use of apposite physical gestures.

Kleiber's success owed much to this singular approach alongside his mode of physical gestural expression, which was clearly in a league of its own. As Järvi points out, Kleiber's technical vocabulary was 'so individual and expressive' and used in a way such that there could be no doubt as to his musical intentions. Similarly, Riccardo Muti observed Kleiber's gestures were impossible to copy for he conducted as though free as a bird,⁴ an observation in support of this premise.

Kleiber's innate physical expressiveness was remarked on by musician Marco Postinghel, who highlighted his exceptionally beautiful 'Körpersprache,'⁵ remembering that Kleiber 'had a body language that spoke. The eyes, the face, but also the arms, the arms above all.'⁶ This connection between Kleiber's manual gestures and his body as the broader vehicle for gestural expression was unparalleled – 'perfect, as if somehow all are one.'⁷

The following sections will attempt to demystify the gestural component of Kleiber's art by drawing on the analysis presented in Chapter Four. The discussion is presented according to the three parameters established for analysis: Posture, Body Language and Movement, Facial Expressions and Eye Contact, and Manual Conducting Gestures.

⁴ *Carlos Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

⁵ Körpersprache = Body Language

⁶ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

⁷ 'Es gibt wohl keinen zweiten Dirigenten, bei dem die Eleganz des Körpers, der Arme und der Hände sich in solchem Maße auf den Stab übertragen hat.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber - der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 40.

Posture, Body Language and Movement

Perhaps initially, the most striking aspect when considering Kleiber's body language is the extent to which it is integrated with the conducting process. Indeed, it is not connected in a passive manner whereby body movement results from an association with manual gesture, rather, it is a principal feature of the act of conducting. Kleiber's body is used to indicate specifics relating to tempo, dynamics, articulation and phrasing, along with more subtle and nuanced musical details of expression. He achieves this via a number of means and using a highly creative array of gestures.

In accordance with evidence presented in Chapter Two, it is necessary for a conductor to establish authority and exhibit confidence. Beginning the work with an open, relaxed and confident body posture, Kleiber's head is held erect and high. The open and relaxed body posture indicates a lack of inhibitions and nerves. It also establishes a warm, welcoming and supportive atmosphere, one in which he invites the musicians to join him. Simultaneously, the position of his head leaves no doubt as to Kleiber's confidence in leading the orchestra. Combined with facial expressions, his buoyant body reflects the joyous nature of the opening of this piece.

Kleiber uses his body to reflect numerous musical and expressive details of Strauss' score. For example, he swings his body toward the viola section in bar 12, in preparation for their entry the following bar. The rise and fall of his body in line with the melodic contour of the oboe melody in bars 15-18 is also significant as it is an example whereby Kleiber personifies the score – here, he *is* the music. In bars 15-16 his body moves from right to left and for the restatement of this melody in bars 17-18, from left to right, seemingly to suggest that while the melody is exactly the same, the repeat should exhibit a different quality. Kleiber does a similar thing in bar 226 – a slight turn of the head indicates the clarinet echo of the motif in the preceding bar.

He indicates the cello pizzicato in bar 23 via small, slightly jerky, energised upwards body movements – a perfect gesture by which to reinforce this descending pizzicato line. The pizzicato in bar 197, on the other hand, is indicated in an entirely different fashion – leaning slightly forward and lowering the head. Indeed, the quality of the pizzicato in these two bars is vastly differing – the first is a playful accompaniment to the violin melody whereas the second is an indication of a darker, brooding and more solemn character leading into the following section which is

based on the lament, 'So muß ich allein bleiben.'⁸ The physical motions of Kleiber's body therefore go far beyond indicating the fundamental information in the score – they are used to indicate and reinforce the character of the music.

Articulation is another musical element which Kleiber emphasises via physical motions. Bars 222-226 which see the music conducted principally with the body, is an excellent example. The accents in bar 224 are articulated via a downward body motion, leaning into each beat of this bar. Kleiber's body movements in these bars are, however, not limited exclusively to showing articulation – again, the pathos of the music is conveyed by his movements which reflect pain and anguish. In what must be an entirely Kleiberesque physical gesture, he can be seen chomping his teeth, almost with excitement, in the final bars 416-419 so as to reinforce the very short quavers comprising the juggernaut via which the work reaches its conclusion – a rather unique way by which to express this aspect of the score.

Body movements are also used to indicate dynamic markings. A slight turn of the head in bar 71 indicates the change of dynamic from *forte* to *piano*, crouching down at bar 121 reflects the *ppp* dynamic, in bar and similarly in bar 372, to show the *diminuendo*.

Subtle tempo indications are also reinforced via body posture. Slight nods of the head on each downbeat through bars 66-69 seem to reinforce the *stringendo*, while the same gesture is used conversely in bar 119 in order to suggest the *ritardando* (not marked in the score) should not be too exaggerated. Similarly, Kleiber leans forward in bar 315 in order to issue a reminder regarding the *ritardando* in this bar.

The lightness and dance-like elements of Strauss' score are also singled out by Kleiber for physical demonstration. The return of the Valse theme in bar 150 is accompanied by a small, dance-like step and similarly bar 280-281, the return of this section sees a bouncy sort of motion reinforcing the light character of this section – again, Kleiber's physical gestures indicative of the most refined musical and expressive details.

Kleiber also uses a variety of spatial techniques via which to communicate. Bars 130-135 see him step back and hold the railing of the podium, as if to remove himself from direct responsibility and hand that role over to the orchestra. A forward step towards the orchestra the following bar reasserts authority and control before

⁸ 'So I am condemned to stay alone.'

the same leaning back posture is assumed through bars 140-149. Indeed, this habit of Kleiber's – to step back and remove himself from the orchestra as it were – is very much a feature of his style.

Conductor Mark Elder explains that Kleiber had an 'extraordinary ability to impart trust to an orchestra... He makes them feel they can do it.'⁹ One of the principal means through which Kleiber conveyed trust to players was indeed by absolving himself of the leadership role and offering it to the orchestra. In doing so, the unconventional and free gestures which are a hallmark of Kleiber's work were, at times, so free as to virtually not be there. Sometimes he might pause, stop conducting, preferring to communicate via physical motions or facial expressions alone.

As seen in this performance of *Fledermaus*, when Kleiber leans back and holds the podium railing with one hand he continues to conduct in a passive and indirect manner (bars 130-135, 140-149, 226-227). This technique is described by Fischer as an impromptu style of conducting, one of calculated risk, whereby Kleiber retreats somewhat from the act of conducting, disengages almost, in order to hand responsibility over to the players.¹⁰

This 'anti-conducting' was explained by Sir Peter Jonas as 'leading players to a conception, rather than simply giving a beat to follow.'¹¹ Similarly, Walsh and Spelman agreed that Kleiber's approach in not beating time offers a greater degree of autonomy.¹² Matheopoulos also recognises this phenomenon, reporting Kleiber had a way of stepping back and relaxing, whilst continuing to remain concentrated on all aspects of the performance.¹³ This 'anti-conducting' then, is another key feature of Kleiber's conducting style and an excellent example of his use of body posture to great effect.

'Anti-conducting', by and large, therefore sees the conductor's body assume the leading role in the communicative conducting process, subjugating the role of manual gestures. Supporting the use of the body are the other powerful aspects of

⁹ Kettle, 'A Rare Touch of Musical Magic,' *The Guardian*, January 1 1990.

¹⁰ 'Kleiber trat auf dem Pult einen winzigen Schritt zurück, hielt sich mit der linken Hand an der Brüstung des Pultes fest, was er gern tat, schien aus dem Geschehen sich abzumelden, überließ das Orchester scheinbar sich selbst...' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber - der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 38.

¹¹ *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹² Walsh and Spelman, 'Music: Unvarnished Symphonies', *Time Magazine*, June 13 1983.

¹³ Matheopoulos, *Maestro: Encounters with Conductors of Today*, 449.

non-verbal communication, namely facial expressions and eye contact, with one musician explaining how Kleiber used this technique to great effect:

perhaps seen from outside it looked like a motionless body, but he was inside the flux of the music and with a brief gesture of the eyes, of the shoulders or elbows or knees, he succeeded in controlling that which, others, alas, couldn't.¹⁴

Kleiber's body language, then, is characterised by a unique originality. Using his body, Kleiber is able to convey aspects of Strauss' score, along with details pertaining to style, nuance and interpretation. The technique of 'anti-conducting' is also an idiosyncratic one – seemingly a contradiction in terms, it is one which serves to strengthen Kleiber's leadership and control of the orchestra.

¹⁴ *The Smile of Music – A Portrait of Carlos Kleiber*, RAI Radio3 Series, 2008.

Facial Expression and Eye Contact

Highlighted in Chapter Two as the most effective and efficient means of nonverbal communication, Kleiber uses facial expressions and eye contact to great effect in this performance. Principally, facial expressions and eye contact are used to depict mood and character, however these communicative techniques are also used, on occasion, to relay musical information.

While all aspects of nonverbal communication are characterised by their intangibility, facial expressions are ultimately the most challenging to describe. Unlike body motions and manual gestures which can be analysed, to an extent, in physical and spatial terms, the variety of nuance conveyed via facial expression and through the eyes cannot be treated similarly. The musical context is therefore of paramount importance, particularly when considering the emotional content of such gestures.

For the majority of this performance, Kleiber's facial expression is one of happiness, in line with the general joyful character of the work. Smiles are used to indicate new sections, and the variation of expression within this general mood is remarkable. We see moments of suggestive, flirtatious happiness, childlike and silly happiness, and peaceful, serene happiness, all communicated exclusively via eye contact and facial expressions.

Commencing the performance with a smile, the jovial appeal of the piece is clearly conveyed. This same smile precedes the return of the opening theme at bar 33 – the same gesture is used to correspond to the same music.

The oboe melody in bars 15-18 is given significant attention via facial expressions. Kleiber's eyes correspond with the contour of the oboe melody in these bars and along with his body motions, he represents the physical embodiment of the music. Similarly, in a gesture that cannot accurately be put into words, the First Violin entry at bar 19 is accorded an almost salacious look – the quasi-fantasy of the resulting phrase clear.

In conveying the character of the music via facial expressions, Kleiber is particularly effective. The graceful, floating violin melody of the *Meno Mosso* at bar 74 is indicated by a peaceful and serene facial expression throughout this section. The playful nature of the *a tempo* at 110 is again reflected in Kleiber's facial expressions and similarly, the exuberance of bars 268-274 is very clear.

Kleiber also uses his eyes to indicate dynamic shadings. In bar 71, for

example, he turns his attention to the woodwinds, in line with the dynamic change from *forte* to *piano*. With closed eyes and almost wincing, Kleiber indicates his dissatisfaction with the *pp* dynamic – and wish to modify it – from bar 375 before the *forte* marking at bar 380 is designated by a smile.

Facial expressions are also used to indicate points of varying musical intensity. We see this most clearly from bar 224 where Kleiber's almost pained facial expression is indicative of this pathos-laden melody. An increasingly animated expression throughout bars 316-319 corresponds with the crescendo to the *forte* on the downbeat of 320. A similar technique is used to indicate the stringendo beginning in bar 56 which leads ultimately into the following Allegretto.

Aspects of slight tempo modifications are another element over which facial expressions and eye contact have an effect. A look towards the flute and clarinet in bar 119 seems to suggest this slight *ritardando* which is not marked in the score. Similarly, the continuation of the *ritardando* in bar 198 is conducted entirely by Kleiber's eyes, with the baton offering passive support.

Conducted also entirely via facial expressions is the upbeat to the theme of the Allegro molto moderato at bar 229 where a smile and raised eyebrows are used on this occasion. In a similar instance, there is a clear look to the First Violins in bar 315 in order to assist them with the placement of this final quaver before the return of the Tempo di Valse.

As such, the variety of musical elements for which Kleiber uses facial expressions is remarkable, the scope of character and emotion reflected via looks and smiles also extraordinary. Indeed, Kleiber's use of eye contact and the effectiveness of his facial expressions have been highlighted as most exceptional qualities. Barber notes the extent to which Kleiber could use this ability to communicate, stating 'the way his eyes controlled a room and a person without meaning to do so but effectively doing so was really quite astonishing.'¹⁵ Oboist Klaus König also recalls, 'His movements were pure music, also in his face.'¹⁶

Perhaps König's statement is a most appropriate closing one for this section – Kleiber's facial expressions *were* the music.

¹⁵ Charles Barber, *Who was Carlos Kleiber?* BBC Radio Documentary, 2009.

¹⁶ *Kleiber: I am Lost to the World*, 2011.

Manual Conducting Gestures

In the overall context of gestural expression Kleiber's manual gestures maintain a unique place. Kleiber's manual gestures are notable for their sheer variety, glove-like fit to the composer's score and the exceptional degree of detail they convey. Creative, expressive and unorthodox, Kleiber's manual gestures, like his broader physical gestures, are entirely free, seemingly unconstrained by the technical framework from which they were originally derived. This degree of freedom largely underpins the success of his manual gestures which are inspired solely by musical and artistic elements.

Fellow conductor Manfred Honeck describes a simplicity, borne of the music, without regard for traditional conducting patterns, rules or protocol.

He took the melody and shaped it with his hands, he simply took it with his hands, and everyone understood. With just one gesture he could give the music the lift it required... he could suddenly send it soaring with just one motion of his hands.¹⁷

One such example of this motion can be observed in Kleiber's two-handed gesture in the upbeat to bar 229 in which he literally appears to 'lift' the sound. A similar phenomenon is communicated via a large two-handed gesture leading to the downbeat of bar 223. This gesture also seems to scoop up the anacrusis and 'place' it on the downbeat of the next bar. The *fortissimo* in bar 336 is also the subject of a similar technique – the left hand is lifted to head height before being released and dropped in a most obvious correlation to the score.

Even in a context where the act of time-beating is accorded a role of secondary importance, with Kleiber this function is much less significant than with other conductors. Rather, the expressive content of the music is of principal importance and every time-beating gesture is imbued with musical and interpretative characteristics. In what is another distinctly Kleiberian trait, the right and left hands are used in tandem and interchangeably. As such, Kleiber's gestural language is both artistic and atypical. Leaving behind the established convention which dictates the right hand is responsible for rhythmic information and the left reserved for expressive means, Kleiber's conducting is noticeable for its uniqueness even at this

¹⁷ Carlos Kleiber: *Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

uppermost artistic level.

As with his physical gestures and facial expressions, Kleiber's manual gestures offer information as to numerous musical elements, phrasing and interpretation. One of the principal means Kleiber uses is a spatial one – the actual height and positioning of his hands reflects the details of the score. For example, the restatement of the opening theme in bar 3 is clearly rearticulated using a more elevated hand position as if to indicate the repeat should be more emphatic. The final note of the melody of this opening section is similarly indicated spatially. This interval of a descending 12th is indicated via the dramatic shift from an elevated baton position to a much lower one in which the tip of the baton is pointed directly to the floor. The contour of the oboe melody in bars 15-18 is another example – it is clearly reflected in the direction and height of the baton. Conversely, horizontal motions of the arms in bars 110, 112 and 114 mark static melodic movement. Similar instances can be observed in bars 168-169, 172-173, 176-177, 373-374.

Rhythmic elements are also given attention – the dotted rhythm on the final beat of bar 22 is shown via a flick of the wrist. The trumpet entries in bars 264 and 266 are also marked by a two-handed staccato gesture which articulates the rhythm. Another such example is the downbeat of bar 229 which is flicked up in the air, resulting in a dotted quaver significantly shorter and more separated than is notated. While most conductors attend to matters of phrasing and shaping of the melody, the indication of rhythmic aspects is far less common, possibly unique.

Aside from melodic and rhythmic elements, Kleiber's manual gestures extend to indicating changes in harmony. The pedal point (bars 147-149) leading into the return of the Valse theme at bar 150 is an excellent example. Bar 147 marks a change in the direction of Kleiber's circular motions which are modified from clockwise to anticlockwise at this bar. Another example of a manual harmonic indication is demonstrated via a clear cue with an elevated left hand to the trumpets in bars 385-386.

Articulation is also clearly indicated via manual gestures; Kleiber's trademark attention to detail clearly reflected in physical terms. He uses an innovative gestural technique in bars 33-34 whereby he changes the direction of the circular motion of his hands in order to indicate the accents. The accents in bars 237 and 238 are of a significantly different quality – a lighter and more playful one. Accordingly, a different type of gesture is used – these accents are clearly marked by a forward pointed

gesture with the baton. Highlighting this motion is the fact Kleiber does very little on the other beats of these bars.

The dialogue between the woodwinds and the strings in bars 29-30 is clearly distinguished via motions of the left hand which alternates between these sections, emphasising the interplay. Also in these bars, the thumb and forefinger of the left hand are joined in a gesture which focusses the articulation. By moving his hand higher and closer to the winds than the strings, they produce a more pronounced attack and shortened final quaver than do the strings. The dialogue between the same sections in 244-247 and 253-256 is also clearly shown, this time via the alternation of the baton placed in the centre of the orchestra towards the winds and leaning into the violins.

Complete freedom in his arm movements means that Kleiber's expression of legato and sostenuto melody lines is incomparable. The connection between Kleiber's body and his manual gestures has already been remarked on and nowhere is it more apparent than in this context. Very large and expansive gestures are used to indicate individual legato lines, as well as broader orchestral phrases. Such examples can be found in bars 19, 41-42, 58-62, 75-79, 168-169, 172-173, 176-177, 297-298 and from 388 – an excellent example indicating the broader phrasing.

Character is also indicated via manual gestures to an unmatched degree. The playful character of the violin phrase in bar 27-28 is indicated via a unique twisting motion of the left hand which moves from right to left while bar 224 sees gestures which can most accurately be described as stabbing motions, reinforcing the pathos of this theme. Numerous other examples of idiosyncratic gestures can also be observed. Bars 94-95 see Kleiber's left hand brought to his lips in a gesture which seems to suggest he is tasting or savouring the moment. Bars 239-240 see a sort of windscreen wiper-like motion, the cut off in bar 274 sees both hands brought to the chest to stop the sound and the final chord of the piece is designated via a slashing-like motion of the baton across his body. Such a diversity of manual gestures is unique; the degree of musical detail conveyed unparalleled.

One of the most obvious techniques by which to communicate information is via a change in the size of the beat. Kleiber employs this technique for the crescendo in bars 122-125 whereby increasingly larger right hand circular motions are used. The use of these circular motions also injects energy and projects a degree of intensity, corresponding with the heightened excitement of the music. Similar circular

left hand motions, as if to wind up the orchestra, are also used to enact the slight *accelerando* – not marked in the score – in bars 79-83. A larger left hand gesture is also used on the final beat of bar 224 on which the *ritardando* is the greatest.

Ornaments are another detail indicated manually. Two circular left hand motions correspond to the trills on beats one and two of bars 55, 57, 63 and 65. Similarly, these flutter-like left hand motions are also employed to indicate trills in the violin line again in bars 310-313 – these light and playful gestures not only indicate the musical content of the score but also serve to underline the character of the music.

Kleiber's baton technique also warrants mention. Another of the means through which this degree of musical and expressive intricacy is communicated is via Kleiber's use of the baton in a variety of creative and highly unconventional ways. Specifically, modifying the placement and angle of the baton can communicate a great deal of information. At times the stick is entirely horizontal to show the legato line of the melody, pointed directly towards the floor in a commanding *forte* gesture, or held delicately upwards in order to suggest a light staccato. One such example is bar 110 which sees the baton used in an unusually elevated position with the stick almost vertical, in order to indicate this light staccato. The same technique is employed for the corresponding music at 256-257 and 361-362 where the baton on these occasions, is entirely vertical. In this instance, again, Kleiber's manual gestures go beyond representing purely musical details but are in themselves the physical manifestation of the music, that is, of the *character* of the music.

It is therefore clear that Kleiber's ability to translate the composer's intentions into manual means of expression was a quality he possessed in abundance. His hand movements and physical gestures were inextricably connected to the music, in a way well beyond that of other conductors. Kleiber's fanatical dedication to score study and preparation also translated into precise physical expression, as evidenced by Fischer who observes how this scholarship was reflected in gestural terms.

Unrivalled was the refinement of the phrasing, the way his beat came a fraction of a second earlier when he knew that the tempo at this particular place often dragged, or when on the other hand, he incorporated a moment's hesitation when the orchestra was generally inclined to accelerate.¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Unerreicht war sein Raffinement der Phrasierung, die Art, wie sein Schlag einen Sekundenbruchteil früher kam, wenn er wußte, daß das Tempo an dieser Stelle oft verschleppt wurde, oder wenn er im

Manfred Honeck explained the way in which Kleiber achieved such gestural precision, revealing that he rehearsed gestures quasi-choreographically beforehand¹⁹ and Kleiber himself admitted to practising in the mirror in an effort to execute gestures so they looked good.²⁰ Such evidence underlines his fanaticism in attending to every aspect of the conductor's art and Kleiber's clear understanding of the physicality inherent therein.

Gegenteil eine winzige Verzögerung einbaute, wenn das Orchester normalerweise zum Schnellerwerden neigte.' Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber - der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 38.

¹⁹ *Carlos Kleiber: Traces to Nowhere*, 2010.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Even in an art form that relies to a considerable degree on conjuring -- the conductor using the power of communication through eyes, body gestures and words to convey to other musicians the essence of sound -- Kleiber was a remarkable magician. A performance by him was like that of no other conductor. His eyes had a glint that all but hypnotized orchestra, musician and audience member alike. His gestures were so precise that they seemed to etch melodies out of thin air. It was as if every fiber in his body was translated into single-minded musical impulse, which he conveyed with a dancer's grace.²¹

From this description, it is clear the cumulative effect and synthesis of the individual physical and gestural aspects ensures a sum of the whole which is greater than that of its component parts. Indeed, in spite of numerous individual aspects which can be identified, singled out and analysed, Kleiber's conducting still seems to defy superlatives. The 1989 Vienna performance of Kleiber's *Fledermaus Overture* is a supreme example of his conducting style, exemplifying these individual facets which characterise and define his style. Kleiber's hypnotising eyes, perfect manual gestures, the grace of his physical motions, and this intangible 'conjuring of magic', ensured performances of extraordinary quality.

The video analysis in this study contains no such descriptors, rather, it offers an objective assessment of all aspects of Kleiber's physical conducting gestures in the chosen performance. In spite of this precise detail regarding manual function, body posture, facial expressions and eye contact, an explanation of the 'Kleiber magic' remains elusive. The intangible qualities inherent in the art of conducting -- the 'X Factor' as it relates to qualities of leadership, charm, charisma and the power of personality -- remain precisely that.

The details *between* the notes, precisely how a conductor embodies the music and inspires the musicians, largely remain a mystery. On the other hand, precise information as to the physical component of the art of conducting is, in this case, now available. An assessment of Kleiber's conducting, and indeed that of other conductors, thus warrants an analysis of the type undertaken. While impossible to demystify or clarify the unseen elements in conducting, as this analysis shows, it is possible to break down the various physical components of gestural expression. In doing so, this analysis offers precise information as to the type of physical gestures

²¹ Swed, 'Carlos Kleiber, 44; Brilliant, Reclusive, Conductor', 2004.

used to maximum effectiveness in what is a purely artistic context.

It is hoped students of conducting and indeed conductors will benefit from such precise information and perhaps consider such aspects as they relate to their own repertory of physical gestures. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this study will provide a potential framework for future visual analyses of conductors' gestures.

Appendix 1

Carlos Kleiber: Publicly Performed Operatic and Ballet Repertoire¹

Berg	Wozzeck
Bizet	Carmen
Delibes	Coppélia
Egk	Abraxas
	Der Revisor
Henze	Undine
Humperdinck	Hänsel und Gretel
Lehár	The Merry Wives of Windsor
Leoncavallo	Edipo Ré
Lortzing	Der Waffenschmied
Millöcker	Der Bettelstudent
	Gasparone
Offenbach	Die kleine Zauberföte
	La Belle Helena
	Le mariage aux lanternes
	Les Contes d'Hoffmann
	L'île de Tulipatan
Puccini	La Bohème
	Madame Butterfly
Ravel	L'Heure Espagnole
Smetana	The Bartered Bride
Strauss, Johann II	Die Fledermaus
	Wiener Blut
Strauss, Richard	Daphne
	Der Rosenkavalier
	Elektra
Stravinsky	Oedipus Rex
Tchaikovsky	Sleeping Beauty

¹ List compiled from <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist/>, accessed January 9, 2012 and Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 341-343. For a complete discography and filmography, please consult the same sources.

Verdi	Don Carlos
	Falstaff
	I Due Foscari
	La Traviata
	Otello
	Rigoletto
Wagner	Tristan und Isolde
Weber	Der Freischütz
	Oberon
Wolf-Ferrari	Die vier Grobiane
Zeller	Der Vogelhändler

Appendix 2

Carlos Kleiber: Publicly Performed Concert Repertoire²

Bach, CPE	Cello Concerto in B Flat Major
Beethoven	Coriolan Overture
	Piano Concerto No. 4
	Piano Concerto No. 5
	Symphony No. 4
	Symphony No. 5
	Symphony No. 6
	Symphony No. 7
Berg	Wozzeck, Three Fragments
Brahms	Symphony No. 2
	Symphony No. 4
Butterworth	English Idyll No. 1
Dvořák	Carnival Overture
Falla	Three-Cornered Hat
Haydn	Symphony No. 94
Liszt	Piano Concerto No. 2
Mahler	Das Lied von der Erde
Martinů	Oboe Concerto
Mozart	Overture to The Marriage of Figaro
	Symphony No. 33
	Symphony No. 36
Nicolai	Overture to The Merry Wives of Windsor
Ravel	Alborada del Gracioso
	Bolero
	Tombeau de Couperin
Schubert	Symphony No. 3
	Symphony No. 8
Schumann	Piano Concerto
	Symphony No. 2

² List compiled from <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist/>, accessed December 15, 2010 and Barber, *Corresponding with Carlos*, 341-343.

Strauss, Johann I	Radetzky-Marsch
Strauss, Johann II	Accelerationen
	An der schönen blauen Donau
	Bauern-Polka
	Bei uns z'Haus
	Csardas
	Overture to Der Zigeunerbaron
	Overture to Die Fledermaus
	Eijen a Magyar!
	Frühlingsstimmen
	Im Krapfenwald!
	Künstlerleben
	Kaiser-Waltzer
	Neue Pizzicato-Polka
	Persischer Marsch
	Pizzicato-Polka
	Stadt und Land
	Tausend und eine Nacht
	Tritsch-Tratsch-Polka
	Unter Donner und Blitz
	Vergnugszug
	Wiener Blut Waltz
Strauss, Josef	Die Libelle
	Dorfschwalben aus Österreich
	Feuenfest!
	Jockey-Polka
	Moulinet-Polka
	Plappermälchen
	Sphärenklaege
Strauss, Richard	Ein Heldenleben
	Tod und Verklärung
	Der Rosenkavalier, Waltz Sequence No. 2
Telemann	Tafelmusik
Weber	Overture to Der Freischütz

Appendix 3: Most Frequently Performed and Recorded Works

Most Frequently Performed Operatic Works³

Composer and Work	Number of Performances
Strauss <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	152
Verdi <i>Otello</i>	93
Verdi <i>La Traviata</i>	84
J. Strauss II <i>Die Fledermaus</i>	78
Puccini <i>La Bohème</i>	69

Most Frequently Performed Symphonic Works⁴

Composer and Work	Number of Performances
Beethoven <i>Symphony No. 7</i>	30
Weber <i>Overture to Der Freischütz</i>	24
J. Strauss II <i>Overture to Die Fledermaus</i>	22
Mozart <i>Symphony No. 33</i>	22
J. Strauss <i>Unter Donner und Blitz</i>	21
Brahms <i>Symphony No. 2</i>	21

³ List compiled from <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist>, (accessed December 15, 2010.)

⁴ Ibid.

Most Frequently Recorded Works⁵

Composer and Work	Number of recordings
Beethoven <i>Symphony No. 7</i>	11
J. Strauss II <i>Die Fledermaus</i> (Full opera recordings 3, Overture only 7)	10
Beethoven <i>Symphony No. 4</i>	9
Strauss <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> (Full opera recordings 8, Excerpts 1)	9
Brahms <i>Symphony No. 4</i>	8
Wagner <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> (Full opera recordings 7, <i>Prelude and Liebestod</i> only 1)	8
Mozart <i>Symphony No. 33</i>	7

⁵ Fischer, *Carlos Kleiber - der skrupulöse Exzentriker*, 67-90.

Appendix 4: 1989 New Year's Day Concert Program

Program:

Strauss, Johann II	Accelerationen
Strauss, Johann II	Bauern-Polka
Strauss, Johann II	Bei uns z'Haus
Strauss, Josef	Die Libelle
Strauss, Johann II	Overture to Die Fledermaus
Strauss, Johann II	Künstlerleben
Strauss, Josef	Moulinet-Polka
Strauss, Johann II	Eljen a Magyar!
Strauss, Johann II	Im Krapfenwald!
Strauss, Johann II	Frühlingsstimmen
Strauss, Johann II	Pizzicato-Polka
Strauss, Johann II	Csardas
Strauss, Josef	Plappermälchen
Strauss, Josef	Jockey-Polka
Strauss, Johann II	An der schönen,blauen Donau
Strauss, Johann I	Radetzky-Marsch

Conductor, Carlos Kleiber, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Venue: Musikvereinssaal, Vienna.

Appendix 5: List of Opera Companies with whom Kleiber worked⁶

Bavarian State Opera
Bayreuth Festspiele
Frankfurt Opera
Geneva Opera
German Opera on the Rhein (Düsseldorf)
German Opera on the Rhein (Duisburg)
Hamburg State Opera
La Scala
Metropolitan Opera
Potsdam Opera
Salzburg Opera
Royal Opera, Covent Garden
Teatro Comunale Florence
Vienna State Opera
Württemberg State Opera
Zurich Opera

⁶ <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist/>, (accessed December 15, 2010).

Appendix 6: List of Orchestras with whom Kleiber worked⁷

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Orchestra
Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra
Bavarian State Orchestra
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
Berne Symphony Orchestra
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra
Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra
London Symphony Orchestra
Munich Philharmonic Orchestra
NDR Symphony Orchestra
Prague Symphony Orchestra
RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra
Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra
South German Radio Symphony Orchestra
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
Vienna Symphony Orchestra
Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra

⁷ <http://www.thrsw.com/cklist/>, (accessed December 15, 2010).

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