



2022

## Should Conductors Listen To Recordings When They Learn Scores?

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Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2022.279>

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SHOULD CONDUCTORS LISTEN TO  
RECORDINGS WHEN THEY LEARN SCORES?

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DMA PROJECT

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A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts  
in the School of Music  
at the University of Kentucky.

By

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2022

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## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

### SHOULD CONDUCTORS LISTEN TO RECORDINGS WHEN THEY LEARN SCORES?

We can observe the conductor's work at his performances and rehearsals. However, we cannot see the process of score preparation from the time they get the score to the downbeat of the first rehearsal because the conductor does this work alone. This dissertation discusses the debate among conductors past and present about whether, when, and how to use recordings as part of the score preparation. It considers the advantages and disadvantages of using recordings in the score preparation process.

I conducted several types of research on the use of recordings by living conductors. I interviewed conductors using Skype and phone conversations, email correspondence, and in-person interviews. I found information online, and in books and magazine articles.

This dissertation recounts these conductors' methods of learning scores with and without listening to recordings and answers the following questions:

*What are conductors specifically interested in when listening to recordings?*

*How did conductors from the past learn the scores when the recordings did not exist, or when they were not widely available?*

*Do conductors use recordings to learn the score? How do conductors use the recordings in their score learning process?*

The research presented within begins to answer the questions about learning scores, an important process for all conductors.

KEYWORDS: Music Performance, Conducting, Orchestra, Score Study, Recordings

Jan Pellant

January 24, 2022

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## Chapter I

### SURVEY OF EXISTING LITERATURE

When preparing orchestral scores for performance, conductors often use guide recordings, in addition to critical analysis, as a formative method for constructive improvement of their musical understanding. Scant literature on this subject exists; there are no books or articles that specifically deal with the topic of recordings as score study, making this an invitation for future work. Of course, there are many sources that broadly cover score preparation and the use of reference recordings, which this chapter separates into three sections: books, dissertations, and other resources.

#### Books

Frederik Prausnitz was an influential conductor and professor, who taught at the Julliard School for over twenty years before serving at the Peabody Conservatory from 1976 and 1987. In the twelfth chapter of his conducting guide *Score and Podium*, Prausnitz points to his belief in the importance of using recordings to prepare concertos and accompanied opera recitatives, recommending the analysis of as many different recordings of the same piece as possible.<sup>1</sup> He suggests physically conducting along with these recordings while imagining that the soloist and orchestra are before you and cueing the necessary instrumental entrances. Doing this with multiple recordings until you can anticipate each gesture, Prausnitz believed, would hone your skills. “Careful analysis and

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<sup>1</sup> Frederik Prausnitz, *Score and Podium: Complete Guide to Conducting* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1983).

frequent practice with different recordings will repay the effort, not only in the study of a musical masterpiece, but in the challenge to our technical proficiency with the beat.”<sup>2</sup>

In his book, *Score and Rehearsal Preparation*, Gary Stith shares lessons from his experience as the Music Director of the Houghton College Symphonic Winds from 2002 to 2010.<sup>3</sup> He divides score study into three steps: the initial overview of the score, the analysis of compositional structure and preparation of the score, and the planning of your interpretation and rehearsal schedule. In this final step, Stith suggests the study of multiple recordings as an important factor for deriving lists of ensembles and conductors as part of the score learning process.

In addition to his prolific career as a performer and composer, Gunther Schuller was an award-winning conductor and President of the New England Conservatory between 1967 and 1977. In his book *The Compleat Conductor*, Schuller champions the importance of using the composer’s exact score indications, especially tempo markings and dynamics, as the basis of an educated interpretation that demonstrates understanding of every detail of the score while eschewing personal ego.<sup>4</sup> He warns against arriving “at an ‘interpretation’ before the score is fully assessed, or [when it is] biased by extra-notational influences, such as a famous recording or someone else’s prior interpretation, or—worse yet—personal whim and fancy.”<sup>5</sup> Forming an interpretation that does not completely originate from the score will miss the composer’s intentions and lead to an

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Stith, *Score Rehearsal Preparation: A Realistic Approach for Instrumental Conductors* (Galeville, MD: Meredith Music, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Gunther Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 48.



artistically failed performance. For this reason, Schuller recommends against the use of recordings for the score preparation process. In his book, he only uses recordings to observe the habits and mistakes of other conductors, particularly those conducting from memory. Schuller does not believe conducting from memory is necessary or efficacious. He gives a note of caution, saying that although you may be capable of quick memorization, this can lead unintentionally forgetting segments under pressure or with the passage of time. Moreover, Schuller claims that most of the conductors conducting from memory only know the surface of the score instead of the inner details.

Max Rudolf, head of the opera and conducting departments at the Curtis Institute of Music in the early 1970s, shared Schuller's concern about using recordings, although for differing reasons. In the twenty-seventh chapter of *The Grammar of Conducting*, Rudolf cautions that listening to recordings creates the danger of implementing others' interpretations and describes this kind of preparation as passive: "No matter how impressive a recording played by a great orchestra under the direction of a prominent conductor may be, listening to it can never be substitute for serious score study."<sup>6</sup>

The recommendations in Christopher Seaman's *Inside Conducting* fall in between the opinions outlined in the previous four books.<sup>7</sup> The Conductor Laureate of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra believes in usefulness of studying recordings, but not merely to glean ideas for your own interpretation. About the positive use of listening, he says, "Listening to recordings is useful, because it helps the music reach the memory through

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<sup>6</sup> Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1950.), 326.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Seaman, *Inside Conducting* (UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2013).

the ear as well as the eye.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, he argues that, in listening to the interpretation of others, it is important not to be overly influenced, having disagreements with some things in a recording is a good sign that you are achieving an independent interpretation; “Disagreeing with some things in a recording is a healthy sign that you’ve arrived at an interpretation of one’s own.”<sup>9</sup>

These books summarize the spectrum of opinion on the use of recordings by conductors for score preparation. Some professionals strongly recommend using recordings through the entire score learning process as a foundation of ideas to replicate, others advise that recordings can be a source for both positive and negative ideas, while some conductors strongly advise against this kind of listening as it will dilute the composer’s or your own vision.

### Dissertations

In his dissertation on graduate conducting pedagogy, Robert Mirakian critically examines the ideas presented in Gunther Schuller’s *The Compleat Conductor*.<sup>10</sup> Mirakian agrees that Schuller’s approach to listening to multiple recordings for critical observations is a beneficial exercise for conducting students. At the same time, he finds it unfortunate that Schuller would not, in general, recommend the use of recordings in the score preparation. Mirakian opines, “What is unfortunate, perhaps, is that Schuller’s process of surveying recordings could yield a multitude of possibilities for students rather

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Edward Mirakian, “A Graduate Curriculum for Orchestral Conductors” (DM diss., Indiana University, 2015).

than simply providing cannon fodder for his condemnation. With instruction, however, such an approach might be placed in a productive context.”<sup>11</sup>

Jacob Mitchell’s dissertation surveyed teachers and graduate students with teaching experience.<sup>12</sup> Some of these participants responded that with a simpler score, they can establish a good feel for how the piece sounds, but the study of more complex literature—particularly pieces with larger instrumentations—is assisted by the use of multiple reference recordings. Mitchell also points out that experience is a significant factor in how useful performers found reference recordings. “Undergraduate students implied through their score study tasks that the aid of a recording would help them greatly in their decision-making when it comes to studying the score and planning a rehearsal. . . . Those subjects teaching at the time of the study implied that recordings seemed to have a less important role in their preparation methods.”<sup>13</sup>

Jesse Hopkins’ dissertation divides score study into four types and then examines the effectiveness of each.<sup>14</sup> Of the four types surveyed (study with a piano, with a recording, sight-singing, and silent inspection), Hopkins claims that studying a “recording with the score for a period of 50 minutes” is one of the most effective methods of learning the music.<sup>15</sup> This determination was based on a test of conductors’ abilities to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Mark Mitchell, “Score Study Procedures and Process among Instrumental Music Teachers and Students of Varying Experience” (MME thesis., University of Louisville, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>14</sup> Jesse Evans Hopkins, “The Effect of Four Approaches to Score Study on Student Conductors’ Ability to Detect Errors in the Performance of Choral Music” (DME thesis, University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 21.

detect and identify errors in the performance of choral music after using each of the score study techniques.

The research that led to Alexander Trevino's dissertation involved studying the results of listening to recordings on the musicality of undergraduate instrumental music majors' conducting.<sup>16</sup> His results concluded that listening to recordings is part of an effective learning process that increased the conducting students' abilities to express and communicate musical ideas. He found that students using recordings to prepare for conducting significantly outperformed the control group that studied without their use. Also, his study indicates that it is good to listen to recordings at the early stages of the score study process. According to Trevino "study suggests that hearing a piece of music in the initial stages of preparation provides an aural framework for the conductor that is beneficial for demonstrating expression."<sup>17</sup>

The dissertations I reviewed gave a variety of opinions and evidence about the effects of the use of recordings to score study and that these effects largely depend on the stage of the preparation process and the level of difficulty of the selected repertoire.

### Journal Articles and Online Resources

Carl Topilow has long been a conductor and teacher of conducting at the Cleveland Institute of Music. In an article published online, he outlines the best practices for preparing a piece for its first rehearsal.<sup>18</sup> Topilow states the importance of noting the

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<sup>16</sup>Alexander R. Treviño, "The Effect of the Use of an Aural Model during Score Study on Undergraduate Music Majors' Conducting Gesture" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Topilow, "The Rehearsal – Preparing for a Successful Concert," Studylib.net, <https://studylib.net/doc/8956101/the-rehearsal---preparing-for-a-successful-concert>.

articulations and tempo markings in a score; this should include both general dynamics which the composer writes for the whole orchestra as well as more specific markings for individual sections or players. Topilow prefers to study scores visually first, without the use of recordings. He then listens back to recordings of his rehearsals to observe the tempos he took and make future corrections.

Mark Heron, a conductor and professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, believes that using recordings is a short-cut for score study, when not enough time is available.<sup>19</sup> He views the use of recordings in score study as a dual process. He suggests listening to recordings in the early stages of score learning and Heron recommends listening to more than one recording to avoid being overly influenced by one specific conductor's interpretation. On the other hand, he does not practice conducting technique while the recording is being played as he thinks "conducting in real" has a significantly different feeling. His own view is that "one must take a pragmatic approach, and judiciously use recordings as an aid to the process provided that the dangers can be borne in mind."<sup>20</sup>

Other articles by various working conductors and teachers reinforce the spectrum of opinions I have already outlined on this subject. Writing in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Don Crowe, a music teacher at South Dakota State University since 1995, observed that using a recorded "sound image" can enhance a conductor's knowledge of a score, stating "Score study with a correct aural example was found to be

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Heron, "Some Thoughts on Score Study," <https://conductit.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/10/Thoughts-on-Score-Study.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

significantly more effective than study with the score alone.”<sup>21</sup> Conductor Kenneth Woods divides his pre-rehearsal work into score study and score preparation, saying that recordings are an effective part of the former, while the latter is more focused on preparing baton technique.<sup>22</sup>

The articles cited here all discuss the use of recordings as an important part of the score study process. In fact, some sources here recommend the use of more than one recording to avoid being overly influenced by a single interpretation.

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<sup>21</sup> Don R. Crowe, “Effects of Score Study Style on Beginning Conductors’ Error-Detection Abilities,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 44, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 160–171.

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Woods, “On Study and Preparation,” <https://kennethwoods.net/blog1/2020/03/16/on-study-and-preparation>.

## Chapter II

### A SHORT HISTORY OF ORCHESTRAL RECORDINGS

The emergence of sound recording throughout the twentieth century is probably the most significant development in the world of music performance since the appearance of written notation. Not only has this revolutionized the way audiences consume music and provided a format for the endless reproduction of singular performances, the evolution of recordings has also reshaped the kinds of resources available to musicians, including conductors. Prior to the invention of sound recording in 1877, conductors, whether student or professional, had to listen in person to rehearsals or performances to analyze the sound of an orchestra.<sup>23</sup>

Because of audio recording's unprecedented power to preserve the work of musicians, it has also reshaped the development of the classical canon in the twentieth century, both challenging its influence and reinforcing its ability to shape audience expectations. The abundance of recordings of studio performances, live concerts, and rehearsals give musicians a wide variety of compositions with which they can easily familiarize themselves. This ever-increasing catalogue serves as research material for musicians selecting and preparing repertoire and is often viewed as a repository of performable compositions.<sup>24</sup> For many musicians, unless a musical composition has been recorded, it may be assumed to not be worthy of study. On the other hand, pieces that

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan D. Kramer, "The Impact of Technology on the Musical Experience," College Music Society, [https://www.music.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2675:the-impact-of-technology-on-the-musical-experience&Itemid=3665](https://www.music.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2675:the-impact-of-technology-on-the-musical-experience&Itemid=3665); Adrian Boult, *Thoughts on Conducting* (London: Aldine Press, 1963), 19.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Rye ed., *1001 Classical Recordings You Must Hear Before You Die* (New York: Universe, 2008).

have a wealth of available recordings may seem more approachable, as these recordings serve as reference material for the prospective performer.

The history of recordings roughly divides into four periods, during each of which conductors have approached the medium in a variety of ways. In the acoustic era (1877–1925) recordings were difficult to manufacture, orchestras were necessarily small, and pieces frequently excerpted. The advent of electrical recording (1926 - 1948) removed many of the previous limitations and conductors were increasingly drawn to recording. Conductors who exploited the abilities of the LP format (1948-1982) and expanded their work into video formats became international celebrities. Finally, the online era has introduced many new formats for musicians to record and listen to music, including the compact disk, MP3 and internet streaming.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Acoustic Era (1877 - 1925)

The first successful experiment in audio reproduction was completed in 1877, when Thomas Alva Edison invented the phonograph. In the following year, Emile Berliner developed and patented a new innovation called the gramophone, which employed flat discs as the recording object instead of the tin or wax cylinders used by the phonograph. The length of the recorded sound on either medium was usually between two and three minutes.<sup>26</sup> After several decades of competition between the two similar

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<sup>25</sup> Fred Plotkin, *Classical Music 101* (New York: Hyperion, 2002), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Michal Kašpárek, “Vyvoj zaznamovych zarizeni VII – gramofon vs fonograf” [The Development of Recording Tools – Gramophone vs. Phonograph], *Musizkus: Časopis Pro Muzikanty*, August 20, 2013, <https://www.casopismuzikus.cz/workshopy/vyvoj-zaznamovych-zarizeni-vii-gramofon-vs-fonograf>.



devices, the gramophone discs took over the marketplace in the 1920s. In the meantime, many companies formed to produce and distribute recordings for this new medium.<sup>27</sup>

When the phonograph was put into commercial production by the end of the nineteenth century, the cost to buy a machine in the United States was approximately \$200, five times the average monthly salary. Thus, in the 1890s, phonograph recordings were most readily available in venues known as Automatic Phonograph Parlors, where customers could pay a few cents to play one of the pre-mounted tracks. Although phonograph machines were commercially available to purchase in international exhibitions, Edison's intention was to make the recorded cylinders easily accessible to individuals for private use, and these cylinders were soon available for purchase at public kiosks and boutiques. Between 1901 and 1920, record players became affordable for most people in the United States, and both phonographs and records were available in furniture and music stores. By 1903, the Victoria Red Seals premium records were selling for approximately \$1 each.<sup>28</sup> In 1913 the Edison company switched from manufacturing cylinders to producing record discs; however, these discs were only playable on the Edison Disk Record.

In the period before 1925, recordings were made acoustically.<sup>29</sup> This mechanical analog process required the musicians to play in front of a single large horn, which collected the sound and directed it to a diaphragm.<sup>30</sup> This diaphragm would vibrate due to

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<sup>27</sup> Joan Peyser, ed., *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformation* (New York: Scribner, 1986), 477.

<sup>28</sup> A Voice., "History of the Record Industry, 1877—1920s," Medium.com, June 7, 2014, <https://medium.com/@Vinylmint/history-of-the-record-industry-1877-1920s-48deacb4c4c3>.

<sup>29</sup> Peyser, 476.

<sup>30</sup> Olajide Paris, "Recording the Orchestra," Sound on Sound.com, May 2020, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/recording-orchestra>.

the sound waves hitting it, and these vibrations would be recorded onto the wax or tin cylinder by a sharp stylus. The lack of precision in this process meant that the musicians had to sit as close as possible to the horn and play more loudly than normal to create enough sound to affect the stylus. Recording rooms were as small as possible in order to better direct the sound of the performance into the horn. Many instruments produced either too wide a frequency spectrum—frequencies on the extreme ends of the musical could not be captured—or were of too high or low amplitude for the recordings process to appropriately capture. These constraints led to frequent instrument substitutions on many recordings. For example, tubas and bassoons often provided a more easily recorded substitute for lower strings. Instruments that produce high pressure sound waves could even damage the recording device (a fact still true today with certain microphones). French horns recorded especially well because they fit within the frequency spectrum and sound pressure levels required.

Playback from the recorded cylinders was achieved by reversing the process of recording. Another stylus could read the acoustic information in the groove on the cylinder. The undulations recorded in the cylinder caused this stylus to vibrate. These vibrations were transferred to a large diaphragm that created soundwaves which were sent through a flaring horn that acoustically amplified them. The recordings produced through this acoustic process had low fidelity and were strictly monophonic.

Another limitation of the record format in the early decades was the small amount of recordable space available on the medium. Thus, the length of recordings from the

early twentieth century were only a few minutes. This meant that most records featured short pieces, and longer pieces had to be recorded on multiple sides or sold as disc sets.<sup>31</sup>

Major recording companies were founded around the turn of the twentieth century, including Columbia Records in 1889 and the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1901. Other important recording companies was Pathé founded in France in 1896, the Gramophone Company founded in England in 1898 and later known as EMI, and Deutsche Gramophone founded the same year in Germany.<sup>32</sup>

As records became more accessible and popular, recording companies began looking for artists that would attract wide audiences. During these early years, singers were the most successful recording artists. In 1902, the Milanese virtuoso Enrico Caruso became the first tenor to gain commercial success from recordings; the ten arias he recorded for the Gramophone Company brought him international acclaim.<sup>33</sup> By 1915, he had made seventy-nine solo recordings for the Victor Red Seal catalog and forty-nine more in ensembles with other singers. After Caruso's success, out of the ninety-three musicians listed in the Victor Red Seal catalog, eighty-three were vocal artists and the other ten were solo instrumentalists.

The orchestral selections available at this time consisted primarily of short pieces and orchestral movements from operas. Due to the limitations of the recording

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<sup>31</sup> Roger Beardsley and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "A Brief History of Recording to ca. 1950," CHARM: AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, [https://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/history/p20\\_4\\_1.html](https://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/history/p20_4_1.html).

<sup>32</sup> Lance Brunner, "The Orchestra and Recorded Sound," in *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformation*, edited by Joan Peyser (New York: Scribner, 1986), 478.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Martland, "Caruso's First Recordings: Myth and Realities," *ARSC Journal* 25, no. 2 (1994): 195.

technology these works were often re-orchestrated or substantially shortened.<sup>34</sup> The Gramophone Company's catalog listed fifty-one orchestral selections in 1899, including selections from Wagner's *Lohengrin*" and the waltz from Gounod's *Faust*Two historically important recordings of Viennese dance music were made during this time: a 1901 album conducted by Carl Wilhelm Drescher and a 1903 record made by Johann Strauss III. 1903 was also the year that the first recordings of band music were made, and in the following decade more than six hundred band records were added to the Victor catalog.

Music critics, especially the German composer and critic Max Chop, began to decry the lack of traditional symphonic recordings.<sup>35</sup> This gap in recorded material began to be filled in 1909 when the Odeon Company released a recording of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71 performed by the London Palace Orchestra and conducted by Hermann Finck.

Among early record producers were English companies. In April 1909, German-based Odeon Records released a recording of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite op. 71*, performed by the London Palace Orchestra and conducted by Hermann Finck. They followed this up the following year with the release of a recording of Mendelssohn's incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>36</sup>

One of the busiest conductors to record orchestral music in the acoustic era was Landon Ronald, who was contracted with the Gramophone Company. His first orchestral

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<sup>34</sup> Beardsley and Leech-Wilkinson.

<sup>35</sup> Brunner, 481.

<sup>36</sup> Claude Gravelly Arnold, *The Orchestra on Record, 1826–1926* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 287.

recordings were made in 1909 with three selections from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*. By December of the same year, the Gramophone Company issued the first recording of a piano concerto, featuring the first and third movements of Grieg's piano concerto performed by Wilhelm Backhaus.

A significant moment for large-scale orchestral recordings came in the fall of 1911, when Odeon issued Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 on four double-sided discs followed by the Symphony No. 6 on five double-sided discs in early 1913. These symphonies were performed by the Odeon-Streichorchester conducted by Eduard Künneke. In February 1914 another milestone was reached when the Gramophone Company in Germany issued a recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra led by Arthur Nikisch, the first orchestral recording by a world-renowned conductor and orchestra.

Many works issued on record throughout the 1910s were relatively short works or arrangements, but this changed after the first world war as the orchestral repertoire began to be explored. Another factor was the Edison company's introduction of the Diamond Disc Phonograph in 1912, which could play up to 41.5 minutes per side. In Germany both Parlophone and Deutsche Grammophon made recordings of orchestral excerpts from Wagner's operas. From 1922 to 1925, the Gramophone Company issued a number of large scale works, including Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 "Choral." Other remarkable recordings from this period are Schumann's Piano Concerto with Alfred Cortot as soloist and Bach's Violin Concerto No. 2 in E Major with Jacques Thibaud as soloist. The Aeolian Company of England issued a number of recordings of orchestral music including two rare recordings of Vaughan Williams conducting his own works. In 1910,

the Blunthner Orchestra of Berlin, conducted by Bruno Weyersberg, made the first recordings of movements from Beethoven's symphonies that were uncut for the most part and were first to record the complete *Leonore Overture No. 3*. Deutsche Grammophon issued several other orchestral recordings before 1914, such as Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* overture, the *Peer Gynt Suite* by Grieg, Weber's *Oberon* overture, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture*, and orchestral excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1917, recordings were made of Richard Strauss conducting his own works, including *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, and waltzes from *Der Rosenkavalier*.<sup>37</sup> By 1925 Polydor had issued recordings of all nine of Beethoven's symphonies. Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 were also recorded with Oskar Fried conducting. In 1917 the Gramophone Company in Spain issued one of the first concerto of violin concertos by Mendelssohn and Beethoven with the Orchestra Sinfonica de Barcelona conducted by Concordio Gelabert and Juan Manen as a soloist.

In the United States, the acoustic period was focused on vocal music, but orchestral recordings were also made beginning with American Columbia's recordings from 1911 of the Russian Symphony Orchestra of New York led by Modest Altschuler. In 1916 the company made remarkable recordings of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Wagner's music dramas: *The Prelude to Lohengrin*, and passages from *Parsifal* and *Die Walkure*.<sup>38</sup> In 1917, another American company, Victor, made its first recording session with a major American orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra

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<sup>37</sup> Brunner, 485.

<sup>38</sup> Peyser, 490.

under the German conductor Karl Muck. In the same year, Victor issued the first recording of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, an album of Brahms's Hungarian Dances Nos. 1 and 2. Most of Stokowski's recordings in the acoustic period were short popular classics, although there are two full-length works in 1924 and 1925: Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* and Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. Other orchestras featured in Victor's catalog were the New York Philharmonic under Willem Mengelberg and the La Scala Orchestra under Toscanini. These recordings were primarily overtures, short pieces, and movements from symphonies. In 1925, Victor issued recordings of the San Francisco under Alfred Hertz on Wagner's excerpts, and the Cleveland Orchestra under Nikolai Sokoloff.<sup>39</sup>

Though the recording technology of the acoustic period was severely limited, this era of recording still brought forth an abundance of landmark recordings. The analog nature of the recording process resulted in performances that were raw expressions of the time; each record including a single take devoid of cuts or interruptions.<sup>40</sup>

#### Pre-LP Electrical Recordings (1925 - 1948)

The introduction of the microphone to the recording studio in the early 1920s had an enormous impact on the industry, making it possible to record large orchestras in a full dynamic range. This electrical recording process was developed in the United States by Bell Telephone Laboratories, and, by March 1925, both Columbia Records and the Victor

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 491.

<sup>40</sup> "Acoustical Recording," Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-jukebox/articles-and-essays/acoustical-recording/?loclr=blogtea>.

Talking Machine Company had signed contracts with Bell.<sup>41</sup> This made recordings of full orchestras with original instrumentation available to the public and drew increased attention to celebrity conductors. Although more of these conductors were taking advantage of the opportunity to record in upgraded studios, the resulting recordings did not always meet their expectations because there were still limitations in the capabilities of the technology.

The 1920s saw an advancement in the kinds of technology that could be applied to orchestral recording. Microphones were able to capture a larger frequency spectrum than the previous analog system, and amplifier and speaker systems, though inferior to today's equipment, made playback easier and louder. It also became possible to write multiples times on the same disk, layering sounds on top of each other to compile a richer recorded product.<sup>42</sup> The gramophone discs invented by Emile Berliner were made of shellac, but high demand for shellac material during World War II helped popularize vinyl as an alternate material for recording.

Records were also becoming more readily available and cheaper throughout the world. Gramophone recordings could be found in drug, jewelry, and furniture stores throughout the 1920s. In the following decade, independent record stores began opening; the first record store in the United States opened in 1932 in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.<sup>43</sup> At that time, the cost of a recording was around \$1 (which is approximately \$20 today).

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<sup>41</sup> Beardsley and Leech-Wilkinson.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Prince, "Record Grading 101: Understanding the Goldmine Grading Guide," *Goldmine: The Music Collector's Magazine*, February 7, 2020, <https://www.goldminemag.com/collector-resources/record-grading-101>.

<sup>43</sup> James P. Goss, "History of Independent Record Stores," *Vinyl Lives*, <http://www.vinylives.com/history.html>.



The improvements in recording technology inspired many composers to conduct definitive recordings of their own works. Richard Strauss conducted his own works as well as many other pieces of the standard repertoire. Igor Stravinsky, who would go on to record nearly his whole *œuvre*, issued his first recording in 1928.

The first orchestral recording using electrical technology was a recording of *Danse Macabre* by Camille Saint-Saëns produced by the Victor Company with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. In the 1930s, Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra set the standard for orchestral recordings with their impressive catalog of records produced for Victor in the United States and the HMV Company in England. Stokowski's repertoire was broader than most other major recording conductors during this period, and, in 1932, he made the first recordings of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and Sibelius' Symphony No. 4. Part of Stokowski's success as a recording artist was in his ability to adjust the orchestra during recording sessions. This success as an orchestrator aided him in 1939, when he recorded his own orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.<sup>44</sup>

Other important conductors from this era recorded a broader repertoire including works by Delius, Sibelius, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Holst. Those conductors include Thomas Beecham, Adrian Boult, John Barbirolli, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Erich Kleiber, Karl Böhm, Willem Mengelberg, Malcolm Sargent, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner, and Pierre Monteux.<sup>45</sup> Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony recorded works by Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Mussorgsky,

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<sup>44</sup> Margaret Kruesi, *Leopold Stokowski papers* (University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, 2001), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Peyser, 557.

Tchaikovsky, Debussy, and Ravel for RCA Victor, which brought great international recognition to all involved.

The electrical recording era was the first time that conductors had the opportunity to use recordings as a score study aid. They could listen to short musical segments on 78 RPM discs and longer musical segments on 33 RPM discs. From the late 1920s, conductors also had opportunities to experience orchestral performances on radio.<sup>46</sup> One of the earliest broadcast orchestras was the Mitteldeutschen Rundfunks (MDR) Symphony Orchestra founded in 1923 in Munich. The BBC Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1930 in London, and the NBC Symphony, conducted by Arturo Toscanini, was established in the United States in 1937 by David Sarnoff, President of RCA.

One of the most influential conductors of his time, Arturo Toscanini remained the Music Director of NBC Symphony Orchestra from 1937 to 1954. Before being hired by RCA Victor, he had made very few recordings, but in his years as director of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, he recorded around one hundred and sixty major works. In addition to their recordings commercially released by RCA Victor, the NBC Symphony Orchestra with Toscanini also performed in weekly radio broadcasts. Unfortunately, most of his recordings did not capture the greatness of his live performances, perhaps because of the difference in acoustics between a concert hall and recording studio.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sondra Wieland Howe, "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch, 1928–1942," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 64–77.

<sup>47</sup> "The Toscanini Recordings: Part 1, An Overview," The Art Music Lounge: An Online Journal of Jazz and Classical Music, <https://artmusiclounge.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/the-toscanini-recordings-i-1.pdf>.

## The LP Period and Beyond (1948 - 1982)

The next era of recording technology began in the aftermath of World War II when Columbia Records introduced the long-playing, microgroove record in June 1948. These discs quickly became colloquially known as LPs. Around the same time, magnetic tape became the standard recording medium. These magnetic tapes had multiple tracks that could be recorded simultaneously, which allowed for stereo recording and gave audio engineers the ability to edit together a performance before it was permanently etched onto an LP. The audio engineer, a job created in the wake of magnetic recording, directs the recording and editing process, responsibilities that have remained roughly the same ever since. These engineers also worked with new equipment—preamps, mixing desks, compressors, etc.—that could affect both the quality and complexity of the resulting recordings, though this equipment was so expensive that few studios could afford it and there was still a limit to how many tracks a magnetic tape could hold at one time. Other technological advances affected how the LPs were created. The tracks etched onto the records themselves became more precise and detailed, and resulting sound of records from this era achieved a higher fidelity. Columbia Records was the first company to mass produce vinyl records that lasted longer than the previous shellac version and could hold up to twenty minutes of information per side, technology that was soon copied by many others in the recording industry.

With each new development in recording technology came an incentive to re-record the standard repertoire with the latest quality standards. Musicologist Lance Brunner writes, “The response of the industry to the new technologies was not surprising: improved fidelity and new equipment had already provided impetus to re-record the

standard repertoire en masse, while the saturation of the market with standard works had led to the exploration of previously unrecorded music. The same patterns were to be followed with the introduction of stereophonic sound in 1957, digital recordings in the 1970s, and the compact disc in the 1980s.”<sup>48</sup> This market saturation encouraged record companies, especially Columbia Records, to also look to less well-known and more challenging repertoire to broaden their offerings. This led to recording and distributing the works of composers such as Ives, Schoenberg, and Webern; the complete symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler by Jascha Horenstein and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra; and some of the first recordings of Baroque and early music, such as Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*, and Gregorian chant.<sup>49</sup>

One of the longest-serving and most prominent conductors during the LP period was Eugene Ormandy, who spent forty-four years and the music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra.<sup>50</sup> Ormandy began recording in the 1930s and gained increasing popularity in the 1950s and 1960s with the arrival of stereo recording. Together Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra made hundreds of recordings for Columbia Records, RCA Victor, and EMI, including the first recordings of many important works, such as Prokofiev’s sixth and seventh symphonies and Mahler’s tenth symphony. Ormandy developed a remarkably sizeable repertoire that ranged from Bach, through Haydn, Tchaikovsky, and Bruckner, to Webern and included many composers’ complete

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<sup>48</sup> Brunner, 500.

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence B. Johnson, “Recordings View; Revelations [*sic*] of Understated Mastery,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/06/16/arts/recordings-view-revelations-of-understated-mastery.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Aryeh Oron, “Eugene Ormandy (conductor, arranger),” Bach Cantatas Website, July 2010, <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Ormandy-Eugene.htm>.

orchestral works. Ormandy's notable recordings include Bruckner's seventh symphony, Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night*, and Ravel's orchestration of the *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky.

The most prominent conductor to emerge in the United States during this era was Leonard Bernstein, who was music director of the New York Philharmonic from 1957 to 1969 and worked frequently with the Vienna Philharmonic and State Opera beginning in 1966. Bernstein introduced the American market to the symphonies of Sibelius, Nielsen, and Mahler, and in 1954 gave the first televised music lecture on the American educational television series *Omnibus*. He would go on to exploit the medium of television for music-educational purposes in his series of Young Person's Concerts and produce hundreds of video recordings of live performances that are still available to this day.<sup>51</sup>

Herbert von Karajan was one of the first conductors who made a successful career through both audio recordings and video-taped performances. Karajan became well known for the unique sound he brought to the Berlin Philharmonic, which became known as the "Karajan sound." He became the most recorded musician in history, selling over 200 million records.<sup>52</sup> Most of these recordings were released by Deutsche Grammophon, including multiple complete recordings of the symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky.<sup>53</sup> One of the earliest orchestral video recordings was produced in 1968 by

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<sup>51</sup> Erin Hobbs Reichert, "Leonard Bernstein: Model Music Educator" (MA thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2019), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Stephanie Tassone, "The Legend of Herbert von Karajan: The Man Who Brought Classical Music into the Future," IDAGIO, January 13, 2016, <https://blog.idagio.com/the-essential-karajan-3c41fd6323>.

<sup>53</sup> Chad Emry Hetzel: *The Art of Conviction: A Film-based Study of the Rehearsal Techniques of Herbert von Karajan* (University of Toronto dissertation, 2020), 28.

Karajan and featured Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 "Pastoral." He continued to be active in film and television throughout his career, directing many opera performances on film. Karajan's work with *his* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra can be seen in the television series "The Art of Conducting." He was also one of the first conductors to exploit laser discs technology when it was developed in 1978. These discs, which presaged the invention of the compact disc, were single-sided discs that were laser etched and could even contain video.<sup>54</sup>

In the years immediately following the second world war, burgeoning conductors began finding a new wealth of resources for using recorded orchestral music as a source of information for their own score study. Radios became inexpensive and widely available, and music broadcasts from respected orchestras and celebrity conductors were widely programmed. As LPs became the ubiquitous medium for recorded music, performers increasingly embraced the use of recordings, both as a proxy to promote their live performances and as a tool for learning. However, there were always artists who refused to release their performances on commercial recordings, including the well-known Romanian conductor Sergiu Celibidache who claimed that a listener could not obtain the same "transcendental experience" from a record as they could in a concert hall.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> William S. Goodfellow, "The Laserdisc: For Those Who Treasure Video Sights, Sounds," *Deseret News*, August 21, 1988, <https://www.deseret.com/1988/8/21/18775873/the-laserdisc-for-those-who-treasure-video-sights-sounds>.

<sup>55</sup> Serg Childed, "The Transcendental Experience behind Classical Orchestras Conducted by Sergiu Celibidache," MusicTales.club, July 16, 2020, <https://musictales.club/article/transcendental-experience-behind-classical-orchestras-conducted-sergiu-celibidache>.

## The Online Period

The inventions of the 1980s and 90s brought digital recording technology and the possibilities of the internet to the recording industry. Compact disc technology, digital editing, MP3 file distribution, and live-stream capabilities continued the pattern of innovations in recording and greatly expanded access to recorded music. The first compact discs were released by the Phillips and Sony companies in 1982 and they quickly became the standard medium for home audio.<sup>56</sup> Twenty years later, compact disk sales had reached thirty billion discs. Digital recording also allowed for a wider frequency spectrum and dynamic range, gave audio engineers the ability to record, edit, and mix almost unlimited channels, and, eventually, could include virtual plugins within digital workstations.<sup>57</sup> With the introduction of web-based MP3 files in 1993, the inventory and distribution costs for musical recording fell to practically zero, which opened the recording industry to new musicians. Since YouTube was created in 2005, it has become the most popular source of video recordings, including of orchestral music, in the world.<sup>58</sup> Audio streaming has brought dozens of new and old recordings to platforms like Spotify and Apple Music.<sup>59</sup> In June 2011, the streaming service Twitch introduced the first web-based live video streams.<sup>60</sup> Web-streaming was quickly adopted

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<sup>56</sup> Ryan Waniata, "The Life and Times of the Late, Great CD," digitaltrends, February 7, 2018, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/music/the-history-of-the-cds-rise-and-fall>.

<sup>57</sup> Kathleen Stansberry, Janna Anderson, and Lee Rainie, "Experts Optimistic about the Next 50 Years of Digital Life," Pew Research Center, October 28, 2019, [https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/10/PI\\_2019.10.28\\_The-Next-50-Years-of-Digital-Life\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/10/PI_2019.10.28_The-Next-50-Years-of-Digital-Life_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> "History of the Web," World Wide Web Foundation, <https://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web>.

<sup>59</sup> Adam Feldman, "The Best Live Theater to Stream Online This Week," TimeOut, January 15, 2021, <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/the-best-theater-to-watch-online-today-streaming>.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Farrington and Nicholas Muesch, "Analysis of the Characteristics and Content of Twitch Live-Streaming," (BS Qualifying Project Report, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 2015), 5.

by major classical music organizations, such as the Berlin Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera, as a new avenue for audience interaction, providing both live and recorded concert experiences to global audiences.<sup>61</sup> All of these recent innovations have exponentially multiplied the number of opportunities conductors have to listen to a nearly unlimited amount of repertoire.

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<sup>61</sup> “Met Launches ‘Nightly Met Opera Streams,’ a Free Series of Encore Live in HD Presentations Streamed on the Company Website during the Coronavirus Closure,” The Metropolitan Opera, March 13, 2020, <https://www.metopera.org/about/press-releases/met-launches-nightly-met-opera-streams-a-free-series-of-encore-live-in-hd-presentations-streamed-on-the-company-website-during-the-coronavirus-closure>.



## Chapter III

### HISTORICAL PROCESSES FOR STUDYING NEW SCORES

#### Historical Methods for Learning Scores

Since batons were first used to lead an orchestra, conductors have devised their own methods to study scores and internalize them for use in front of their fellow musicians. Nicolai Malko, who has conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra, has written about the importance of internalizing the music as a first step towards preparing for a concert. “Knowing the notes and the instrumentation is not enough. The conductor must understand the content of the music. This includes ... the structural peculiarities (of form, phrasing, harmony, and of the technique of the individual instruments) plus the recognition of the problems that must be dealt with in the rehearsal. These problems may be technical in relation to the instruments; they may be concerned with difficult rhythms, with passages that may be out of balance when performed by the prospective orchestra; they may be concerned with the actual baton work, namely, how best to show the music through gesture.”<sup>62</sup>

This chapter discusses the methods of score study used during the past two centuries, beginning in a period where live performance was the only way to hear music and continuing to the present day, when conductors have the choice of using recordings to assist in their study. Before these recordings were available, a conductor had to be knowledgeable in other types of score preparation methods that are uncommon today.

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<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth A. H. Green and Nicolai Malko, *The Conductor and His Score* (NJ: Englewood Cliffs, 1975), 13.

These could include mental preparation, experience performing as an instrumentalist, and attending rehearsals and performances led by other conductors.

Conductors often focus on developing their ability to audiate the sound of an orchestra, to hear the music inside their heads. This skill takes an exhaustive grounding in music theory, oral skills, and years of practice to acquire. Some conductors combine this with a photographic memory that can quickly memorize every single note on the page. Legendary conductors Arturo Toscanini and Lorin Maazel, both former music directors of the New York Philharmonic, had such skills. Others must read the scores by singing each instrument's part individually or by playing each of them on another instrument. There are many methods to achieve a clear mental image of each passage in a score, and these are often unique to the individual conductor.

For many conductors whose audiation or memory does not allow for easy consumption and digestion of a new score, playing sections on a piano provides a practical substitute. Historically, most conductors were also pianists and composers, skills were put to use in their conducting. Those who played keyboard instruments could learn scores by playing them on the piano. Carl Maria von Weber, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Franz Liszt, Leonard Bernstein, Daniel Barenboim, Erich Leinsdorf, Georg Solti, and Christoph Eschenbach were all concert pianists who used these abilities to assist their score preparation. Many conductors, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century began their careers as rehearsal pianists for opera theaters.<sup>63</sup> There, they were typically employed as coaches and accompanied the singers in rehearsal,

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<sup>63</sup> Luke Jensen, "The Emergence of the Modern Conductor," *Performance Practice Review* 4, no. 1 (1991): 39.

learning the scores on the piano as they worked. Even non-performers, such as Leoš Janáček, Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss were capable keyboard players. Some conductors used other instruments to provide the same help, such as Hector Berlioz who used a guitar in his score preparation.<sup>64</sup>

Some conductors learned scores by playing in orchestras. Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, music director of the New York Music Conservatory between 1890 and 1893, was also a distinguished conductor. However, early in his career he played viola at the National Theater in Prague where he observed other conductors' and composers' techniques. Another example is Arturo Toscanini, who spent his early years as a cellist in a touring opera orchestra. There is story told about a rehearsal in which Giuseppe Verdi noticed the young Toscanini playing a certain passage too softly for the composer's taste.<sup>65</sup> Verdi stopped and pointed out the mistake, to which Toscanini replied, "But Maestro, that part is marked ppp." "That's true," Verdi said, "but I still want to hear it!" This became a seminal experience for the young musician, and, as a conductor, Toscanini always sought make the inner voices clearly heard no matter how softly they were marked.

Many conductors learned aspects of their craft by attending the rehearsals and performances of other artists. As a music critic in the late 1880s, Leoš Janáček regularly attended rehearsals and performances at the National Theater in Brno.<sup>66</sup> In the same

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<sup>64</sup> Emma Riggle, "Hector Berlioz: Biography & Music," Study.com, February 7, 2015, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/hector-berlioz-biography-music.html>.

<sup>65</sup> "Toscanini IV - La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera," The Art Music Lounge: An Online Journal of Jazz and Classical Music, June 2018, <https://artmusiclounge.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/toscanini-iv.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Jiří Zahrádka, "Leoš Janáček - člen a činitel Družstva českého národního divadla v Brně" [Leoš Janáček - Member and Functionary of the Czech National Theatre Society in Brno]. In *Stopy minulosti*:

decade, composer and conductor Jean Sibelius also watched rehearsals while studying in Berlin, including performances of Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* conducted by the composer. Influential Russian composer and conductor Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov heard performances of Wagner, Glazunov, Borodin and many other composers of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup> Herbert von Karajan, future music director of the Berlin Philharmonic, attended a performance of Verdi's "Falstaff" in Vienna, and later recalled, "From the first bar, it was as if I had been struck by a blow. I was completely disconcerted by the perfection that had been achieved. The agreement between the music and the stage performance was something totally inconceivable for us."<sup>68</sup> This method of learning by listening to the work of others most resembles our modern ability to learn from recordings of rehearsals and performances by other conductors.

Often live rehearsals and performances brought with them the possibility for a conductor to meet the composer and discuss any particular passages in the scores. One could see at rehearsals processes of working with the sounds and one can also understand the music text in the score as a performer with the knowledge of transferring the text in the score to the listeners. Many authentic recordings of the composers and conductors from the past are available today functioning as great sources in the score preparation. At the same time, recordings, regardless how great they may be, would hardly substitute for specific music answers coming directly from the composer or when studying the score.

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*Věda v Moravském zemském muzeu na prahu třetího tisíciletí*, ed. Jiří Mitáček and Luděk Galuška (Brno: Moravské zemské muzeum, 2011), 237.

<sup>67</sup> John Rockwell, "Under Wagner's Influence," *New York Times*, April 18, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/04/18/arts/under-wagner-s-influence.html>.

<sup>68</sup> David Denby, "The Toscanini Wars," *New Yorker*, July 3, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/07/10/the-toscanini-wars>.

## Historical Conductors' Methods of Score Study

Each conductor has their own method of learning a new score. The following section includes anecdotal information pertaining to several specific conductors. These stories can give young conductors ideas for formulating their own methods of score study.

The legendary Austrian conductor Herbert von Karajan, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic for over thirty years, used rehearsal attendance and memorization as his main tool for score study. As a young man, Karajan learned many scores, especially operas, by attending rehearsals in Vienna and Salzburg theaters. Walter Legge, an English classical music producer who worked closely with Karajan, said that the mature conductor had a phenomenal memory. "Karajan used to sit on the floor with the score in front of him. He never marked it in any way but just absorbed it. And conducted from memory with his eyes shut! Apparently, he knew the whole score of Tristan! Just how he did it defies belief with us lesser mortals."<sup>69</sup> Of score study von Karajan said, "No one can say they know a score, however well it may be known in the mind, until it has been tried on the orchestra. The moment you stand in front of an orchestra you hurt yourself on the inertia of the matter."<sup>70</sup> He claimed that he never learned pieces by listening to gramophone records.<sup>71</sup> He only used the score, what he could work out at the piano, and from his prior experiences with the music. Karajan knew some operas well enough that

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<sup>69</sup> Roger Vaughan, *Herbert von Karajan: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 20.

<sup>70</sup> Herbert von Karajan, *Conversation with von Karajan*, ed. Richard Osbourne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 94

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

he claimed if someone woke him up at three o'clock in the morning and sang to him one bar of *Der Rosenkavalier* he would be able to carry on from which musical passage to start.<sup>72</sup>

Václav Talich was a prominent Czech violinist and pedagogue, who is best known for conducting the Czech Philharmonic from 1919 to 1941. His students have recounted the advice he gave them on score study. Charles Mackerras remarked that Talich once told him: "When you learn a score, learn it in its full complexity. The next step would be to go through each instrumental line. Try to understand what it means to you, what did the composer write there, what is each part expressing, whether is it second violins, oboe or tuba. One must go through all lines and then, again, look at the score in its complexity."<sup>73</sup> Mikuláš Medek, another one of Talich's students, mentioned that Talich learned a score beginning with the character the music should express, and, as the day of the performance got closer, he would narrow down the more basic elements such as rhythm, tempo, sound, and clarity.<sup>74</sup>

Adrian Boult, the conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra during the first twenty years of its existence, left an entire book dedicated to his ideas about conducting, including the preparatory stages. "[Boult] would read the score through, somewhat faster than its appropriate performing pace. He did this several times-not really hearing it as a complete score, but still noting the shape, balance, structure of its keys, it's climaxes,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *Václav Talich, sebevědomí a pokora* [Václav Talich, Self-Confidence and Humility], directed by Martin Suchánek, (Česká televize, 2004), 46 mins, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/11548260689-vaclav-talich-sebevedomi-a-pokora>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

emotional parts and dynamics; and getting a kind of bird's-eye view.”<sup>75</sup> When it was a complex modern work, he would examine details, sometimes taking difficult passages to the keyboard. Boult thought that it was mandatory to understand the music before thinking about interpretative decisions. He believed it is not a good idea to begin thinking of rubatos, crescendos, and similar expressive nuances without full knowledge of the work. Boult’s standard for adequate knowledge of a score was when he could, for instance, go out for a walk and begin preparing the work from memory.<sup>76</sup>

The British-Hungarian conductor Georg Solti became legendary as the conductor of the Chicago Symphony, Covent Garden Opera, Orchestre de Paris, and London Philharmonic. There are many first-hand accounts of his score preparation, which agree that Solti always had a clear concept of what he wanted to achieve in a performance. Gordon Parry, a recording engineer at Decca said, “He worked on the scores, he prepared himself.”<sup>77</sup> Recording producer James Mallinson remembered, “Solti spent a prodigious amount [of time studying] ... It took a long time to learn a new score ... penetrating to the essence, into the area behind the printed notes.”<sup>78</sup> And Michael Haas, another producer with whom Solti worked, claimed, “Solti always did his homework. The most prepared conductors that I have ever worked with ... never did anything on the wing ... there was never a musical motive or a musical idea that he had not thought about or

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<sup>75</sup> Adrian Boult, *Thoughts on Conducting* (London: Aldine Press, 1963), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in David Patmore, “The Influence of Recording and the Record Industry upon Musical Activity, as Illustrated by the Careers of Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Georg Solti and Sir Simon Rattle,” (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2001), 141.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

recognized or incorporated into what he was doing.”<sup>79</sup> Solti stated in interviews that he rarely, if ever, listened to his own recordings after they were completed.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> David Patmore, “Sir Georg Solti and the Record Industry,” *ARSC Journal* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 223.



Chapter IV:  
CONTEMPORARY SCORE PREPARATION WITHOUT THE USE OF  
ORCHESTRAL RECORDINGS

This chapter and the chapter that follows examine the two views that contemporary conductors have formed over whether recording has a place in score study. Some believe that using recordings is not healthy because there is a danger of copying someone else's interpretation. Others use recordings in their score preparation as a secondary source of information. Each of these chapters discusses the primary ideas behind its approach. This is followed by specific notes from conductors who ascribe to that position, some of whom I was able to personally interview for this project.

The following commentary is from conductors who advise against the use of recordings by other conductors in the preparation of scores. (Some do, however, use recordings of their own conducting.) There are two major reasons given for this stance. The first is that listening to others' recordings could unduly influence your own interpretations, watering down your personal interpretation or adding ideas that do not come from the composer or score. A second reason that is often given is that listening to a recording is a shortcut for getting a superficial understanding of the work; it can easily substitute for deep study of the score that will yield a more inciteful understanding of the music.

Mark Heron, professor of conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music, calls a score study without recordings the "traditional view."<sup>81</sup> This is his preferred

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<sup>81</sup> Mark Heron, "Some Thoughts on Score Study," <https://conductit.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/10/Thoughts-on-Score-Study.pdf>.

method of score preparation, and he says that listening to recordings is a “short cut through that time-consuming process, [which] will leave the conductor with only a superficial knowledge of the work in question, and very possibly result in a re-interpretation of someone else's work.”<sup>82</sup> He has broken down the steps of his process into what he calls the “seven trips through the score.” Each step is a separate action, designed to be applied to the entirety of the score.

1. Look at the instrumentation and transpositions
2. Analyze the form
3. Look at the harmonic structure
4. Find the melodic line and its instrumentation
5. Do phrase analysis
6. Look at the dynamics
7. Identify special effects in the scores and how to apply on instruments

These steps require a great amount of time to be spent learning the score. Heron’s version of the process focuses on asking the right questions to uncover deeper layers of the music, rather than simply trying to remember each note from the score. For example: Why is this movement in sonata form instead of rondo form? Why does a specific chord in the harmonic structure of the piece resolve to subdominant? Why is the main melody in this section played by this instrument? Why is this phrase five measures long instead of the expected four measures? Where does this section climax? Why is it important to play these notes *espressivo* or *non vibrato*? Developing your own answers to these kinds of questions prepares you by deepening your understanding of the music itself, and it can prepare you to answer questions that could arise during rehearsal.

In his book *The Grammar of Conducting*, Max Rudolf wrote that “no matter how great the recording is and even if led by a great conductor, cannot really be considered as

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

a serious score study. It holds the risk of imitating someone's mind and using someone other's interpretations."<sup>83</sup> As the former head of conducting at the Curtis Institute (in addition to being music director of the Cincinnati Symphony), he was experienced in coaching young conductors, who he believed should learn scores without relying on outside help. Rudolf's career began in the years before recordings were widely available, allowing him to see the results of both styles of score preparation. Reflecting on teachers who advised their students to listen to recordings, he wrote that this practice tended to produce clones instead of developing students' individuality.<sup>84</sup> Although outstanding recordings provide a vivid picture of orchestral sound, you can only gain passive experience from this exercise.

In his book *Conducting Business: Unveiling the Mystery Behind the Maestro*, Leonard Slatkin provides advice based on his years of experience as music director of the Detroit and National Symphonies as well as conductor of the St. Louis Symphony.<sup>85</sup> He cautions against any use of recordings in the score study process.

My best advice to a novice is to learn the work thoroughly before listening to any recording. I find that most of these aural aids wind up seeming a bit faster than is practical for live performance. No composer has ever erred on the slow side. . .

[Should I listen to recordings?] Of course, no. My advice is to learn a piece on your own and borrow only from performances that reside in your memory. When you have thoroughly digested the work, you can then consult a recorded version.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: Schirmer, 1950), 326.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Leonard Slatkin, *Conducting Business: Unveiling the Mystery Behind the Maestro* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

David Robertson, who was music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra a few years following Slatkin, believes it is important to study scores without recordings to understand the composer's process and the musical structures that results from it. Robertson, in a conducting masterclass released on the Carnegie Hall YouTube channel, says, "One of the things that always gets to me with young conductors is we tend to listen to recordings. The danger of listening to recordings is that we tend to hear the surface. You can imitate the surface of something, but you don't necessarily understand the structure and the process that brought it about. You've got all of the things in sort of right place, but in terms of how they cohere, it seems to me that there is no real sense of trajectory of how the movements works and where these things fit in. Our job is to find for ourselves some type of internal underline and logic as why it is this and not something else. And everything hangs on this logic."<sup>87</sup>

Lawrence Golan, resident conductor of the Phoenix Symphony and author of the book *Score Study Passes*, is not in favor of listening to recordings. "I feel very strongly about NOT listening to recordings during the early stages of score study (at least passes one through sixteen) because it can be detrimental to the development of interpretive, independent thinking, and critical thinking skills. Finally, it should be pointed out that this is an all-inclusive list of score study passes."<sup>88</sup> Though he advises against the use of recordings early in the process, Golan rejects the idea that it will prevent us from developing our own interpretations. He says that we can apply our own values to what we

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<sup>87</sup> "How to Deepen Musical Interpretation as a Conductor, ft. David Robertson," Carnegie Hall: Weill Music Institute, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5QR1X0A-xA>.

<sup>88</sup> Lawrence Golan, *Score Study Passes* (Beau Bassin, Mauritius: GlobeEdit, 2020), 27.

hear in a recording, taking from it what we like and rejecting what we do not. However, listening cannot replace studying and marking your scores; it is only a part of the later learning process.

In his article, “The Orchestra, Conductor, Interpretation,” G. L. Daum also takes a more neutral stance on the use of recordings.<sup>89</sup> Pointing out the necessity of individual approach to music, he advises conductors to use progressive steps in their analytical process. It is impractical to expect to listen and analyze the entire catalog, for example, of forty or more recordings of Beethoven’s fifth symphony. The score, not these recordings, is the ultimate authority, and there is no need to listen to every recording in search of your own style.

In the process of preparing this document, I had the opportunity to talk directly with several practicing conductors and pedagogues. One of these was Pinchas Steinberg, the chief conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. He told me that he never listens to recordings.<sup>90</sup> He, instead, goes through the score a lot of times step by step, hearing the music inside.

I spoke at greater length with Leoš Svárovský, chief conductor of the Aichi Central Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra. When asked if he uses recordings to study scores, Svárovský gave the following answer.

First of all, there is a type of the score preparation process in which one has to refresh the piece, which means the scores that you already know, the scores that you already studied before. Of course, this particular process is rapid.

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<sup>89</sup> G. L. Daum, “The Orchestra,” *Music: A User’s Guide*, [http://claver.gprep.org/fac/gldaum/\\_music/\\_acoustics/acoustics9.htm](http://claver.gprep.org/fac/gldaum/_music/_acoustics/acoustics9.htm).

<sup>90</sup> Pinchas Steinberg, email interview by the author, October 10, 2017.

Next are the scores that you have never seen before where you cannot use any recordings. For example, I conduct a lot of contemporary pieces in Japan and in this case, I start from the biggest passages to smaller.

First thing you need to do is to look at the instrumentation, then one has to look at the rhythmical difficulties like as if you look at the Mozart's symphonies, where usually the first movement would be in 2/4 pattern and the third movement in 3/4. Or, for example, in a Shostakovich symphony whether the movement in 3/8 pattern or 1/8 pattern. Then you mark the important moments in the score, such as dynamic changes and slowly I would realize how hard the music is. This holds whether is it *Eine Kleine Nacht Music* style or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. There is a difference if one conducts an opera that has 3 hours length or if you perform some suite or overture that has a duration of 50 minutes. It also must be considered how it is that you experience the piece and how much effort you make to do so. In my conducting stage I look at the scores that I conduct in two weeks, even though I would conduct something different tomorrow. One has to prepare the score so well, that he or she would look confident enough in front of the orchestra. Any hesitations and concerns from the conductor fail to bring anything positive for the orchestra.<sup>91</sup>

I also asked him for advice on learning contemporary works.

If the score is not written in the pointillistic style, the main melody is usually in the woodwinds.<sup>92</sup> There is some phrase for about four, six or eight measures and then you would have some contrasting rhythmical passages. Even the fastest notes need to be clearly played and understood. I always say that determining the right tempo is seventy percent of success. The conductor should make sure that he or she has a positive atmosphere around the orchestra; and not to have frustrated musicians complaining about unplayable passages. Some contemporary composers don't take to consideration this issue. Sometimes I would positively surprise those composers with my suggestions for changes. If the conductor is not sufficiently with the score, there is no way orchestra can achieve distinction.

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<sup>91</sup> Leoš Svárovský, phone interview and translation by the author, June 18, 2017.

<sup>92</sup> Pointillistic music - a compositional technique used in the twentieth century in which individual tones of different colors and dynamics are placed at large intervallic distances from one another to prevent the impression of a continuous melody.

Marek Valášek, head of conducting at Charles University, Prague and a professor at the Prague Conservatory, gave me an extensive overview of his approach and recommendations to score preparation without recordings.

I always recommend to my students the following steps:

My advice is to learn scores as much as possible without using recordings, in order to create your own thoughts on the interpretations, phrases, and tempo changes. Tectonically it is essential to understand what the composers' intentions are and why he composed pieces in a particular way.

To learn scores without using any tools may be time consuming, may require patience, tireless hard work and also require the ability to play scores on the piano - as this is generally expected of conductors. Conductors with perfect pitch have an additional advantage.

The point is to understand what the composer's intentions are, why the composer composed a particular piece of music in one way and not another. The well-known conductor Jiří Bělohlávek once mentioned: "We, as conductors, have rights to make changes in the score. However, before changing even one note, let's carefully and thoughtfully consider whether it is worth doing it for the benefits of music itself."

The conductors mentioned in this section have differing opinions on whether there is any place for recordings in the score preparation process, but they all agree that it is important, first and foremost, to develop your own understanding of the music. Many feel that recordings can get in the way of this process or be a paltry substitute for deep score study. Some argue that recordings can prevent you from forming your own interpretation or can impart musical ideas that are outside of what the composer wrote.

## Chapter V:

### CONTEMPORARY SCORE PREPARATION USING ORCHESTRAL RECORDINGS

This chapter outlines viewpoints from several conductors who use recordings in a variety of ways as a part of their score preparation process. Some conductors use recordings as they begin the process to observe traditions from the past, while other conductors do this at the end of the process after they have used their own individual approach to analyze the score. Video recordings can be used to observe how the conductor's gestures are translated by the orchestra and to analyze the emotions that are conveyed through the conductor's movements and expressions. A few conductors listen to a recording without the score in hand and only listen a single time, so they can get a general idea of the piece. Others listen multiple times, analyzing the score as the music plays. If a conductor is lucky enough to have conducted and recorded the piece in the past, they can reference that recording for subsequent performances. Most pedagogues studied for this survey recommend listening to more than one recording to compare them

The commentary I have collected from books, articles, and interviews can be divided by four contexts in which the conductors advised using recordings: listening to others' recordings to prepare the score; extremely limited use of others' recordings to prepare the score; the use of the conductor's own recordings; and the use of recordings for pedagogy.

#### Recording Use Recommended to Prepare Score

There are many conductors who believe that adding recording analysis to the more traditional methods of score study can enhance and accelerate the process. This can



be to speed up the process, provide an aural reference for the harmonies and polyphony, to give an idea of how past conductors have performed the piece, or a host of other reasons.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mark Heron generally advises to not rely on recordings in your score preparation. However, he does provide five pragmatic instructions, if you do choose to use them.

1. If at all possible, listen to more than one recording. This will avoid being taken in by a conductor who has chosen a particularly extreme tempo, or perhaps taken some unusual interpretative decisions, or even decided he (and I deliberately omit 'or she' here) knows better than the composer and indulged in a little bit of 'recomposing'.
2. Listen to the recordings early on in the score study process and if possible, cease doing so before the rehearsal starts. This will allow your own interpretation to develop.
3. Have the courage of your convictions and if you take a different view of something other than what you hear on recordings, - no matter how exalted the conductor and orchestra - go for it. Your interpretation will usually be better than your regurgitation of someone else's interpretation.
4. Don't practice conducting the piece with the recording playing - it's not like that in real life!
5. Don't necessarily stick to the big names - they (and I mean orchestras as well as conductors) may be better able to pull off an idiosyncratic performance than you.<sup>93</sup>

Wolfgang Sawallisch, former director of the Philadelphia and Vienna Symphonies and the Bavarian State Orchestra, mentioned in his memoirs that the availability of

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<sup>93</sup> Mark Heron, "Some Thoughts on Score Study," <https://conductit.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/10/Thoughts-on-Score-Study.pdf>.

recordings makes it is very easy to learn scores.<sup>94</sup> To paraphrase his German: one can simply push a button on a container of music, and everything is perfectly clear.

In his career as conductor of the BBC Symphony, Czech Philharmonic, and Prague Symphony, Jiří Bělohlávek developed another reason for listening to as many recordings as possible for each piece he learned.<sup>95</sup> He never wanted his students to be influenced by the interpretations, tempos, or orchestra colors of other conductors. Instead, he felt it was good to be aware that your performance would be judged against these other performances, both good and bad. He would even encourage listening to badly performed recordings as examples of what not to do.

Michael Bowles, the Irish conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, talks in his book, *The Conductor: His Artistry and Craftsmanship*, about the usefulness of listening to recordings while reading a score to receive a good impression on unfamiliar harmonies. He wrote that it can be attractive to look at and read a score while “playing a recording through a few times - it is an easy way of getting an impression of the work as a whole.”<sup>96</sup> However, Bowles adds that these approaches should be used carefully and with reservations. It is not a substitute for the hard mental work of spending time with the score to master its details. Listening to a recording many times may give a good impression of the music, but this is not precise or detailed enough to prepare a score properly for rehearsal.

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<sup>94</sup> Wolfgang Sawallisch, *Im Interesse der Deutlichkeit: mein Leben mit der Musik* [In the Interest of Clarity: My Life with Music] (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1988).

<sup>95</sup> This information is based on the author’s personal recollections as a student of Bělohlávek.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Bowles, *The Conductor: His Artistry and Craftsmanship* (London: G. Bell, 1961), 145.

Conductors Christopher Seaman and Tomáš Netopil independently recommend a strong sense of one's own musical ideas and interpretation. Christopher Seaman, author of the book *Inside Conducting*, writes,

Listening to recordings is useful, because it helps the music reach the memory through the ear as well as the eye. It speeds up the learning process, but it's not healthy to depend on it too much. It's better to read through a score without a recording more often than with it. Great recordings can be inspirational, but they shouldn't be allowed to over-influence your interpretation. No conductor would want you to ape his performance; in fact, disagreeing with some things in a recording is a healthy sign that you've arrived at an interpretation of your own."<sup>97</sup>

And Tomáš Netopil, music director of the Aalto Theater and Philharmonie Essen, told me that he finds orchestra recordings helpful in his score preparation, adding that one cannot be influenced by recordings if one has some musical intelligence.<sup>98</sup>

When I spoke with Hynek Farkač, professor of conducting at the Prague Conservatory and Prague Academy of Performing Arts, he claimed that he does not see anything wrong with using recordings during the score learning process as long as it is for an informative reason rather than to copy someone else's interpretation.<sup>99</sup> "If one is a good musician, he or she would not be influenced by listening to the recordings." In his own preparation, Farkač usually listens to recordings once or will limit his listening to only selected passages. He believes using recordings makes the score preparation process faster.

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<sup>97</sup> Christopher Seaman, *Inside Conducting* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 162.

<sup>98</sup> Tomáš Netopil, interview by author, Prague, July 2, 2020.

<sup>99</sup> Hynek Farkač, phone interview and translation by author, June 8, 2018.

John Nardolillo is the director of orchestras at the University of Kentucky School of Music and artistic director of the Prague Summer Nights Music Festival, which gives him a multi-faceted view of the conducting process as both teacher and performer.<sup>100</sup> In our interview, he said that he listens to recordings once at the beginning of the score study process to get the general idea of the piece and again only after he has completed his personal score study. In this second round of listening preparation process he looks for answers to specific problematic passages he has come across. For example, he may listen for how the timbre of the particular chord affect its intonation.

Nardolillo is interested in learning which tempos are commonly chosen for a piece and identifying conductors' reasons for those decisions. Though he tends to listen to recordings of pieces with which he is familiar less frequently, in such cases he may listen to these more critically, especially when their tempos conflict with his own. He may even change his opinions on certain recordings as his knowledge of the work deepens.

Another thing which interests Nardolillo is the traditions from the composition's country of origin—for example, how Czech conductors and orchestras play the music of Dvořák, how Brahms is interpreted in Vienna, or Mahler in New York. Because of this, he advises conductors to be familiar with the specific interpretation traditions that are expected in a composition, even if they are written into the scores themselves.

Nardolillo finds video recordings and live streams instructive. They allow him to observe the musical connection that occurs between the orchestra and conductor, how the

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<sup>100</sup> John Nardolillo, interview by author, Lexington, KY, May 2, 2017.

musicians respond to the conductor's gestures, and how a successful interpretation was achieved.

We also spoke about the preparation of compositions that have never been performed. Nardolillo explained the necessity of spending a great deal of time reading the score, sometimes using a piano. Once the first rehearsal occurs, he finds that it is beneficial to use it as a kind of run through, accepting that what he hears will not fully represent the piece. He believes that a conductor, and often the instrumentalists as well, must approach contemporary pieces based on educated guesses. Because these works do not have a tradition of performance, even the composer may not know exactly what the piece will sound like until they hear it in rehearsal.

Lewis Buckley, conductor of the United States Coast Guard Band for nearly thirty years and writer of the blog *On Conducting*, has found that his opinion on this subject has changed. In his post "Should I Listen to Recordings?," Buckley recounts how he was told by his conducting teacher to never listen to recordings because they would prevent him from developing his own interpretations.<sup>101</sup> Later, he realized that the opposite was true, that listening to recordings was essential for his process. Buckley acknowledges that he cannot audiate all the complex harmonies of score simply by looking at the notes. For new pieces, the only way he can prevent hearing them for the first time at the first rehearsal is to listen to a recording during his preparation. He also says that it can help when time is limited. "From the practical point of view, recordings can be a huge help when you have to learn something in a hurry."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Lewis Buckley, "Should I Listen to Recordings?," *On Conducting*, August 2, 2015, <http://lew Buckley.com/blog/conducting.html>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

Charles Olivieri-Munroe has spent much of his career conducting orchestras throughout Europe, including the German Philharmonie Südwestfalen, the Slovak Radio Symphony, and the Kraków Philharmonic. He recommends listening to recordings in an intelligent way, while not allowing your listening or preparation to get lazy.<sup>103</sup> He suggests that listening to different kinds of recordings can give you a variety of insights. Listening to performances by less proficient orchestras can point out technically tricky spots of the piece. However, he prefers recordings by conductors who create a transparent sound and insert less of their own personalities.

Olivieri-Munroe believes the necessity for listening to recordings depends on the stage in the conductor's musical life. He listens to recordings far less often than in his earlier career, saying that because of his experience it is now possible for him to get a sense of the orchestral sound from simply reading the score. It is important for him to understand the structure of the particular score, the hierarchy of the instrument sections, articulations, and looking for the loudest and softest passages in the pieces and how the dynamics work throughout.

Olivieri-Munroe's first step in learning scores, especially those he needs to study quickly, is to determine the tempo of the composition. What are the fastest notes and at what tempo do they work best? He insists on determining the tempo based on the indications written by the composer into the score, not on one's own feelings, as some conductors do. Inserting his personal ideas is the final step of the process and is particularly necessary in finding the best colors and timbres for the piece. For example, a

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Olivieri-Munroe, phone interview and translation by author, May 26, 2017.

work by Stravinsky would need a rhythmic, articulate, punchy sound that would be inappropriate for an impressionistic piece that requires shifting sound colors and effects.

As the music director of the Atlanta Opera and head of conducting at Indiana University, Arthur Fagen has experienced many sides of conducting.<sup>104</sup> He tends to listen to recordings to refresh his music memory but doesn't find himself using recordings for works in the common practice harmonic tradition. When preparing for premieres, he asks the composer to provide him with a MIDI version of the piece. Fagen learns scores by focusing on the sound colors of a particular section, gaining an understanding of how the piece flows rather than necessarily memorizing it. He does not feel that his preparation is complete until he has worked the music with an orchestra. Fagen is not opposed to his students listening to recordings to familiarize themselves with the traditions of musical style and tempos.

Some working conductors still admit to using recordings to check the traditions of tempo and style associated with key works. Larry Livingston, professor of conducting at the University of Southern California, listens to recordings from conductors he considers great during his score preparation.<sup>105</sup> He notes their tempos, articulations, and how they balance the orchestra. He warns not to be overly influenced by these recordings; particularly young conductors, he finds, get into a trouble when their ears are not well trained.

Livingston starts his own score study with an overview of the movements' large sections and then moves into the smaller segments with harmonic and structural analyses.

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<sup>104</sup> Arthur Fagen, phone interview by author, February 3, 2018.

<sup>105</sup> Larry J. Livingston, phone interview by author, November 4, 2017.

In traditional works, he focuses on tracing the main themes and motifs. This process, according to him, can be difficult in twenty-first-century works that may have several different structures occurring simultaneously.

Like Livingston, Carl Topilow, conductor of the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, concentrates his listening on conductors he respects, checking their tempos against what is indicated in the score.<sup>106</sup> He notes, for example, that Stravinsky often conducted his own compositions in a different tempo than he had written in the score. Topilow believes that it is possible to audiate the score, though not everything may be heard. Therefore, he suggests using recordings later in the score study process, and only using those made by conductors you trust.

Some conductors specifically listen to records without looking at the score. Roger Norrington, best known for his work in historically informed performance and for conducting the Camerata Salzburg and Stuttgart Radio Symphony, stated in an interview that he uses recordings in this way.

I study in lots of different ways. If I don't know a piece, I'll listen to a recording, any recording will do. I'd listen just to get the sound of the score in my head. I'd probably listen to it while driving. I'd just get used to it subconsciously. So, if I'm driving it's good because I can't look at the score. I have to listen to what's happening. I don't use the piano much since I never learned how to play the piano well. However, then I go into a whole lot of detail. I might not label every chord, but I know what it's doing and where it's going. Then I go through the score with a more inventive mind, forgetting about structure. I ask, "What's really happening?" Is the music funny or serious, whether a particular gesture is tragic or comic? I ask what the flavor

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<sup>106</sup> Carl Topilow, phone interview by author, February 17, 2018.



is. I live with a work a minimum of six months before performing it.<sup>107</sup>

Robert Baldwin's process of score preparation also makes selective use of score study.<sup>108</sup> Baldwin, who is director of the Salt Lake Symphony and teaches at the University of Utah, uses recordings only as reference to notice things he may have missed. He generally listens to recordings only three to five times for tempo or rubato ideas, then does not listen to them again until after the piece has been performed, so as not to influence his interpretation. If the piece is newly composed work, he may listen to other works by the same composer to get an idea of their compositional style and personality. After his initial listening, Baldwin engages in a process of scanning through the score ten times, marking notable musical elements and using a viola or piano to hear passages that are difficult to audiate. Baldwin recommends that his students listen to recordings but never conduct to them. He believes students should listen to the recordings of both the conductors they admire and those with whom they disagree. If available, they must listen to at least one historic recording (i.e. Toscanini, etc), one late-twentieth century recording (i.e. Abbado, etc.), and one recent recording.

Thomas Douglas, artistic director of the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh and director of opera studies at Carnegie Mellon University, listens to recordings when he is pressed to learn something quickly.<sup>109</sup> He listens to at least three recordings, both older and recent, to avoid being overly influenced by one musical interpretation, but only after he has

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<sup>107</sup> Bruce Duffie, "Conductor Sir Roger Norrington: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie," *Bruceduffie.com*, April 1996, <http://www.bruceduffie.com/norrington.html>.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Baldwin, email interview with the author, December 16, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Douglas, email interview with author, December 19, 2020.

briefly perused the score to give him an idea of what to expect. After this initial listening, Douglas' next step in the score preparation process is to look through the score and play through each of the musical lines at the piano. The tempo of the piece, even if it is given, should be dependent on the proficiency of the performers. Finally, he told me that he believes there is value for students in conducting with a recording and following someone else's interpretation. This is because most professionals begin their careers as assistant conductors who will need to be able to conduct effectively even when it is not their musical ideas.

#### Recording Use NOT Recommended to Prepare Score

In contrast to those conductors who listen to many recordings multiple times, some say that it is best to briefly listen for only the most basic ideas. Often they are looking for very specific answers in these recordings, or are wanting to compare various styles of performance and interpretation.

As the conductor of the Czech Radio Symphony, Vladimír Válek finds recordings, particularly of Czech repertoire, important for passing down the mandatory traditions associated with this music.<sup>110</sup> He normally only listens to recordings once or twice and analyzes the rhythms of scores measure by measure, focusing on his conducting technique and clarity of downbeats. He believes that any musical composition can be felt in the character of either a polka or waltz, possibly with more complex subdivisions.

Conductors Martin Pearlman and Libor Pešek avoid listening to recordings, however, they may use them to resolve specific questions they have. Pearlman, who is

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<sup>110</sup> Vladimír Válek, phone interview and translation by author, March 10, 2018.

the music director of Boston Baroque and professor of historical performance at Boston University, does not generally listen to recordings while learning scores and developing his own interpretation.<sup>111</sup> His preparation generally involves reading the score, marking details, and eventually playing specific parts on the piano. He may listen to one or two recordings afterwards if he is curious about how someone else solved a particular problem. He may also listen to his own recordings while preparing for another performance of the same music, comparing how his current interpretation has changed from the previous one.

Libor Pešek also uses recordings only when he needs solutions for specific problems, usually tempo changes.<sup>112</sup> As a former conductor of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra and conductor laureate of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Pešek believes that score preparation, especially for young conductors, requires attending other conductors' rehearsals to develop one's own sense of the orchestral sound. He prepares his own scores by dividing the compositions into smaller segments and believes that the first rehearsal is an extremely important moment of authentic experience with a new piece.

David Effron, professor of conducting at Indiana University, uses recordings only at the beginning of his score study.<sup>113</sup> He believes that the more a conductor's ears are trained the more perceptive they are while examining the score. When their musical imagination is well developed, a conductor can hear the score when looking at it. He does not recommend that his students listen to recordings.

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<sup>111</sup> Martin Pearlman, email interview with the author, July 6, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Libor Pešek, phone interview and translation by the author, June 22, 2017.

<sup>113</sup> David Effron, phone interview with the author, November 21, 2018.

Mark Gibson rarely uses recordings because he already has experience conducting most pieces in the standard repertoire.<sup>114</sup> He does not believe listening to recordings has much to do with studying scores, but he does ask his students to listen to two recordings of the piece, one older and one more recent, after they have finished a phrase-by-phrase analysis.

Ronald Zollman, former conductor of the Plzeň Philharmonic and Belgian National Orchestra, does not typically make listening part of his score preparation.<sup>115</sup> But, unlike the other conductors cited in this section, he told me that you do listen to recordings, listen to as many as possible. Zollman says that reading scores takes time to do properly. He starts by looking at the general idea of the piece, then explores the score for more details, such as tempos.

#### Use of One's Own Recordings

Some conductors listen to their own recordings to learn what they can improve upon or simply to appreciate what is working well. According to Bernard Haggan's book *Conversations with Toscanini*, the conductor listened to his own recordings when studying pieces for further performances.<sup>116</sup> A specific incidence of this occurred in 1938 when Toscanini was preparing Haydn's Symphony No. 98. He had recently conducted this symphony for his first NBC season and used the video of this broadcast along with

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<sup>114</sup> Mark Gibson, email interview with the author, April 10, 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Ronald Zollman, phone interview with the author, May 4, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Bernard H. Haggan, *Conversations with Toscanini* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 46.

his typical score study. He also admitted to reading Donald Tovey's commentary on the work in Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis*.<sup>117</sup>

Early in his career, Gerard Schwarz listened to recordings to for interpretive ideas and to acquaint himself with performances by important conductors and orchestras. Later in his busy career as conductor of the Seattle Symphony and director of the All-Star Orchestra, Palm Beach Symphony, and Eastern Music Festival, he found that he listened more to recordings of his own performances to see if he agreed with his prior decision making. In his score study process, he rarely uses recordings or even a piano to hear the music, preferring to learn scores by looking at the page. He allows his students to listen to recordings because he believes it will increase their knowledge of the repertoire.

#### Use of Recordings for Pedagogy

A few conductors who are also teachers of the craft limited their comments about recordings to their use as a pedagogical resource for student development. Many of them do not recommend recordings for score study but have found them useful in other ways.

Radomil Eliška, the principal conductor of the Sapporo Symphony, recommends that his students use recordings for educational reasons and not for learning the score.<sup>118</sup> He does not want his students to consult recordings during their score preparation process, because it would be disappointing to hear a performance that is similar to what one has already heard on a recording. He does recommend that his students listen to recordings to familiarize themselves with the vast orchestral repertoire and with its

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<sup>117</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

<sup>118</sup> Radomil Eliška, interview with Vladimir Bukac, translated by the author, June 7, 2017.

various historical styles. To develop his students' ear, Eliška suggests that they begin training by studying classical era scores for many hours until they can begin to audiate the music. Once they have reached proficiency with these simpler scores, they can move on to larger orchestrations from later periods. Only when facing the most complicated harmonies and textures, would he allow his students to use a piano.

In his own preparation, Eliška avoids using recordings, only listening to them after careful score study and creating his own interpretation, because it is inappropriate for a professional conductor to imitate someone else's interpretation. He believes that, as a conductor, it is an important ability to audiate the music from the score and begin outlining strategies for rehearsals from this hearing. However, he does conduct from memory, especially during rehearsals where he may need to consult the score to answer a question. If he listens to recordings, he will look for a recording from a conductor and orchestra he trusts.

Petr Vronský, conductor of the North Czech and Moravian Philharmonics, believes that audio and video recordings are necessary short cuts for those students who do not have perfect pitch.<sup>119</sup> Because he does have perfect pitch, Vronský can read a score without needing a piano or recordings. However, he does use recordings to speed up his own preparation and recommends this tool and video recordings to his students. For those without perfect pitch, Vronský believes it is worth the years effort to develop. "My summary here would be to either have a perfect pitch or spend years of training to have this ability."

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<sup>119</sup> Petr Vronský, email interview and translation by the author, March 26, 2018.

## CONCLUSION

Before the introduction of audio recording and the first recorded orchestral performances, conductors had to learn the scores without the benefit of recordings. After 1913, orchestral recordings became increasingly available with an ever expanding repertoire, and conductors had to choose whether to use these catalogs of recordings as a resource for their score study.

As the conductors cited in this document show, there are two completely different views on whether or not to use recordings as part of score preparation. Some conductors strongly prefer to use recordings, and some use them only at a certain point in their preparation. But, other conductors strongly prefer to avoid listening to any recordings. Whatever their opinion on recordings, professional conductors are often rather secretive about their detailed score preparation, their secret sauce.

It is not a secret that the first step of score study for most conductors is to find the main melodic line, sometimes called the red line. This can be difficult when studying complex scores with many instrumental lines. By listening to recordings, this process is made significantly easier. Looking at a score while listening to a recording usually makes this melody easier to recognize. It can be a very time-consuming process to discover the main line without using recordings or an instrument, particularly because a conductor is looking at many simultaneous voices on the page.

The next step is to understand the form of each movement of the piece. Start from the large passages and narrow your focus down to the smaller ones, discovering in the smaller sections important phrases and motives. When analyzing the harmony, focus on

the quality of the chords, marking which note in each is the most important. You may even need to decide which instrument playing that note should be the most prominent. Other features to note at this stage are misprints, particularly in hand-written scores, and articulations, especially bowings and phrasings in the strings (though, some conductors ignore this completely). Choral repertoire brings with it problems of vocal quality, breath and phrase structure, and articulated consonants and word endings.

After the score study is complete, it is time to confront your opinion on recordings. If you decide to listen to recordings, you will also face questions about differing interpretations; if you find a respected conductor making a different choice, will you keep your interpretation or adapt to what you have heard. It is important to remember that every conductor has a right to have their own opinion. Whatever you decide is up to you. Careful score study should prepare you to commit to your interpretive decisions.

My understanding of the value of recordings for score preparation, based on the research included in this document, is that recordings can help conductors become better informed about the range of possibilities. However, you should be very careful not to copy any recording, which can easily happen. Therefore, you should precisely consider if and when to listen to recordings as part of your professional discipline. Although it is quite certain that listening can help to make the score preparation process quicker, based on this research, I would not recommend listening to recordings at the start of learning and preparing a score. Features in the score may become more immediately clear through listening, but it can lead to a lack of discipline in uncovering new ideas in the score and artistic growth in ourselves. My opinion is that a conductor should know how to deal



with the scores without using any tools, even if they then decide to use recordings in their score preparation process.

There are two related issues that were barely touched on but deserve research of their own: conductors listening to their own recordings and the usefulness of video recordings. Listening to your own recordings provides a valuable resource for continuously improving your conducting skills. It can also help you clarify your interpretation without risking the influence of another conductor. Video recordings, on the other hand, provide another set of angles from which we can study the performances of conductors and orchestras. Further research is needed to collect professional's opinions on the use of this prospective asset.

## APPENDIX

This appendix contains the full original interviews I performed with twenty-five conductors. I have included the entirety of those excerpted in the previous chapter as well as additional interviews not used in the body of this document.

List of conductors whose interviews are below (in order):

Robert Baldwin  
Thomas Douglas  
Brian Edward Dowdy  
Eugene Dowdy  
David Effron  
Radomil Eliška  
Arthur Fagen  
Hynek Farkač  
Mark Gibson  
Larry J. Livingston  
Jon Mitchell  
Charles Olivieri-Munroe  
Ike Nail  
John Nardolillo  
Martin Pearlman  
Libor Pešek  
Gerald Schwarz  
Pinchas Steinberg  
Nancy Pettersen Strelau  
Leoš Svárovský  
Carl Topilow  
Marek Valášek  
Vladimír Válek  
Petr Vronský  
Ronald Zollman

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Robert Baldwin, Director of Orchestral Activities – University of Utah School of Music;  
Music Director – Salt Lake Symphony (interview date 12/16/2020)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

As reference only. I never conduct to scores. But I sometimes find it helpful to reference and notice things I may have missed.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I use good recordings for tempo ideas and gain some excellent rubato ideas that I may have not thought of before. I generally will listen to 3-5 recordings, then never listen again. I never listen to recordings while in the rehearsal process so as to not influence my own ideas.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I will listen to other works by that composer to get an idea of the style and personal approach to composition. Then I will scan by using a method of score study of taking 10-trips through the score to mark a variety of musical elements. I may use a piano or my viola to hear certain things that are difficult to hear in my head.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

Yes, but I do not recommend they ever conduct to a recording. (The only exception is something like *L'Histoire du Soldat* where it is important to get the feel and beat while the music sounds much different). I feel it is important that they listen to a variety of sources, so I always ask them to report to me on which recordings they listen to. They are not allowed to use only the conductors they admire! In fact, I require them to listen carefully to conductors they may disagree with. It's important to remove our biases if we are to learn anything. If available, they must listen to at least one historic recording (Toscanini, etc), one mid-late 20th century recording (Abbado, etc.), and one recent recording.

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Thomas Douglas, Director of Opera Studies – Carnegie Mellon University; Artistic Director – Bach Choir of Pittsburgh; Former Music Director – Newton Symphony in Kansas (interview date 12/19/2020)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

When I am pressed to learn something quickly, I listen to recordings. I am very careful to use at least three recordings so that I am not imprinted with just one musical interpretation. And I study the score briefly BEFORE I listen, so I know what to expect.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I use them to get an overall concept of the piece. I generally listen to a combination of older and recent recordings. Then I put them away until perhaps after the concert.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

First, I look at the score and study it visually. I mark the score extensively. Then I sit at the piano and play through the lines and do my best to play the open score. Even if

the tempo is given, I try to determine if that feels natural depending on the proficiency of the performers.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

Yes. I believe there is value for the students to practice conducting with a recording. I would recommend that they begin studying by the standards listed in #3, but ultimately a recording is useful. Most young, student conductors will begin a professional career as an assistant conductor and therefore it's useful to learn another conductor's work and musical interpretation. As an assistant, one's personal interpretation is not important, it's the ability to rehearse the piece in the manner of the musical ideas of the conductor, therefore conducting to a recording is a helpful way to practice this skill.

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Brian Edward Dowdy, Artistic Director & Principal Conductor - Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra; Principal Conductor - Journey North Opera Company; Lecturer - University of Minnesota School of Music (interview date 03/13/2022)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

Yes, I used recordings when preparing a score. As a student, I often heard the advice that we should either listen to no recordings at all or listen to many different ones. In my opinion, only the latter is good advice, assuming recordings are available. In what other discipline do professionals *not* consult the work of others in their field?

*If so, how do you use them?*

Regardless of my familiarity with a given piece of music, I listen to as many recordings as possible, and I do so as "step 2" of my score study. Step 1 would be learning background on the composer/piece, examining instrumentation, tonality (if it's a tonal piece), tempo/metronome markings, etc., so that I have a sort of objective "filter" through which to listen in "Step 2." (Side note: to be fair, if I've programmed something, I would have already listened to recordings and looked at scores a couple of times as part of that process.)

Practically speaking, listening to recordings is also a more efficient way to get a basic sense of the piece. If you're conducting a lot of new-to-you scores (and you will be if you're committed to performing works by composers from underrepresented populations, for example) efficiency will be critical, because you won't have the luxury of leaning on mostly core repertoire and works you've conducted previously.

Interpretively speaking, it's an opportunity to hear what others in the field have done, what works and what doesn't, what seems faithful to the score and what doesn't, etc. You'll also hear interpretive "traditions" in terms of tempo, taking time at specific moments, etc. And you'll hear different "schools" of interpretation, especially around historical performance practice (e.g. vibrato, Beethoven's metronome markings, etc.). You don't have to follow any of those traditions, but it's irresponsible not to know what they are (or to follow them blindly), because you need to know what the musicians are

expecting or assuming will happen before you step on the podium. You then need to make and own your own interpretive decisions, and you need to plan accordingly.

Short version: recordings are a tool, and conductors should be using every tool available. They are also the work of others in our field, and we should be learning from each other. Only then should we make our final interpretive decisions. And by the way, this isn't to say that we should follow interpretive decisions when "everyone does it that way." To the contrary, the score should be the primary arbiter. For example, I've heard a lot of Egmont overtures in my day, and I'm in the tiny camp of folks who think the introduction should be in three and at a significantly quicker tempo. It's a Sarabande, people! A Spanish dance for a Spanish invader!

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

Again, I use every tool I've got. I play as much as I can at the piano. I sing melodic material and vocalize rhythmic material. I vocalize various options for articulation, tempi, etc. I analyze structure, harmony, rhythm, orchestration, etc. and mark all that in my score. I ask the composer (if possible) a lot of questions. And eventually I get to the place where I'm just quietly sitting with the score and using my inner ear. I mark the musicians' parts thoroughly, making *explicit* what I see as implicit in the score (e.g. articulation). (Side note: that's how I would define interpretation.) In rehearsal I use all I've learned to interpret the score as faithfully as I can, I expect that some things won't work, and I change my approach as needed. Such is the nature of leadership.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

Yes. Again, students should be learning from what experienced professionals have done. They need to know what interpretive traditions are out there and what musicians may be expecting. They need to decide what they think is faithful to the score or not. And they need to be efficient in their learning, especially if they want a significant percentage of their season program to be works by underrepresented composers and living composers (for which midi is another viable tool - lots of great composers will assume you want it).

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Eugene Dowdy, Professor Emeritus, UTSA; Conductor & Artistic Director, Symphony of the Hills (interview date 03/03/2020)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

Not usually.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I prefer to learn the music through a complete theoretical/formal analysis based on the notation and knowledge of the composer, period and performance practice. Sometimes when leaning a new work, especially for a premiere, I'll listen to the

composer's mp3 or their recommendation of a certain performance in order to learn more of their preferences.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

See answer 1. A complete theoretical/formal analysis along with study of the composer and/or performance practice can lead to successful rehearsals and performance.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

I don't place emphasis with my conducting students on using recordings during score study. I don't believe it is useful to a conductor while they are developing a personal and compelling artistic understanding and vision for how the work should sound. I believe listening to recordings while learning a score actually takes away from understanding what the composer has indicated. The score and other extant works and notes/letters are all that most composers could leave us. Leinsdorf also speaks on this topic in his book, "The Composer's Advocate."

NOTE: I do listen to symphonic music and have enjoyed learning how various conductors approach composers and works. I just do not see the value of listening to recordings while preparing scores for a rehearsal sequence and performance.

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David Effron, Professor of Conducting – Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music  
(interview date 11/21/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

I use them at the beginning of the studies, but not to get influenced. The more your ear trained are the more you can catch when looking at the score.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

If you have a good imagination then it should be easier to hear it right away, otherwise you might be in a trouble. Conductors should look at the score more visually, to look for tempo changes, measure changes, conducting patterns. There are conductors that have photographic memory.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings?*

I don't recommend students listen to recordings, however they do it anyway.

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Radomil Eliška, Former Principal Conductor – Sapporo Symphony Orchestra (interview date 06/07/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

I try not to use recordings. Firstly, I would study score without using any tools, to create my own opinion on the particular piece and then I may consider listening to recordings, eventually, and look for any good recordings available with good conductors and orchestras.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I listen to the recordings occasionally not to be too influenced by other conductors. I believe professional conductors would not be proud of trying to imitate someone else's. Conductor has to have the ability of "hearing" the notes while reading the scores. In this process, conductor should already start to have thoughts on the rehearsal strategies, what to say to musicians.

I am not a fan of conducting by heart and would be strongly against the fact to lead the rehearsals without the score in front. I can always look at the score as soon as I have any concerns at the rehearsals and start to fix them.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I do learn the scores, which have never been recorded before, exactly in the same way as any others. Once having ability to read the scores from the classical period, one would deal in the same way with others. Perhaps, when only having extremely complicated passages in the scores, for example related harmony structure, chord qualities etc. then I might play it on the piano. One can check the interval distances by doing that. I usually look for interesting passages in the scores, such as rhythms, melodies, etc.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

I ask my students to read the scores without using any tools, by looking at it through their eyes, to create the sound image of the work. To have a perfect pitch is not a requirement.

This starts from good knowledge instrument clefs and the transpositions. The reading training starts with the early classical scores, with sort of "drill" learning process - by hours and hours of studying, things would start to go to your brain and to feel the musical ideas of the particular work. A conductor would suddenly start to "hear" the notes in the scores faster. Then next step would be to take another more complicated score from another music period. Again, once the conductor can read the score from the classical period, he/she should be able to read the contemporary scores as well. The notation is the same.

I do recommend my students to listen to recordings as much as possible for the educational reasons, to be familiar with a huge orchestral repertoire and to be familiar with all the music styles, music history periods. However, I strongly do not recommend my students listen to any recordings while they learn the particular work.

For a good conductor, it is not important to be listening to any recordings, but to make his/her own sound imagination based on serious, deep knowledge of the work. It can be disappointing when one hears a performance that is so similar to what one knows from the recordings. This is not the right approach for becoming a good conductor.

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Arthur Fagen, Head of Conducting Department – Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music; Music Director – Atlanta Opera (interview date 02/03/2018)

*Do you use, generally speaking, recordings when studying scores?*

To eventually check the memory, to refresh it. I listen to recordings several times. If it is traditional harmonic piece, I would hear structure sooner and without using recordings.

*If so, how do you use them?*

Depending on the piece, if it is piece I know then just once to refresh my memory.

*How do you learn scores without using any tools, so, for instance, contemporary pieces, which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I would ask for midi file from the composer to check the tempos, articulations, or play on the piano. I try to hear the sound in a task of good instrument balance, colors of instruments. I try to have oral understanding of the piece (singing), visually to see the piece in mind though I don't consider myself as a person with an extraordinary ability here. Conductor should have an idea of how the piece should go, not necessarily a "recording machine" in his mind. The absolutely final monuments are created when starting to work with the orchestra.

*Do you recommend young students to listen to recordings? Why?*

I do, but I am especially interested in their later approach with orchestra to check on how they approach things with the orchestra.

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Hynek Farkač, Professor of Conducting – Prague Conservatory and Prague Academy of Performing Arts (interview date 06/08/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Of course, listening the recordings will make the preparation easier, why not, most of the conductors do that. They would not admit it, but it is different to be just informed by listening them or to be too influenced which we should avoid. Listening to recording is welcomed because it will make the process faster. If one is a good musician, he or she would not get influenced by listening to the recordings.



*How do you use them?*

Sometimes I would just listen to some passages, another time I would listen once and leave it.

*How do you learn a piece that has never been performed?*

I would play the score on a piano. Then I need to know how to read the score and imagine the sound in my mind. There is no other way.

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Mark Gibson, Head of Conducting and Conductor – Cincinnati Conservatory Orchestra  
(interview date 04/10/2018)

*When you learn the scores, do you use recordings or not, generally speaking?*

Very rarely do I “use” recordings when studying scores, for several reasons. First, I am fortunate to be at a stage in my career when most everything I am conducting I have conducted before. 2nd, I don’t believe that listening to recordings has much to do with “studying” a score.

[He does not want them to listen to works interpretations rather than orchestral execution, whether the tempos are consistent with the composer’s intent, whether the orchestra plays together, etc. Gibson also mentions how important it is to observe and know that even well – known artists such as Bernstein, Copland or Stravinsky would not always be great conductors of their own works. Furthermore, he believes the sound of any given recording is often more defined and established in the control room by the engineer than on the stage.

Gibson tries to identify phrases - usually 3 or 4 bars long - then organize periods (groups of phrases), etc. On top of which, he does a lot of graphing. He describes the process as “it may increase your appetite, but it doesn’t really nourish you at all.”]

*Is there anything you are particularly interested in when listening to recordings?*

I will relate this question to what I suggest to my students: Listen to two recordings of a piece, one old or historic (’30’s to ’50’s, for instance) and one recent. Do so AFTER you have already studied the score, which means, for us, do your phrase and harmonic analysis. Listen not necessarily for “interpretation,” but rather for specifics such as orchestral execution - do the strings employ slides, are the tempos consistent with the composer’s intent, does the orchestra play together, etc.? When doing an opera, it is important to understand the traditions of the work, as many Bel Canto operas aren’t performed as they are written. Again, the two (or in the case of opera, maybe 3) recording rule applies. It is always useful, in my opinion, to listen to recordings led by the conductor. But even in this case, Copland, for instance was a notoriously bad conductor; his performance of his 3rd Symphony with London Symphony is frustratingly poor. Even Bernstein sometimes (especially in his later years) doesn’t get his own music right. Stravinsky – was not a great conductor of his own works. But still, these are important documents to know. Furthermore, the sound of any given recording is often more defined and established in the control room by the engineer (“Tonmeister”) than on the stage.

*Do you listen to recordings several times during your preparation process?*

More often than not, composers will provide MIDI recordings of their works, but they are often compromised and inaccurate. I believe that the conductor's job is to learn score - to identify the organizing principle the composer employs; there is nothing random in the method of composition (apart from John Cage). Almost all music is designed in terms of phrase; I try to identify those phrases - usually 3 or 4 bars long - then organize periods (groups of phrases), etc. ON top of which, I do a lot of graphing.

*How do you deal with the scores that have never been recorded?*

I have addressed this above. In general, I tell my students that listening to or watching recordings/videos of other people making music is like watching someone else eat food. It may increase your appetite, but it doesn't really nourish you at all.

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Larry J. Livingston, Professor of Conducting – University of Southern California  
(interview date (interview date 11/04/2017))

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

Yes, to check the traditions what great conductors do, especially in the task of tempo, articulations, and the orchestral balance. I will listen to well-known conductors and check the commitments where they play soft, loud dynamics, etc. The dangerous thinking is to not get too influenced. I read letters and learn the cultural context.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I would start from the big sections to the smaller, do harmonic and structural analysis. I try to find the main themes when having the traditional harmonic work. The 21st century's scores might have more rhythmically expanded passages considered as main lines. It is hard to decide the main line when having several different structures going on at the same time.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

Yes, but if they don't have their ear trained, they might be in a trouble. It is about listening to orchestra.

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Jon Mitchell, University of Massachusetts, Boston (interview date 03/13/2022)

*Do you use, generally speaking, recordings when studying scores?*

Yes, but not all the time. For something very tonal--no, as I don't want my interpretation to be based on someone else's.

*If so, how do you use them?*

For something semi-tonal--I'll listen to a particular recording once, unless there are some really difficult passages. Perhaps two different recordings, but just once.

*How do you learn scores without using any tools, so, for instance, contemporary pieces, which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

First, go to the composer, if possible. Then study, study, study. Oftentimes, I'll sit down at the piano to work out my understanding of certain passages.

*Do you recommend young students to listen to recordings? Why?*

I always have advocated for my students to listen to recordings. They must achieve a familiarity with the repertoire, be it orchestra, band, or chorus. The vast majority of students in beginning conducting classes, in particular, have not yet achieved the consummate inner hearing ability that professional conductors need to have.

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Charles Olivieri-Munroe, Chief Conductor – Philharmonie Südwestfalen, Dortmund, Germany; Artistic Director – Kraków Philharmonic, Poland (interview date 05/06/2017)

*When you learn the scores, do you use recordings or not, generally speaking?*

Yes, I use them as a reference point. There is an intelligent way of listening to recordings and the choice of the recordings is so much greater than when I was a student. When I was studying conducting, you were much more selective about which CDs you went to buy, it was the investment, something special so all the conductors would buy Karajan's Beethoven symphonies, he recorded them by the way three times, from 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The point is that that was a sort of a benchmark and then you would buy symphonies of Harnoncourt, George Norrington to get the feelings for the original instruments and more urtexts approaches to the Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Lot of things can be found on the YouTube but also can make people lazy, they would listen to whatever they find on YouTube. If I were studying conducting today, then I would want to get as wide sample of possibilities and listen critically and see how different conductors do it at different times. It is also by the way good to listen to less good orchestras because when you listen to concert performance even a studio recording of the less good orchestra, that is when you can identify difficult places of the piece or the orchestra you are going to conduct. When you listen to the Berlin Philharmonic or the New York Phil, everything sounds perfect. It hides the difficult places. Sometimes is good on purpose to listen to less good orchestras because then it gets you better preparation for what to expect when you conduct the particular orchestra.

*Is there anything you are particularly interested in when listening to recordings?*

When I listen to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, I look for the clean transparent recording of Gardiner or Norrington. They don't put too much of their personality. On the other hand, if you listen to recording of Christian Thielemann, he is just so personal, it's really incorrect. I don't like it. For example, recording of Wagner or Strauss are too personal. I prefer more transparent articulated, clean approach.

*Do you listen to recordings several times during your preparation process?*

I believe, listening to recordings depends on where you are in your musical development. I find nowadays that I listen to recordings less than I used to. When I was younger, I would listen more, I would be more connected to the sound, but now for example in case of Dvorak's Fifth Symphony maybe I listen once to anybody's performance, because I have my own sound, my own tempos and I am just curious how for example Dorati would do it. And it doesn't necessarily mean it will change my opinion, it may force to what I do. For example, with Harmoncourt recording of My Fatherland and he used wrong materials out of date and it wasn't so long he recorded it. It is interesting to hear what the famous conductors do. Sometimes there are mistakes. Another example, *Píseň bohatýrská*, Dvorak's last orchestral work, a half bar is missing. The conductors didn't catch it, neither did the recording engineers. Otherwise, it's a pretty good recording.

*How do you deal with the scores that have never been recorded?*

When you get to the certain point and you have conducted lot of repertoires, even when you look at a new piece, you will connect to a genre or style or tradition of composing, it will be familiar to you. You should recognize it for period and have a concept of the sound. Just the orchestration should give you a kind of sound of the rehearsal. What is important is to identify quickly what the hierarchy is and what groups of instruments must come out of the texture. One of the things I look for also and it is my way of judging is to identify, where the loudest point is and where the one softest is. I always look for a great contrast of dynamics and also a very clear understanding of the articulation of the different instruments. To be played long, sustained, is it played on or off the string, how much dealing of the bowing, are the winds covering, are the brass playing long notes in which case it has a danger, all these things I do automatically know plus you can also take the piece to the piano.

*How would you deal with the score that you would need to learn in a very limited time without using any tools?*

The first thing is to get the idea of the tempo. It is extremely important. Many conductors have no idea how to judge the tempo. I asked so many students how they determine the tempo. They say based on their feeling which is wrong. First thing is what is written there. Tempo marking - is it andante, allegretto or is it scherzo? Next question would be what is the metronomic marking? Many conductors don't know what the metronomic marking is. What are the fastest notes and how they can be played at that tempo? Then comes finally the feelings, what is the spirit of the music. Is it sort of a virtuosic piece or more cantabile adagio? Is it Bartok or Stravinsky kind of punchy music, short rhythm or is it more impressionist? You can find that quickly.

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Ike Nail, Director of Instrumental Studies - Western Oregon University; Music Director - Western Oregon Winds; Music Director - Western Oregon Symphony; Music Director - Salem Pops Orchestra (03/13/2022)

*Do you use, generally speaking, recordings when studying scores?*

Yes, I use recordings to study scores.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I listen to them while reading the scores. I consider that in the same light as hacking through a score on the piano. My piano skills are not adequate to play through a full score at anything like full tempo with all parts represented. I use recordings to get a basic understanding of the piece. I often pause them or run them back to clarify relationships, interpretations, balance, tempos - anything relevant to interpreting, rehearsing and performing the piece. I have often been told that the main objection to using recordings is that interpretations would be copied either purposefully or inadvertently. Whether listening to a live performance or a recording, I have always considered alternate tempos, phrasing, styles, and nuance as a matter of course. I usually feel that there are things I could do to enhance what I am hearing. If I hear something that is particularly effective, I just consider it a bonus.

*How do you learn scores without using any tools, so, for instance, contemporary pieces, which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

When no recording is available, familiarizing myself with the material is a longer process. I sing through the parts individually, play through parts section by section, analyze chord progressions, and mark phrases (beginnings, including pick-ups, and peaks) noting any connections with other material. I mark everything in No. 2 pencil so that I can make changes once I start to rehearse the piece.

*Do you recommend young students to listen to recordings? Why?*

I strongly recommend that my students use recordings in score study. Many students are totally unfamiliar even with works in the standard repertoire. Many do not have piano skills or aural skills to effectively learn a score; in addition, listening to the many highly regarded recordings available online is a general education in orchestral music and styles.

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John Nardolillo, Director of Orchestras – University of Kentucky, School of Music; Artistic Director and Conductor – Prague Summer Nights Music Festival (interview date 05/02/2017)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Yes, I use the recordings when studying the scores.

*How do you use them and for what?*

I use them at the very early part of the process in order to get a very general and distant idea of the piece and how it goes. Once I have spent some time studying the scores without doing any listening, I will do another round of listening. I will investigate for six, eight, ten different performances and in that part of the process I am interested in finding out what different conductors' thought is based on what they are bringing out. For example, one conductor might emphasize certain accent or dynamic or timbre and different one might emphasize something different. In that case it is a little bit like studying with the conductors', ask them questions about the music, trying to figure out what they thought about the score and about the piece based on what they are doing on those performances. It doesn't mean that I will do any of those things, but it means little bit like asking those conductors questions about how they perform the work, what they think of the score based on that. Then the important thing I am listening for is tempo. I want to find out what different conductors' thought was a good tempo for particular piece and figure out why. If there is a part of the music I don't think it is working in the particular performance I really don't like I will try to figure out why is the case. For instance, is it slow so it doesn't really work, or is it too fast, so it sounds scrambled etc.

There are limitations to what you can learn from the recording, but you can also learn a lot from it. Another thing is, I like to listen to recordings from the standing point of a particular orchestra so the particular orchestra would have a tradition of how they play a certain piece of music, especially if it is a piece from the repertoire and I am interested in finding out what that is and sometimes, many times that tradition might go back to the composer of himself so for example some of Dvorak's works might have been premiered by the Czech Philharmonic and they might have tradition how to play the music all the way back to the composer themselves. This can be true for Brahms in Vienna, Mahler in New York and so on and then of course with more...

I am interested in how the orchestra is playing different types of repertoires or how the orchestra plays besides the particular score I am learning. I am trying to learn something about how the orchestra plays from listening to recordings of the works. When I am talking about the recordings I am not just talking about oral recordings, but I am also interested in watching the orchestra. I can watch them on the video or a live streaming because there is something to be learned or watching the orchestra interact with each other, the relationship between the conductor and the orchestra and evaluate, what is the resulting sound that is coming out or studying the relationship between the gestures of the conductor or the expressions on the conductor's face, what is happening in the orchestra as a result.

Another thing that can be accomplished by listening to recordings is finding out the question of style and tradition so there are in a symphonic repertoire, for example in playing let's say in Mozart or Haydn, there are particular stylistic elements like the way players play off the string or the length or articulation or the way players divide the chords, that are traditional and customary considered stylishly appropriate and then of course those change over time so that the answer is going to be different in 1950s than it is right now but you can learn a lot about the style of the way things are played by listening to recordings and then if you are studying an opera, it is particularly important

because those stylistic things are not in the scores, so they often involve a fermata that is not written or notes that are not in the score or certain changes in tempo and they are not notated so if your only source of information is the score, you will miss them.

There is an argument that is a very pure way of approaching the music you can learn it that way, but the fact is if you don't know those things and you arrive at a rehearsal without them, the other musicians involved will notify that you haven't done enough work and enough research. You are expected to know what those are. Even if you decide you would not automatically do them.

Another thing I am interested in when I am listening the recordings is listening for whether or not the recording was made in studio or in environment without the audience or whether it is a live recording which also changes for what I am listening for. In my case early in the process I listen to recordings to get a good overview of the piece and in the middle of the process I do some listening almost like asking questions to the conductors and noticing details and checking in on or as if going to someone rehearsal. For me as I learn the score well, as I am learning it better and better, I come to point of decisions what I want to do, what my tempos are. Then I generally tend not to be listening recordings and then they tend to be a different tempo than I want to have or then I feel critical towards recording, they bothered me if I listen to them, because I have my own ideas, that doesn't completely match to any recordings.

*When do you make a decision that you would not listen to any recordings?*

The stronger opinions I have about the score the less I listen to recordings. Then I listen to recordings for specific questions. For example, in *The Marriage of the Figaro*, one of the numbers are a several chords, then on the last note all members of the orchestra are playing the quarter notes, except of the first and second violins and the second violins have the half note. I am curious whether the violins play the short or the long note, or people just generally play short chord or long chord or how is the problem being solved. I would listen to few people to know what they are doing. If I have something that I am not sure what the tempo is, I might go to listen very specific thing, specific rubato you will see what people are doing in a particular place if there is something I am not sure what the solution is.

*Is there anything you do particularly care about when listening to recordings?*

I think that depends on the recording and on the piece of music, so I am the person who is interested in the sound. I am interested in the recordings where the orchestra is playing beautiful sound. If I hear a choral that is perfectly in tune, then I am very interested in how is this accomplished. Most of the time it is not perfectly in tune in this particular recording, accomplished something or ensemble where is a something spectacular.

There is a recording of Beethoven's first symphony, Toscanini and NBC Symphony, they play very fast but with absolutely spectacular ensemble, perfectly together and I find that very impressive and very interested. There are series of the recordings by the Cleveland Orchestra under Christoph Von Dohnanyi made in 1980s sample of the Beethoven's symphonies and so they are often quite exciting where the texture is very clean, beautifully together, beautifully in tune so I am interested in how that way is accomplished and at the same time there are Beethoven's symphonies of Karajan from the late 1960s that are very heavy, rich, and very powerful sound, it is

completely different way of playing and I find that a very interesting recording as well, how is that sound accomplished, so the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, how was that perfect ensemble accomplished.

*How about when you learn a contemporary piece that has no recording?*

It is sort of interesting to learn the score with no tools and it has never been played, if it is new piece, no recording but it is in a familiar style let's say for example Mozart or Haydn symphonies and it is not the one I knew and I didn't listen the recordings but it is a style that is very familiar to me. If I see the C major chord whether is in the winds or brass, the tympani playing, I have a pretty good idea, how the orchestra sounds. I have heard Haydn for years and years and I know how his style sounds like. So that is one thing.

Then let's say it's a contemporary score using some techniques that I am not familiar with, kind of new types of pizzicatos, new types of rhythms, new types of instruments, the way of notating that I am not familiar, in that case we have to do a great deal of work to trying to figure out how it is going to sound like. It is sort of a guess. One has to spend a lot of time sitting in the front of the desk, one has to do some math how to subdivide the rhythm, analyze them, to sit in front of the piano. When I see a C major chord in the winds and tympani, sort of dynamic, then I have a pretty good idea of what the harmonies are going to sound like and then with the timbre of an instrumentation that is not familiar to me so in that case you come to a rehearsal, you might be not able to sing all the rhythm, in that case the orchestra also will not know. In that kind of situation, we have a little bit of a rehearsal time, so you can play it and hear how it sounds like. And also, the composer will not know how it is going to sound like, he will be guessing in the same way that you are. He will try to imagine the sound but not very sure, what the result would be. If the composer is not there, he would ask you to record it from the rehearsal.

Sometimes, when I listen to recording at the very beginning of the process and I don't know the piece well or I am just becoming more accounted with it, I will either really like the recording or I would really dislike the recording for variety of the reasons. After I have studied it and made a lot of investigations, analyze it and learn it, prepare it and sing it many times, then when I go back to the same recording, I have the opposite opinion. The recording I liked or the performance I liked before I knew the score well, I might not like it anymore after I studied the score well or the way around. I will not really like it, but I learned it very well then, I suddenly start to understand, what the conductor does at the performance and I will agree with that. I often have that experience. My particular performances changes when I learn the score.

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Martin Pearlman, Music Director – Boston Baroque; Professor of Music, Historical Performance – Boston University, College of Fine Arts (interview date 07/06/2017)

*How do you use recordings when learning a piece?*

I generally don't listen to recordings while I am learning the details of a piece and developing my interpretation. I may listen to one or two recordings afterwards if I'm



curious about how someone else solved a particular problem. I do sometimes listen to my own recording of a piece, if I am performing it again later, just to see how it compares with what I like now. Normally, though, instead of recordings, I usually sit with a score to study it and try to hear it, mark details in the music, and play parts of it on the piano.

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Libor Pešek, Former Chief Conductor – Czech National Symphony Orchestra; Conductor Laureate – Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Liverpool, England (interview date 06/22/2017)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Sometimes, there are passages in the scores where one would need some advices for how to solve things. For example, tempo changes.

*How do you study contemporary pieces when recordings are not available?*

It depends on what kind of composition is it, however it is essential to divide any kind of these composition into smaller sections. There certainly are pieces that don't have the main melodic line.

*Is it possible to have the final concept of the sound of the particular piece just at the first rehearsal?*

I think the first rehearsal is very important, because it is the first moment when one really gets into sort of an authentic experience with the piece. It depends on the difficulty of the scores. When the scores are polytonal, here things depend on conductor's gift and imagination. I sometimes use the piano to help myself with hearing the score in my mind. I think attending rehearsals of other conductors is the best thing one can do in the score preparation process. One can get inspired from the other conductors work and experiences and eventually learn from his or her mistakes. I don't think one can be afraid that he or she would get too influenced when observing the rehearsals.

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Gerald Schwarz, Conductor Laureate – Seattle Symphony; Music Director – All-Star Orchestra; Music Director – Eastern Music Festival, Artistic and Music Director – Palm Beach Symphony (interview date 03/09/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

Not very often but when I was starting out, I did listen to a variety of performances to acquaint myself with some historical performances and varying

interpretive ideas. I never tried to copy any performance. Now I will, at times, listen to my own recordings or performances to see if my decision making was sound.

*If so, how do you use them?*

I guess I could say informational gathering.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I look at the notes on the page. If there is something that I can't hear in my head I might play it on the piano, but very rarely.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings? Why?*

Yes. More knowledge is better than ignorance.

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Leoš Svárovský, Chief Conductor – Aichi Central Symphony Orchestra; Principal Guest Conductor – Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra  
(interview date 06/18/2017)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

First of all, there is a type of the score preparation process in which one has to refresh the piece, which means the scores that you already know, the scores that you already studied before. Of course, this particular process is rapid. Next are the scores that you have never seen before where you cannot use any recordings. For example, I conduct a lot of contemporary pieces in Japan and in this case, I start from the biggest passages to smaller. First thing you need to do is to look at the instrumentation, then one has to look at the rhythmical difficulties like as if you look at the Mozart's symphonies, where usually the first movement would be in 2/4 pattern and the third movement in 3/4. Or, for example, in a Shostakovich symphony whether the movement in 3/8 pattern or 1/8 pattern. Then you mark the important moments in the score, such as dynamic changes and slowly I would realize how hard the music is. This holds whether it is *Eine Kleine Nacht Music* style or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. There is a difference if one conducts an opera that has three hours length or if you perform some suite or overture that has a duration of fifty minutes. It also must be considered how it is that you experience the piece and how much effort you make to do so. In my conducting stage I look at the scores that I conduct in two weeks, even though I would conduct something different tomorrow. One has to prepare the score so well, that he or she would look confident enough in front of the orchestra. Any hesitations and concerns from the conductor fail to bring anything positive for the orchestra.

*How do you learn the contemporary pieces?*

If the score is not written in the pointillistic style, the main melody is usually in the wood winds. There is some phrase for about four, six, or eventually eight measures and then you would have some contrasting rhythmical passages. Even the fastest notes

need to be clearly played and understood. I always say that determining the right tempo is a seventy percent success. The conductor should make sure that he or she has a positive atmosphere around the orchestra; and not to have frustrated musicians complaining about unplayable passages. Some contemporary composers don't take to consideration this issue. Sometimes I would positively surprise those composers with my suggestions for changes. If the conductor is not sufficiently with the score, there is no way orchestra can achieve distinction.

Pinchas Steinberg, Chief Conductor – Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra  
(interview 10/10/2017)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Never.

*How do you learn scores without using any tools, so, for example, contemporary pieces, that have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

I go through the scores a lot of times and step by step hear the music inside.

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Nancy Pettersen Strelau, Associate Director - Nazareth College School of Music;  
Director of Orchestras - Nazareth College; Music Director, Greater Rochester Women's  
Philharmonic (interview date 03/13/2022)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

Only if it is an unfamiliar work to me and only at the very end of study for opinions on balance and blend. I do not use any recordings, nor do I allow my conducting students to use recordings, because that influences decisions regarding tempi and interpretation.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

Same process as familiar scores. Determine intent, phrasing, climax points.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings while learning scores? Why or why not?*

No. There are far too many influences that skew decision making.

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Carl Topilow, Music Director – The Cleveland Pops Orchestra (interview date  
02/17/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying scores?*

I'd listen to more than one recording with the respected conductors, to check their tempos. I suggest listening to recordings later, not at the beginning. It was expected that the conductors were pianists in the past - one of the first non-pianist conductor was Eugene Ormandy. It is possible to hear sound in your ears. I am interested in knowing whether the tempo is indicated by the composer or publisher, how, for example Stravinsky, conducts his pieces which are not always the same as he indicates.

*How do you learn scores which have never been performed before and have no recordings available?*

To look for phrases, structure, maybe not necessarily to hear everything. To clarify harmony, melody and rhythm.

*Do you recommend your students to listen to recordings?*

I would ask them to listen to more recordings.

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Marek Valášek, Head of Conducting Department – Charles University, Prague;  
Conductor of Choirs and Music Theory teacher – Prague Conservatory (interview date 05/26/2018)

*What is your approach to score preparation?*

I always recommend to my students the following steps:

My advice is to learn scores as much as possible without using recordings, in order to create your own thoughts on the interpretations, phrases, and tempo changes. Tectonically it is essential to understand what the composers' intentions are and why he composed pieces in a particular way.

To learn scores without using any tools may be time consuming, may require patience, tireless hard work and also require the ability to play scores on the piano - as this is generally expected of conductors. Conductors with a perfect pitch have an additional advantage.

The point is to understand what the composer's intentions are, why the composer composed a particular piece of music in one way and not another. The well - known conductor Jiří Bělohlávek once mentioned: "we, as conductors, have rights to make changes in the score. However, before changing even one note, let's carefully and thoughtfully consider whether it is worth doing it for the benefits of music itself."

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Vladimír Válek, Conductor Laureate – Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra; Former Principal Conductor – Slovak Philharmonic (interview date 03/10/2018)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Sometimes I do because I cannot ignore the traditions for example in the Czech tradition what was already recorded such as recordings by Vaclav Talich. Those are traditions and experiences that should be considered. But I try to not to be influenced by them.

*How do you use the recordings?*

That depends if the piece is not familiar to me, I would eventually listen the recordings once or twice and then I would just listen to some passages from the particular recording.

*How would you learn a piece that has never been performed yet?*

I need to analyze the rhythms, go bar per bar. One needs to spend a great amount of time with learning those scores. This process has nothing to do with the music itself, one should make sure to give a clear down beat. It is more important to be technically capable. We can hear something but not everything. Our job is to give the clear down beat. It is important that the orchestra knows in which conducting pattern you are, where the tempo changes are. This seems to be a routine; however, it is extremely important. One should explain the rhythm as simply as possible. In my opinion, any music is either in Polka or Waltz character. In more complicated rhythms one can still subdivide patterns either in 2 or 3.

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Petr Vronský, Chief Conductor – North Czech Philharmonic Orchestra; Conductor Laureate - Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra (interview date 03/26/2018)

*Do you use recordings?*

Yes, I do use recordings.

*How do you use them?*

When I was in my "youth", there were a very limited number of recordings available and it was not usually easy to get them. Therefore, we were taught to play the scores on the piano, or to "touch the keyboard" one section each time and to assume the rest in our minds. Once having your own opinion on the particular piece, the next step was to compare your own thoughts with the recordings. Today, I of course use recordings. I also use demo recordings when learning the contemporary works. The learning process goes much faster.

*How do you learn contemporary pieces that have never been performed, without using any tools?*

Conductors with the perfect pitch have advantage because they hear what they see. I personally came to this ability after many years of trainings and experiences.

*Do you recommend your students to use recordings?*

I highly recommend listening to recordings, especially listening to the video recordings.

*In summary, Vronský said:*

My summary here would be to either have a perfect pitch or spend years of training to have this ability.

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Ronald Zollman, Former Chief Conductor – Plzeň Philharmonic Orchestra; Former Music Director – Belgian National Orchestra (interview date 05/04/2017)

*Do you use recordings when studying the scores?*

Rarely, almost not.

*How often would you use them?*

I never listen to only one recording, if I listen something, I listen to several versions and I don't decide the tempo right away, just to have general idea. I would still keep my own idea.

*How do you learn compositions that have never been performed before?*

I hear the score by reading it. That doesn't matter if the piece has been recorded or not. It takes time to read the scores right away.

*What are you looking for when you open the score first?*

The first look is an overall look and then you go for details. The first thing is to identify the bases of the score quickly and then to have the general feeling.

## RECITAL PROGRAMS

Five recitals, performed between March 2016 and April 2017

March 5, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Edward Elgar: Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20

Francis Poulenc: Concerto for Organ, Timpani, and Strings in G minor

Ottorino Respighi: "*Ancient Airs and Dances*" Suite No. 3

Béla Bartók: "*Romanian Folk Dances*" for Strings

September 10, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Bedřich Smetana: "The Moldau" - Symphonic Poem from *My Fatherland*

Gerald Raphael Finzi: *Let Us Garlands Bring* - Song Cycle for Baritone and Strings

Antonín Dvořák: Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22

October 8, 2016: University of Kentucky Opera Theatre and Symphony Orchestra at the Otis A. Singletary Center for the Arts

Stephen Flaherty: *Ragtime the Musical*

November 5, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Georg Friedrich Händel: Orchestral Suite No. 2 in D major "Water Music"

Joseph Haydn: Concerto No. 1 in C major for Cello and Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Symphony No. 36 in C major "Linz," K. 425

April 1, 2017: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Joaquín Rodrigo: *Andalusian Concerto* for Four Guitars and Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 364

Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek: Symphony in D major, Op. 23

## RECITAL PROGRAM NOTES

Recital #1 - March 5, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)  
Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20

This piece is one of the composer's first compositions that became part of standard repertoire. British composer Edward Elgar dedicated his three-movement serenade in E minor to an organ builder Edward Whinfield. Each movement has beautiful, songful melodies that are developed and varied during the movements. The serenade is often based on dialogs between two instrument sections, where one particular theme is imitated by another one, however, in a different key or motivic structure.

Elgar completed it in May 1892. The story is that the original manuscript was lost, and he rewrote it for the occasion of the third anniversary of his marriage. This serenade shows the composer's early style and ability to write for strings. The first theme starts in the violas, marked "piacevole" (Italian for pleasing). The second movement, Larghetto, is very gentle, peaceful and lyrical, characterizing "Elgarian seventh." This is a melodic note raising a semitone or falling a full note. The final movement is motivically recapitulating the opening viola section. This is a short, easy to listen to music.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)  
Concerto for Organ, Timpani, and Strings in G minor

French composer Poulenc wrote his first faith-inspired work in 1934 and Commissioned by Princesse Edmond de Polignac. It is one of the most popular organ concertos composed outside the Baroque period. In it one may hear a lot of different moods that change unexpectedly. The concerto starts with a powerful entrance of organ joined later by the energetic entrance of strings. It takes us through a journey of mystery, sadness, joy, happiness, interrupted for a moment by a mood of chaos and ending in a prayerful mood, with the opening theme reappearing. This is a one long movement work, with many different passages that clear openings and endings. Poulenc is borrowing from across period styles, from the Baroque to the Polystylistic.

Poulenc's Organ Concerto is considered neo-Baroque, combining compositional styles of many well-known composers, such as Bach, Buxtehude, Stravinsky, etc. The composing was slow and not completed until 1938 when it premiered was great success. The Princesse is quoted as saying, "Its profound beauty hunts me."



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)  
*Ancient Airs and Dances: Suite No. 3*

Ancient Airs and Dances Suite no.3 has four movements using 16th and 17th century tunes by Giovanni Battista Besardo, Lodovico Roncalli, Santino Garsi da Parma plus the others who are anonymous. The whole composition creates a spiritual atmosphere, as if they are sounds of praying from temples.

Respighi opens the suite with an anonymous song which he calls "Italiana." The second movement is called, "Airs of the Court" (Besardo). The third movement is in a slower tempo and is called "Siciliana." Then the fourth movement, "Passacaglia" (Roncalli) culminates in the final dance which alternates between pizzicato and bowed strings in double and triple time.

All the movements are in ABA form and should imitate the sound of a lute and a choir. Respighi very rarely calls for the entire orchestra to play together. This piece is expressing intimacy with sections playing alone and in dialogs.

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)  
*Romanian Folk Dances* for Strings

"Romanian Folk Dances" is one of Bartók's most popular works. They are taken from seven traditional Transylvanian melodies. (Transylvania was originally part of Hungary and then taken over by Rumania). This was originally composed for piano in 1915 and then orchestrated by the composer in 1917 with strings, winds and percussion. The premier of that orchestral version occurred in Budapest on February 11, 1918, conducted by Emil Lichtenberg. We performed the version transcribed by Czech composer, Arthur Wilner, which is about 7 minutes long.

The seven folk melodies can even be heard today on the streets of Romania played on fiddle and on the shepherd's flute. Bartók would travel throughout the area around Hungary and recorded hundreds and perhaps thousands of folk tunes on an Edison phonograph. He has collected and combined here Hungarian as well as Slovak and Romanian folk melodies. He believed that the Hungarian and Romanian folk traditions are more authentically based on local historic styles. They are organized into six movements with the last having two of the melodies. Their names have been translated as:

- Dance with Sticks (Stick Dance)
- Waistband Dance (Sash Dance)
- Stamping Dance (In One Spot)
- Horn Dance (Dance from Bucsum)
- Romanian Polka
- Quick Dance (Fast Dance)

Recital #2 - Sep 10, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

“The Moldau” - Symphonic Poem from *My Fatherland*

This piece evokes the flow of the Moldau River through the Bohemian countryside. It starts small in the Bohemian Forest as strands of two small rivers, Teplá and Studená Vltava, join to create the Moldau. It then flows through groves of trees to grasslands and rural villages, places where people would celebrate events and the night shines with stars and fairy princesses. Then on to where beautiful castles can be seen on the high cliffs. The Moldau captures the flow of the Svatojansky stream and continues towards Vysehrad Castle in Prague, finally ending where it joins the Labe River. Moldau, a second movement from the orchestral poem “My Fatherland”, premiered in its entirety in Prague on November 5, 1882. This piece expresses Smetana's love of his country, Bohemia. This arrangement for string orchestra was made by Jiří Rajniš, professor of viola at the Prague Conservatory. (He was also my viola teacher and professor for six years.)

Gerald Raphael Finzi (1901-1956)

*Let Us Garlands Bring* - Song Cycle for Baritone and Strings

Finzi is a British composer known for his choral works. However, this five-movement song cycle “Let Us Garlands Bring” is his key work and was originally written for baritone and piano. It includes titles from plays from William Shakespeare, which are songs of love. It premiered on October 12, 1942 in London and was dedicated to British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams whose birthday was that day.

It was written during the WW-II German bombing of London. It premiered in the National Gallery's Lunchtime Concerts. This art museum had all the art removed for safekeeping and the concerts were part of morale building for the population under siege.

The first poem (first movement), “Come Away, Come Away, Death”, is sad in mood with also feelings of hope. The second movement, “Who is Silva?”, is a faster tempo song portraying a beautiful woman with the key sentence of this whole work, “To her let us garlands bring.” The third movement, “Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun” is a very lyrical, gentle song expressing no more worries in life. In the fourth movement, “O Mistress Mine”, he is calling for a kiss, not losing the romantic moment. And in movement five, “It Was a Lover and His Lass”, he uses one of Shakespeare's best-known verses and it makes this it optimistic and a happy ending.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)  
Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22

Dvořák was a principal violist at the Provisional Theater in Prague and taught music privately. He was happy in his marriage, started to be internationally acclaimed as a composer, plus started to have teaching and conducting engagements. This Serenade premiered December 10, 1876 in Prague, at which time, Dvorak was involved in writing chamber music rather than huge works. It's among Dvořák's most enjoyed works.

This is a five-movement piece where he is using simple country melodies, however not easily played. With the exception of the last movement, they are in ABA form with a contrasting middle section. He achieved a great variety of harmonic and melodic creativity, which represents the simple human daily life and landscapes in the Bohemian countryside.

The first movement, Moderato, has a short legato in the second violins, which is setup by only four notes and later imitated by other sections. On the other hand, the second theme, expressed in the middle section, is crisp and not imitated at all. The second movement, marked "Tempo di Valse", is expressing the Czech waltz, having a lot of asymmetrical phrases. The A sections are in five-bar phrases, while the middle B section, Trio, has shorter four-bar phrases. This movement is slow with long sustained notes with overlapped phrases, where the musical themes are overtaken by subsequent themes. The lively third movement, Scherzo, has a canon technique, where one section is immediately imitated by another section. A lot of short motifs, have irregular accents, sometimes on downbeat, sometimes on upbeat. Things get calmer again in the middle section, called Dream, with a beautiful, emotional melody. In the fourth movement, Largo, Dvořák has lyrical, harmonically stable melodies with a lot of modulations, with very limited short notes. Concluding, the fifth movement, is the only movement in sonata form, which has a development section. This is a very complex movement, including all kinds of moods, as well as orchestra colors. The exposition traditionally has three themes with regular recapitulation. The middle, development, section recalls the melody from the first movement at one point. The recapitulation starts with the opening melody from the first movement. The final section, coda, called Presto, presents the first and third themes of this movement and ends with great majesty.

Recital #3 - Oct 8, 2016: University of Kentucky Opera Theatre and Symphony Orchestra at the Otis A. Singletary Center for the Arts

Stephen Flaherty (1960- )  
*Ragtime the Musical*

This American musical is one of the most popular, based on the 1975 novel of the same name, "Ragtime", by E. L. Doctrow. It premiered in Toronto in December 1996 and on Broadway in 1998. The Ragtime's book was written by Terrance McNally, musical lyrics were by Lynn Ahrens and music was by Stephen Flaherty. Ahern and Flaherty were longtime, frequent collaborators and won many awards for their works. They first collaborated in 1985.

The story's theme is the experience of three, very different families in the early twentieth century in the New York City area. The families were from different backgrounds: African American ragtime musicians, Jewish immigrants, and a suburban, wealthy white couple. All of them were looking for freedom and hope in spite of despair.

The musical includes many influential, historical figures from the beginning of that century including J. P. Morgan, Emma Goldman, Harry Houdini, Evelyn Nesbit, and Henry Ford.

This dramatic, three hours long, musical expresses all kinds of musical colors: symbol crashes, instruments playing in their highest ranges, accordion playing, a lot of expanded solo passages in the woodwinds, syncopated melodies and many regular repeating base lines. The piece has a lot of fermatas (held notes), long building of phrases, and long crescendos, starting with the softest dynamic to the loudest. Flaherty's music borrowed extensively from Scott Joplin, Stephen Foster and other American iconic composers.

The stories happen in the New York city area - first with the upper-class white family: Mother, father, mother's younger brother, grandfather, and a little boy. Their actual names are not used. The family business is the manufacturer of flags and fireworks.

Second, in an African-American community, a young woman, Sarah, has a relationship with an amazing piano player, Coalhouse Walker. This story shows racial discrimination as Coulhouse's car is destroyed by white vandals and Sarah is eventually killed when mistaken for an assassin. This tragic story culminates in fact that Coalhouse is spending his money for Sarah's funeral instead of their marriage. He then seeks revenge by bombing a volunteer firehouse and killing several firemen in New Rochelle, NY.

Jewish immigrant from Latvia, Tateh and his young daughter is looking for better life in America. They are financially struggling and waiting a long time for the opportunities. The lives of these families intertwine in a complex plot of tragedy, conflict, support and hope.

Recital #4 - Nov 5, 2016: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759)  
Orchestral Suite No. 2 in D major “Water Music”

German composer Händel is one of the few composers in Western music history who received the great artistic admiration during his life, especially in the UK.

There were three suites, all of which were performed on July 17, 1717 on the Thames River to please King George I, while on his excursion from London to Chelsea. He was so pleased with the performance that he asked 50 of the musicians on board to repeat the music many times. The round trip took almost 8 hours!

This second suite in D major gives a lot of opportunities to the brass section—it is one of the first times that French horns appeared in English music history. All five movements of the suite, have a dance character. Though they are in different tempos, they share an atmosphere of great majesty.

The first movement is fast and in a Baroque style, including trumpet fanfares which change into dotted-notes motive, reminding us of the French Overture (a movement with two parts, having slow-dotted rhythms and fast fugue style). In this movement, trumpets grow into virtuosic 16<sup>th</sup> note passages. The second movement, called “Hornpipe”, originally played on two hornpipes, is among Händel’s most popular instrumental compositions. Just listen to it and you’ll see why!

His third movement, Minuet, is a triple-meter, binary-form, where the whole orchestra plays together like a chorus, or coro, in Italian, which is its title in the score. His fourth movement, Lentement, French for “slowly”, is gently, calmly, repeating quarter, eighth, quarter rhythms. It has a lot of minor mode passages which makes the da capo reprise more passionate. The fifth and final movement, marked “Air”, is played three times. However, it is not specified whether the whole orchestra or specific sections should be playing. This leaves many decisions to the artists.

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)  
Concerto No. 1 in C major for Cello and Orchestra

Composed between 1761-65 and dedicated to Joseph Franz Weigl, a principal cellist in the Esterhazy orchestra—probably the best orchestra at that time. The date of the first performance is unknown. The score was lost and then rediscovered in 1961 by Czech musicologist, Oldrich Pulkert at the Prague National Museum. It was next played on May 19, 1962 in Prague by cellist Milos Sadlo and conducted by Charles Mackerras with the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra. The orchestration of this concerto consists of two oboes, two horns and strings.

The compositional ideas are a little influenced by the Baroque concerto grosso style, where a group of soloists (here the cello) matches the tutti (the rest of the orchestra). It is possible that solo part was performed by Weigl sitting in the cello section of the orchestra rather than in front of the orchestra as we usually see today. The concerto

is musically in an optimistic mood, most of the time in a major tonality. It is technically one of the hardest pieces in the cello repertoire.

The first movement is written in a wonderful, majestic style, showing all the instruments can do. The second movement is a lovely aria using only strings which shows Haydn creating long phrases with rhythmical complexity and surprises. The third movement is very quick, Allegro, very energetic, flows in one tempo, and shows off soloist virtuosity.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)  
Symphony No. 36 in C major "Linz," K. 425

It would probably be hard to find a composer in all of music history who would be able to express musical thoughts so quickly and masterfully. The "Linz" symphony was composed just in 4 days! Mozart and his wife traveled from Salzburg to Vienna to stop for a while in Linz—the composer decided to compose the symphony spontaneously, to accommodate count's announcement.

Though the symphony has several dramatic moments especially in the second movement, it is still considered as a joyful symphony, where the composer shows his happiness for making music, rather than scariness of the future, as in the later symphonies. The symphony was premiered in Linz, Austria's third largest city, on November 4, 1783.

This is the first symphony where Mozart uses a slow introduction full of pathos and a lot of mood changes. After the introduction section in the first movement, his next section takes us to a fast tempo, Allegro, with a lively fresh theme in the first violins. The second movement is a little slow, marked poco adagio. It is in 6/8 time, coming from the Italian dance siciliano in F major, a dance style from the Baroque period, expressing a pastoral mood and associated with Sicily. However, this movement has a lot of minor mode harmonies. The third movement, Minuet, is in 3/4 time with a middle trio section introducing a lyric melody for oboe and bassoon, imitated by violins an octave lower. The fourth movement, finale, returns to the first movement's happy mood and majesty.

Recital #5 - April 1, 2017: Lexington Chamber Orchestra at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church

Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)

*Andalusian Concerto* for Four Guitars and Orchestra

In 1939, Spanish composer Rodrigo and his wife began thinking of returning to Spain from Paris as the Spanish civil war was ending and the WW-II was beginning. Two days after WW-II began, they crossed the border carrying the manuscript for *Andalusian Concerto*. Rodrigo was offered two positions: as Professor of Music at the University of Granada; and at the Music department of Radio Nacional in Madrid. They chose the Madrid position.

*Andalusian Concerto* is one of the most popular and challenging works in the guitar concerto repertoire. It was composed in 1967 for 4 guitars and orchestra. All three movements have impressionistic sound colors. The melodies of each movement have origins in 17th century Spanish Baroque dances. It was premiered by Spanish guitarist Los Romeros and the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra on November 18, 1967.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

*Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin, Viola, and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 364

Mozart was 23 years old when he composed his *Sinfonia Concertante* in 1779 while traveling in Mannheim and Paris – and it showed him as a great master. He was not experiencing the best time in his life, as he was disappointed by his concert tour in Mannheim and Paris and having a failing romantic relationship. He was enjoying his return to Salzburg where his father lived, and he was employed as a violinist in the Salzburg city orchestra.

The *Sinfonia Concertante* form has its origins in the Mannheim School – a group of composers who were friends and collaborators in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Mannheim, Germany. It's a combination of symphony (work for an orchestra alone) and concerto (soloist accompanied by an orchestra). The solo instruments here are violin and viola. One can also find small similarities in the Baroque concerto grosso style, where there would be a dialog between a small group of soloists and an orchestra.

It is not known whether Mozart or a colleague from Salzburg, played the violin part in the premier. The existing manuscript of this piece has only a few last measures of the first movement and sketches of the opening of the cadenza of the second movement. However, it is clear from this that the viola part was originally composed a semi-tone lower into D major, expecting the player to tune the strings a semi-tone higher. Today, this part is typically played in E-flat major.

Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek (1781-1825)  
Symphony in D major, Op. 23

Bohemian composer J. V. Voříšek was a piano child prodigy who started to publicly perform at the age of nine (similar to Mozart in Austria). Voříšek is known for the symphony in D major composed in 1821, his only work in this genre. The symphony is considered as the first Czech symphonic work of the 19th century. Voříšek, compared to early Beethoven, still uses the classical elements here, where the passages would be periodically built in one steady tempo, however, at the same time, the symphony has several romantic passages where atmosphere of happiness would suddenly be changed to the one more dramatic. Voříšek's symphony is a transitional work between the classical and romantic period.

Voříšek would skip the slow introduction section, which was usual at that time. The first movement opens with the main theme which reappears in many emotional moments throughout the movement. The same applies in the second movement, which is well orchestrated and shows a lot of contrasting mood, from optimistic to sad. The second movement, having three sections, is following the form of Beethoven's symphonies. The third movement uses an unusual 9/8-time bar structure, which was not well received by critics. The fourth movement is similar to Beethoven's heroic, majestic, dramatic style. At the same time, including passages from the Baroque style, as in the first movement. And the woodwinds introduce notes that anticipate following harmonies.



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