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Philosophies, Goals and Challenges of Selecting Repertoire for the
Collegiate and Professional Orchestra

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For the Collegiate and Professional Orchestra

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Treatise

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In loving memory of Richard M. Johnson (1922-2002)

For Becki and Emily

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Philosophies, Goals and Challenges of Selecting Repertoire for the Collegiate and Professional Orchestra

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2004

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What does an orchestra's choice of music say about our culture's current artistic environment? Does the orchestra's repertoire reflect its own stated musical philosophies and goals? To what extent do non-musical factors influence artistic decisions? To what extent do conductors feel a sense of obligation to develop and/or shape their audience's artistic consciousness? The goal of this project is to speak with conductors of collegiate and professional orchestras to ask questions about their choice of repertoire. The issues involved in music selection are varied and complex, and there are numerous musical and non-musical factors that influence a given conductor's decision. The project will attempt to identify programming trends in collegiate and professional orchestral repertoire, with specific attention to the types of pieces performed and the time period in which they were composed. Further inquiry will be made into conductors' perceived responsibilities toward composers, audiences and musicians with regard to repertoire selection. Through the series of interviews, an effort will be made to recognize those philosophies, goals and challenges common to particular conductors or orchestras, whether collegiate or professional.

Each new orchestral season brings with it a published list of that year's repertoire. A cursory study of repertoire lists from around the country indicates some commonality in programming trends. It remains to be seen whether this commonality corresponds to a similar unity of purpose among conductors, or whether such commonality of repertoire is due to largely non-musical factors affecting various orchestras in similar ways. Those responsible for making decisions regarding repertoire selection are impacted by a large number of issues. Artistic philosophies and goals are often circumvented by external challenges. University conductors face challenges which must be presumed different from those of professional conductors, and vice-versa, though no extensive study has been made on this assumption. The lack of such study on repertoire selection is an opportunity to further explore the motivations behind decisions which are, on the surface, artistically motivated, yet which, upon further investigation, may be critically affected by non-artistic factors.

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Chapter 1

Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This treatise began as a quest on my part to achieve several objectives. First, I sought to increase my personal knowledge of the orchestral repertoire. Second, I hoped to draw conclusions regarding current programming trends among orchestras across the nation. Third, I set out to compare programming philosophies between conductors of professional and collegiate orchestras. And finally, I wished to delineate the factors which influence a conductor's choice of repertoire. With these objectives clear, several questions immediately came to mind. What does an orchestra's choice of music say about our culture's current artistic environment? Does the orchestra's repertoire reflect its own stated musical philosophies and goals? To what extent do non-musical factors influence artistic decisions? To what extent do conductors feel a sense of obligation to develop and/or shape their audience's artistic consciousness?

The goal of this project is to speak with conductors of collegiate and professional orchestras to ask questions about their choice of repertoire. The issues involved in music selection are varied and complex, and there are numerous musical and non-musical factors that influence a conductor's decision. The project will attempt to identify programming trends in collegiate and professional orchestral repertoire, with specific attention to the types of pieces performed and the time period in which they were composed. Further inquiry will be made into conductors' perceived obligations toward composers, musical styles, audiences and musicians with regard to repertoire selection.

Artistic philosophies and goals are often circumvented by external challenges.

Conductors of collegiate orchestras presumably face challenges that differ from those of professional orchestras, and vice-versa, though no extensive study has been made on this assumption. The implication of this assumption is seen as an opportunity to further explore the motivations behind decisions which are, on the surface, artistically motivated, yet which may be critically affected by non-artistic factors.

1.2 Conductor Interviews

In planning the conductor interviews, I set out to achieve four objectives: 1) the conductors interviewed should represent an approximately equal number of collegiate and professional conductors; 2) the total number of conductors interviewed should be small enough that the information gathered would be manageable, yet large enough that reasonable conclusions could be drawn from such information; 3) to the extent possible, the professional conductors to be interviewed would represent both major metropolitan and smaller regional orchestras; and 4) to the extent possible, the collegiate conductors to be interviewed would represent both small and large universities, public and private. The resulting list of interviewees represented a small, but balanced cross section of conductors and orchestras across the nation. Eighteen conductors contributed to this document, fifteen men and three women. Because many of these conductors work with more than one orchestra, there were a total of thirty-two orchestras represented in the study: thirteen university orchestras and nineteen professional orchestras. Among university orchestras, there was a balance of types of schools represented: three music conservatories, four large, comprehensive music schools, five mid-sized universities with

full music schools, and one smaller, liberal arts school. Eight of the universities were public institutions and five were private schools. The list of professional orchestras included three major (national/worldwide reputation) orchestras, six metropolitan (big city) orchestras, seven regional orchestras, one civic orchestra, and two chamber orchestras.

The question list was developed through an intensive process of review and revision, with several goals in mind. The questions were to be broad in scope initially, gradually becoming more specific and focused. The questions were also to be broad in the sense that no question should “guide” the conductor toward any particular conclusion on the given topic. The goal of the treatise, then, would be to investigate current philosophies and attitudes of conductors towards orchestral repertoire in general, and, more specifically, towards the programming process. Each participating conductor was assured anonymity in all phases of the research. In this way, I hoped to gather candid responses to my questionnaire that would more accurately reflect the philosophies, goals and challenges of selecting repertoire for collegiate and professional orchestras.

1.3 Analysis of questions

Chapter 2 contains material gathered from responses to three questions. Two of these questions are very broad and are intended to set a global picture of the conductor’s programming process, to initiate thoughts pertaining to overarching goals and purposes which lie at the root of effective programming.

Fig. 1 Chapter 2 questions

<p>1. Do you have certain goals in mind when choosing repertoire?</p> <p>The first two questions are designed to start the thinking process about orchestral repertoire and to lead intentionally toward a more focused statement of philosophy in the answer to question 3. In this first question, I hope to gain perspective on the conductor's overarching goals of repertoire selection. I expect that these answers will be broad and inclusive of many different ideas on the programming process.</p>
<p>2. Are there specific musical criteria that you use when selecting repertoire?</p> <p>The second question is similar to the first but with a focus on specifically "musical" attributes. I hope that conductors will include a discussion of technical criteria dealing with musical language, form, harmonic and rhythmic variety and melodic interest. I also hope that their answers will include mention of the artistic value of a given work. However, I expect the responses to be rather vague, with broad, sweeping comments on the perceived artistic or musical value of a work.</p>
<p>3. How would you describe your philosophy of programming?</p> <p>This third question is designed as a conclusion to the first two. I hope to hear a relatively short synopsis of the conductor's overall programming philosophy, with the answer taking on a more succinct and focused nature. I expect that many conductors will give an answer that focuses on balance in their programs, with references to the audience, orchestra members and conductor.</p>

The third chapter is divided into two parts, with the bulk of the material derived from the respondents' answers to question 4, which asks them to identify the non-musical factors that impact their programming choices. The second part of the chapter details the extent to which conductors believe they can make 100% of the final decisions regarding repertoire choices for their orchestra(s).

Fig. 2 Chapter 3 questions

<p>4. What are the non-musical factors that impact your programming choices?</p> <p>I believe that non-musical factors are driving the artistic decisions in many orchestras throughout the nation, particularly professional orchestras. I hope to gain insight into these issues in the answers to question 4. I expect to hear frequent mention of financial pressures, audience retention, ticket sales, marketing and promotion, public versus private funding and operating expenses. I also hope to gain some insight into the pressures facing conductors from administrative boards, orchestra staff or influential donors.</p>

5. Do you feel that you can make 100% of the repertoire decisions?

When confronted with a final decision on a season’s repertoire, can the conductor insist on his/her personal preference, or does that conductor have to defer to other people? I hope for a variety of responses to this question, but I expect that most conductors will respond affirmatively that they do have the “final say” on any given work’s inclusion in that particular season. I am also fully aware that some conductors view this decision-making autonomy negatively and prefer a collaborative decision-making process where they have less than 100% of the final authority. I think that many conductors view this latter approach as an integral part of a healthy orchestral environment.

Chapter 4 covers a wide range of issues. However, all are related to the concept of obligation. When choosing repertoire, to what or to whom does the conductor feel obligated, and why? How do those feelings of obligation inform, expedite or hinder the process of repertoire selection? Obligation, by definition, is a strong word. I chose this term intentionally because I felt it was important to find out which of these areas conductors felt most strongly about. It is one thing for a conductor to say that he or she feels it “would be good” if more contemporary works were programmed. It is another matter entirely for a conductor to say, “Yes, I feel obligated to program more contemporary works, and this is why.” It is the intention behind this last response that I seek in this chapter.

Fig. 3 Chapter 4 questions

6. Are there certain composers or works that you feel obligated or pressured to program?

This question is designed to elicit personal responses on pressures that the conductor faces when choosing repertoire. I expect that much of the focus will be on the external pressures placed on a conductor by board members or influential donors (in the case of professional orchestras) to avoid programming certain works or composers. The reasons for such pressure will be individual to the particular orchestra and situation, and could vary greatly. I also hope to elicit a more personal response from some of the conductors regarding specific composers or works that they feel very strongly about programming or avoiding.

<p>7. Are there any established composers that you would not program?</p> <p>Of the composers that the conductor would consider established (widely programmed and accepted as representing a significant contribution to the repertoire), are there any specifically that the conductor would not program? What are the reasons behind such a decision? I expect responses to include personal aversions to particular composers, whether because of political, religious or other reasons, as well as aversions to “difficult” works. By difficult, I mean both works that are technically difficult for the orchestra to perform and works that are difficult for the audience to understand.</p>
<p>8. To what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to program the standard orchestral repertoire?</p> <p>This question is very straightforward, yet it goes right to the heart of the most prominent programming dilemma for most conductors. Achieving the right balance of standard repertoire and contemporary repertoire is one of the most difficult challenges facing the conductor. I expect that a majority of conductors will indicate a strong belief in the programming of traditional, standard repertoire, and that many will indicate an obligation to “honor the tradition.”</p>
<p>9. To what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to program the music of our time?</p> <p>With this question, I hope to gain insight into the extent of each individual conductor’s commitment to programming contemporary repertoire. For the purposes of these interviews, contemporary works were those written in the last 20-25 years. While I do expect most conductors to respond positively in a general sense, I do not expect that the obligation to contemporary works to be nearly as deeply felt as that for the standard repertoire. This is perhaps a situation that seems obvious given the rich and varied history of orchestral music from which conductors are able to choose, without ever tapping into the last quarter century of composition., yet it is an issue worth exploring from the vantage point of the conductor. I expect to hear a preference for the “tried and true” as opposed to the risks inherent in programming little known works.</p>
<p>10. Do you believe that American orchestras have any obligation or responsibility to program music of American composers?</p> <p>This question is designed to gauge the conductor’s commitment to the music of American composers as compared to that of composers of other nationalities. I believe that most conductors will indicate at least a small obligation to program American music. I expect that many will discuss the importance of promoting the artistic climate of our nation through programming works by American composers, with a focus on exposing audience members to the music of their own culture. Some conductors may further indicate an obligation to American composers grounded in the belief that those composers are less-established in the orchestral canon and in need of promotion from within American borders, just as many of the established masters of orchestral music have been duly promoted by their own nation’s arts organizations throughout history.</p>
<p>11. To what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to commission new works from living composers?</p>

When asked if commissioning new orchestral works is an important concept, I believe that most conductors will respond affirmatively. Yet, I expect that many conductors will stop short of calling it an “obligation.” There can be no doubt that the prospect of launching such a creative venture and following it through to completion is daunting, and so I hope to draw from each individual some insight into the specific factors that inhibit commissioning projects. I expect that discussion may center on financial limitations, lack of support from administrative boards, and the intrinsic risk associated with the creation of an unknown work of art. In short, commissions are expensive and risky, and it takes a leap of faith on the part of all involved to undertake such projects on a regular basis.

The fifth chapter is a compilation of responses to two questions on repertoire. I asked conductors to name five works from the standard and contemporary repertoire that they believed were the most important works for orchestras to play. Both questions are specifically worded to focus the conductor’s attention on the orchestra experience, not necessarily the audience experience.

Fig. 4 Chapter 5 questions

<p>12. If you had to name five specific works from the “standard repertoire” that you believe are the most important for orchestras to play, what would they be?</p>
<p>The use of inherently ambiguous terminology (standard repertoire) led me to ask each conductor to identify five specific works that he/she believed were the most important for orchestras to play. I am interested to see if there is a consensus among all participating conductors. I also hope to illustrate in more specific terms (composers, works and dates of composition) what exactly is meant by conductors who use the term “standard repertoire.”</p>
<p>13. If you had to name five specific contemporary (since 1980) works that you believe are the most important for orchestras to play, what would they be?</p>
<p>I expect conductors to struggle more with this question than with question 12. I expect that some may not be able to list five contemporary works that they believe in strongly enough to fit the criteria of this question, particularly when following the question on standard repertoire.</p>

In Chapter 6, the focus shifts to education. For several years, educational outreach programs to children have proliferated in orchestras due to the efforts of

development and marketing teams, management, conductors and musicians. Yet, a more subtle trend has also gained momentum as many orchestras seek to educate the members of their audience on the finer points of classical music. I wanted to gain some insight into how conductors really feel about this concept. Should orchestras take responsibility for educating their audience members on the type or style of music being performed? If so, what form should this take, and how often should it be employed? Further, to what extent does this concept of audience education influence conductors' programming choices?

Fig. 5 Chapter 6 questions

<p>14. What does the phrase “educating your audience” mean to you?</p> <p>This phrase is often used casually in both academic and professional circles. With this question, I hope to come to some consensus among the interviewed conductors as to the specific meaning of the phrase in their personal experience. I expect that collegiate conductors will focus on their responsibility to expose students to a broad and balanced repertoire over a four or five year period, with little emphasis placed on the education of audience members. From professional conductors I expect to hear discussion of many aspects of an orchestra’s educational program. These will likely include websites, concerts for local school children, chamber music outreach programs, expanded internet program notes for patrons, pre-concert lectures, post-concert conversations with musicians, speaking from the podium during a concert, and public appearances by the conductor throughout the community.</p>
<p>15. To what extent does this idea (educating your audience) influence your programming choices?</p> <p>Again, the emphasis here is on personal experience. I hope to gain responses indicating what types of works a conductor would or would not program because of his/her philosophy on “educating the audience.” I do not expect most conductors to say that the concept of educating the audience has a significant impact on their programming philosophy.</p>
<p>16. Do you feel your philosophy on this issue (educating your audience) is in line with current trends?</p> <p>This question assumes some knowledge on the part of the conductor of current trends in programming and education, and is designed to gain the conductor’s assessment of whether his/her philosophy is part of the mainstream trend or whether that philosophy is</p>

more individual. I believe that some conductors will indicate a desire to educate their audience with respect to contemporary works, with the goal of broadening the audience's exposure to such works and increasing their willingness to hear modern music. I expect that others will focus on specific aspects of audience education, in particular pre- and post-concert talks, and speaking from the podium during a concert. I believe that the current mainstream trends in audience education are largely limited to these two areas with regard to adult audience members. Regarding younger audiences, orchestras have long embraced the ideas of outreach concerts and school-based chamber music programs. Many have recently developed extensive children's websites that include a wealth of musical information, from biographical information on composers and in-depth study of orchestral instruments to various musical games created to engage the students in interactive learning.

In chapter 7, conductors' responses to the final interview question are analyzed in detail prior to my concluding remarks for the paper. This question asked respondents to average the dates of composition for every piece that they programmed this season in an effort to illuminate the balance between contemporary and traditional works. I must state here that the question is not without flaw, as it is preferable to take into account additional factors in order to achieve a truer picture of a balanced repertoire. For example, the length of works performed, and the balance of repertoire over several seasons are two factors that would inform the process greatly.

Fig. 6 Chapter 7 questions

17. If you took the dates of composition of every piece that you programmed for this season and averaged them to come up with one date, what year do you think this would be? What year do you think it should be?

This final question deals with the conductor's concept of balance within a given season. The second part of the question is designed to elicit responses on whether the conductor believes he/she is achieving balance between traditional and contemporary works on a given season. I believe that some conductors may struggle with this question, having never analyzed their programming in this way. I believe that dates given as answers to the first question will vary somewhat, but most will likely fall within the range of 1800-1900. I do not expect that the date given as an answer to the second question will differ widely from the initial answer, indicating that the conductor is largely satisfied with the balance of his/her programming, or at least unwilling to admit dissatisfaction.

Chapter 2

Programming Goals and Philosophies

2.1 Introduction

Every orchestral conductor approaches programming with certain pre-conceived notions about what he or she wishes to accomplish with a season's repertoire. These goals form the basis of current thought regarding programming priorities and can give us insight into the minds of those responsible for choosing the music that our orchestras perform. Various areas of focus include the experience of the student performer, the professional performer and the audience, as well as an attempt to achieve both variety and unity within orchestral programs. Effective programming, it seems, is a very subjective and personal matter. This is clearly evident in the responses to the first three questions of the conductor interviews.

2.2 Student experience

Over half of the conductors representing university orchestras focused very clearly on the experience for the students performing in the ensemble when choosing repertoire. "Student experience is the first priority, always foremost in my mind – as wide a diet as possible for each program. I guess you could say this approach is liberal with a little bit of conservative thrown in," one conductor said. Another claimed to seek "something that will give the student the broadest range of experiences – musically, historically, etc...if the student was in the orchestra only one year, they would still get a broad experience. The student experience will sometimes outweigh the musical criteria –

sometimes I will defer to the goal of giving the students a broad range of repertoire.” Another conductor also sought a “well-balanced diet (curriculum) for the students,” saying it was “important to expose students to as much established repertoire as possible.” It is about the “educational value to the students,” said another, “repertoire that they need to learn, music that will broaden and challenge them.” Other university conductors seemed to feel a stronger responsibility toward the practical task of preparing young musicians for the possibility of a professional career. “The best possible preparation for the orchestral professional life, this is the main goal for everything we program. The students are the focus here always; we are serving students, not the community.” This conductor went further to give two specific “sub-goals,” to program “bread & butter, mainstream repertoire,” and to provide students with the “skills needed to play in ensemble.” A second conductor viewed his goals in a similar way:

The University is almost a laboratory experience for students. One of the most important things is to give them a cross section of the repertoire.

There have to be good parts for every section, every semester. I do a lot of audition repertoire for the performance majors. For years, we did pieces that were over their head because we needed to play certain pieces, nothing too far gone, but pieces that they need to play. Music education students watch how a group is developed over the year, rehearsal techniques, etc.

The more specific focus of university conductors is split between, on the one hand, the idea of programming as wide and varied a repertoire as possible, and on the other, the notion of programming established standard repertoire that students would

likely encounter in a professional career. Some university conductors tried to achieve a balance between the two. “At [school name], it is most important for me to cover the “most important” repertoire pieces. I also try to include a smattering of pieces that they may not ever play again. Almost all of our students are in the position of not only auditioning for professional jobs, but also having a strong likelihood of getting those jobs. A symphony orchestra at the professional level exists for the community – the orchestra at the school exists for the students.” As one university conductor summarized:

Cover a lot of repertoire – nine concerts per year – there is a premium placed on gobbling up repertoire in American professional orchestras, and so we need to give the students a taste of that experience here. We have two orchestras, and the repertoire is highly coordinated between the two orchestras over a four year period. By the time any student has graduated from four years of orchestra at [school name], they should have at least read eight of the nine Beethoven symphonies, all four Brahms symphonies, and at least two of the three big Tchaikovsky symphonies. There is a core of repertoire that we want to cover. We also do one Pops concert and one American music concert per year, again for the sake of preparing the student for the professional life.

2.3 Orchestra experience

In a similar way to the university’s focus on the student experience, many conductors of professional orchestras felt a duty to program works that enriched the experience of their players. One conductor extolled the virtues of programming baroque

and classical works to develop the orchestra's sound and technique, and as a way of furthering ensemble cohesion. Another spoke on the importance of "orchestra development and growth, stretching the strengths of the orchestra – helping them to become better musicians and an orchestra as an entity." A third conductor was very practical in this respect. "[I] program for the orchestra. They shouldn't be bored; they should be challenged and pushed." Another asked, "What does the orchestra need to play? Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven – also, there are incredible gaps in this orchestra's repertoire, an orchestra that is over one hundred years old. We have premiered [locally] Mahler 7, Shostakovich 4, numerous others in recent years that would be considered major works that have never been performed by this orchestra. I feel a need to fill some of those gaps." Another conductor spoke of his desire to challenge his own orchestra. "What is challenging for one [orchestra] is not for another. It's a little like having a weak calf muscle; you don't avoid using it, you work on it – likewise, if you have a weak horn section, you don't avoid music that uses the horns, you choose music that works them in useful and challenging ways."

2.4 Audience experience

It is apparent that professional conductors are much more concerned with the audience experience than are their university counterparts. This is for obvious reasons of economic survival. One professional conductor said, "I really believe in the importance of the audience experience – if I am programming pieces that the audience has never heard, I have to balance that with something comfortable and familiar." Others echoed this sentiment, one of whom said she wanted the "audience intrigued and interested."

They must “leave feeling that they enjoyed the evening.” Another was a bit more poetic, wishing to “provide the [local] public with the wealth, breadth and depth of human genius in the world of symphonic music, giving them an opportunity to hear the best, most beautiful, most moving music ever written by man.” One conductor said that her philosophy had changed over the years, “When I was young, I was much more idealistic, choosing music that I thought would bring the art form along, and [I was] less concerned with what the audience wanted to hear. There are two ways to go – to pander to the audience, or to bring the audience where we want to go – I favor the latter but have been doing a lot of the former.” She said that it was also important to remember that “entertainment is a worthy goal.” The question of trust between audience and conductor was on the mind of one respondent, who said, “If your audience trusts you, knowing that over the course of the season they will hear the chestnut pieces, they will be willing to sit and listen to newer, more unfamiliar works.” Another conductor voices this concern:

I spend a large amount of time building concerts. I am always asking myself the question, ‘why do people go to concerts?’ What can they get here that they can’t get anywhere else? We are killing ourselves with mindless programming – overture, concerto, symphony in the old, tired format. Every concert is an event that they couldn’t get anywhere else, that is my philosophy. I also want everyone involved in the process – the orchestra, the audience, etc... Too many orchestras are still thinking that they need to impose upon the audience the music that they ‘need to hear’ – that’s just ridiculous.

Two professional conductors viewed the audience experience through the lens of modern marketing techniques. One asked the question, “Who can you afford that will spruce up the season and get your audience excited?” The other said that “you have to keep a certain corporate base of support, and that comes from people who have to be happy with the orchestra’s role in the community. We don’t have to sell out, but we do have to keep in mind the opinions of the various corporate donors, etc.” One conductor stressed the importance of programming music that is audience-friendly in some respect:

It is really important that orchestras play music that is accessible to the public. I think many orchestras have cut their own throat in this way, by playing programs that are too esoteric that have alienated their audiences. It is all well and good in the ivory tower, but the reality is that music is a gift, it is a blessing, and the only way you can present it to someone is if they are there. If you do a whole night of music from the Second Viennese School, you won’t have anyone there to hear it. You will have an audience full of skinheads.

Finally, another conductor compared the concert-going experience to that of enjoying a great meal.

I try to think of a concert as a meal, a balanced diet perhaps, but I think of food and music as a pleasure. The audience needs to experience some sort of pleasure. We are in the business of educating, enlightening, and also entertaining. We must not forget the last. Modern audiences have many choices of where they want to go on any given night. We have to make them feel like their choice to attend a concert was worthwhile. [It is

about] putting across these two hours in a meal that has all of the right ingredients – an appetizer, a main course, and a dessert of some sort. You should leave the concert feeling full.

2.5 Variety

Approximately 40% of both professional and university conductors spoke on the importance of variety in programming. One university conductor tried to achieve a “cross section of the repertoire, trying to give a smattering of everything.” He continued, “The standard rep is very important because it helps [the students] get jobs. In addition, I believe it is important to include the contemporary repertoire in programming, especially from an educational standpoint. I try to do a contemporary work every other program.” One professional conductor said, “Every program should have something known and something unknown.” And another professional conductor said that “we are responsible for a broader, greater, wider array of repertoire than ever before. Our orchestras need to play music from the earliest baroque or earlier up to music where the ink is barely dry. [I strive to achieve] a variety of cultures, peoples, ethnicities – both within a concert and over the course of a season.” This same notion of variety and balance was behind the statements of another professional conductor, who believed that conductors and orchestras were failing to adequately represent this broad repertoire:

Repertoire expansion – as far as I can tell, the repertoire that we program now is quite narrow, more limited than we have ever had in the history of the orchestra. I think it is important to find pieces that we really believe in and program them more than once. The very best conductors of the past

did this, to champion a composer in a sense. [My focus is on] musical periods, countries of origin – how much German, English, Italian, etc. Within that, I have to assume that probably half of the music that we program is from nineteenth-century Germany – Mahler, Brahms, etc... So what I try to do is to not only do the great masterpieces by these composers, but also do the lesser known pieces. I am really happy if I can find lesser known pieces that are really great music. I like this approach. I don't do it just because it is unknown, even if it is written by a well-known composer.

This sentiment was echoed by a colleague who conducts both university and professional orchestras, “it's always interesting to do a lesser-known piece by a well-known composer. Your general goal is to make old music sound fresh and new, and to make new music sound old, in a sense.” A conductor of two professional orchestras also focused on variety and contrast in programming, yet sought to unify her programs in a way that might not be initially obvious:

I'm not a fan of the all-Tchaikovsky, all-Brahms program, etc... I like pieces that compliment each other, that have something to say about each other, either by being very different or by having some connection that links them, for example, a piece by Joan Tower and a piece by Beethoven. I know that Joan Tower's greatest influence was Beethoven, so there is an underlying connection there. We're doing two pieces this week by Reger and Rachmaninov, both written about one particular painting.

One conductor's goal was to "embrace the widest possible variety of styles, schools and genres." He cited a current program that included Elgar's Violin Concerto, *La Mer* by Debussy and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, saying that these pieces were "all written in the same area of time, yet by very different composers." Another conductor agreed that "the concept of thematic programming is the way to go, as often as you can." "In the first concert when we did Dvřorák, Barber and Brahms, it was thematic programming in that they were all traditionalists in their time. This concert, Webern – Six Pieces, Strauss – *Don Juan*, and the Bartok Violin Concerto all share the same time period. They are also all based on folk music in some way."

2.6 Unity

At least two professional conductors sought unity in their programming by planning orchestral programs several years in advance. One said, "In programming, you want to have a plan that goes over a few years. Maybe over the next four years you will have a Brahms cycle or a Beethoven cycle, or Shostakovich, whatever. For every concert, you need a significant piece – not necessarily long, but significant. I try to have something old, something new, etc... lots of variety." The second conductor had this to say. "[It is] crucial to play the great works systematically, which is to say, over the course of a three or four year period in a major orchestra, you should do all of the Beethoven symphonies, all of the Brahms symphonies, etc. After that, one has to look far afield to find imaginative, quality music that will contribute to programs effectively. Within this, it is important to program several pieces by a composer so that the audience can begin to understand the language of a composer. If I'm going to program a new

piece by a composer, I try to program several other works by that same composer, to allow the audience a broad view.”

Chapter 3

Non-Musical Factors in Programming Decisions

3.1 Introduction

While some conductors were reluctant to admit that non-musical factors have a powerful influence on their programming decisions, most were very forward and realistic in their responses to this question. As I anticipated, there was a sharp divide among responses given by conductors of professional orchestras and those of university orchestras.

3.2 Professional Orchestras

Among conductors of professional orchestras, 90% of the respondents stated that ticket sales were the primary non-musical motivation in their programming choices. One conductor said: “At the professional level, you have to make programs that will appeal to the audience—you must have people in the seats to survive. If you have a well-known concerto and soloist, you can program a lesser-known chestnut.” Another stated, [programming is about] “attracting an audience—not only for mercenary reasons, but also for perfectly justifiable reasons. Composers write so that their music can be heard by people, not by empty seats – the audience develops a sense of trust, and over time they begin to trust your programming.” Another financial issue, the size of the orchestra, was the second most common concern among conductors. Several cited the expense required to hire additional players for large works as a prohibitive factor in their repertoire selection each season. In the words of one conductor: “I love the Schoenberg *Gurre-*

lieder, but we have never done it here because it's too expensive to hire all the players.” This particular work could easily be seen as exceptional, and many orchestras would not be able to afford the necessary players, over fifty winds alone, to perform this composition. Yet the works suggested by most conductors who cited orchestra size as an issue were notably smaller. In some instances they included works requiring only triple winds plus percussion, certainly not a rare occurrence in music of the romantic era and beyond.

Three other non-musical issues followed closely on the heels of ticket sales and orchestra size. The first of these concerns the soloist, in particular the high-profile guest artist that will often boost ticket sales and generate public interest in a particular concert. There were some negative responses from conductors as to the value for an orchestra, particularly a regional professional orchestra, of the high cost of hiring a top-tier soloist in an effort to draw audiences. One conductor said it was the “lure of the big draw” that was, in effect, poisoning the orchestra’s financial well-being. He went on to say that this was attributable to the “superstar mentality in this country right now.” Few in the music profession would doubt that this is the age of the virtuoso, where often such a high priority is placed on the technical prowess of a visiting artist that the effect on the local orchestra can be minimizing at the least. While it is often enjoyable to see and hear the most talented instrumentalists and singers of our generation, if the excitement generated by such a performance brings more attention to the performer than to the music being performed, then, perhaps our priorities are in the wrong place. One conductor stated: “There are many talented soloists out there that don’t yet have the big name and ego that goes along with it.” He continued, “As a conductor, I would rather hire someone more

anonymous that is really committed to the music, and not so much to himself.” A secondary factor related to the use of soloists is the specific placement of the solo work within a program. At least one conductor gave special consideration to placing big name stars on the second half of programs to avoid having audience members leave at intermission, after the soloist had performed. In this particular situation, at a major professional orchestra, the problem was particularly acute on Thursday night subscription concerts. It was believed to be due, in part, to the need for many patrons to rise early the next morning for work. Yet, regardless of the reason, the effect remains the same. The conductor described it this way: “It is particularly disheartening to come back to my office during intermission and to hear the slamming of car doors in the parking lot outside my window as people get in their cars and leave after the first half is over.”

The next non-musical concern was the appropriate length of concerts. Three professional conductors stated that concert length was a significant factor in their programming choices. Their stated preference for concert length was between 75 and 90 minutes, including time spent talking from the podium but not including an intermission, which would normally last 15-20 minutes. There were others who did not mention a specific length but did speak on the need to avoid excessively long concerts. “Two hours of music is just too much for most people to take. I prefer to keep it more reasonable,” said one conductor. Several other conductors referred in a general way to the public’s lack of attention and focus for particularly long concerts.

The next issue raised by professional conductors dealt with the demographics of audience members attending orchestra concerts. One said, “Our community has a large Latino and African-American population, so we have recently endeavored to

acknowledge this not only in our programming but also in the solo artists we invite to perform with us.” In contrast to this was another conductor’s desire to always achieve a broad range of nationalities in any given season’s programming, regardless of the ethnicity of the community. Another spoke of a large aging population in their community and the need to program accordingly, choosing to frequently perform popular music of the World War II era. This delighted audiences and boosted ticket sales.

Another put it this way:

Know the temperature of your community, liberal or conservative, tolerance level for certain styles of music. Know these things and program accordingly. A smart music director will know how far he can push the limits while still maintaining a loyal audience. Then each year you try to push the limits just a little farther than the past year.

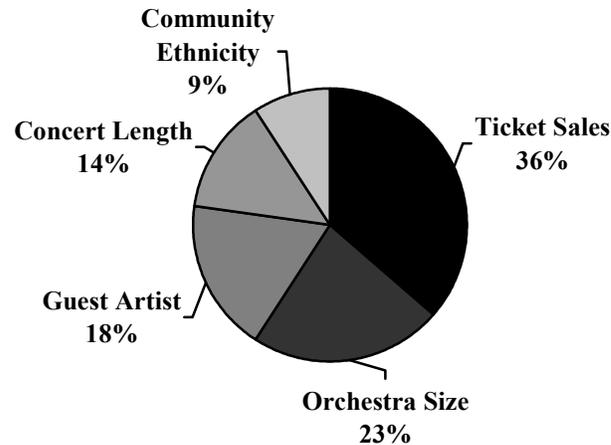
Another factor in programming decisions was the relative strength of the principal players within the orchestra. One conductor said, “if there is a strength (go to it) or weakness (avoid it) in a prominent principal seat, then you have to take that into consideration.” After interviewing conductors from very large, established orchestras, and also from smaller regional orchestras, that concern over the ability of principal chair soloists to deliver consistent performances under pressure is particularly acute among conductors of smaller orchestras. This is, perhaps, to be expected. Certainly the player talent pool in a metropolitan area is larger, as is the personnel budget.

Maintaining strong corporate support was a major concern for at least one professional conductor, while the high cost of rental music was a factor in the decision-making process of another conductor. While the latter can have a direct impact on the

amount and frequency of contemporary music being programmed, the former is less easily categorized in terms of impact on music selection. One conductor listed his orchestra's performance venue as a negative factor in the programming process. The auditorium in question seats approximately 3,000 patrons and is unsuitable acoustically for almost any baroque or classical work with a reduced orchestra, limiting the programming options available to this conductor. This limitation could certainly have a negative effect on the orchestra over the course of several years, based on the answers of other conductors, who assigned great importance to performing music of the baroque and classical periods. Many of these conductors stated their reason for programming such works was an effort to improve the technical performance of their orchestra, particularly that of the strings.

Finally, the input of the executive director, staff and symphony board into programming matters was listed as a negative influence by one professional conductor. However, this appears to be a matter very specific to each orchestra, as many other conductors spoke highly of their administrative staff and board with regard to programming. Most claimed that they were left largely to their own devices in creating a balanced and effective concert season with little pressure from staff to program a certain way.

Fig. 7 Influence of Non-Musical Factors on Programming in Professional Orchestras



3.3 University Orchestras

The university orchestra conductor faces different non-musical challenges, particularly in the area of finances. At least one-third of the collegiate conductors responded that they had little or no financial constraints in their current setting. The majority of those who did not specifically make this statement did not give any indication to the contrary, leading me to believe that if finances were a major issue in the programming process, it would certainly have been mentioned. Thus, fully three-quarters of the collegiate conductors interviewed either said directly or implied that there were no major financial constraints governing their choice of repertoire. These results have several implications, in sharp contrast to some of the professional orchestras discussed earlier. When university conductors want to rent contemporary works, they are able to do so with few exceptions, allowing greater access to the newest symphonic repertoire. In addition, the size of orchestra for larger works is an issue only to the extent that adequate players can be found to participate, as there is no expanded payroll to meet. Furthermore,

there was no mention of problems in drawing audiences to the concert. Conductors of university orchestras seem to enjoy the luxury of a loyal concert-going public, or at least the luxury of not having to depend on the audience for their livelihood.

These positive aspects notwithstanding, conductors of university orchestras are not without non-musical considerations in their programming decisions. About half of the respondents indicated that they were responsible for providing accompaniment to the winner of a concerto competition within the school. The format of concerto competitions varies from school to school. One conductor described the system at his university: “We combine the concerto and composition contest winners here. We have one concert that features the orchestra on two pieces, the composition winner on a ten minute piece, and two to five concerto winners performing one movement each.” Another spoke of a similar system: “We used to have problems with too many concerti every year, but I have pared it down this year. There are three winners, and they each do one movement on the concert.” One large music school goes so far as to have multiple soloist competitions, and soloists are then programmed on concerts throughout the year. This system came about in response to an overload of soloists every year. The conductor said, “Now we just program a few [concertos] throughout the year in consultation with studio teachers, who do the judging/choosing on their own.” A related issue for university conductors is the sharing of orchestra concerts and players with opera productions or joint choral works. One conductor best described this process: “We have regular collaborations with choral groups and opera – this involves other people and it is a matter of negotiation to program works for those situations.”

The ability of their orchestra to perform certain works was a common concern among university conductors, while very few conductors of professional orchestras included this point. Certainly, the differences in age and experience between the college student and the professional performer are major factors in determining the ability of a university orchestra to perform difficult works. In addition, the turnover rate is significantly higher in university orchestras than that of professional ensembles. This leads many conductors to repeat programs every four to six years to ensure that new students are exposed to significant works during their time with the orchestra. In contrast, conductors of professional orchestras try to avoid repeating works over a given time period, ranging from six to ten years, in an effort to achieve a wide variety for their audience.

At least one university conductor commented on the pressure received from applied studio faculty: “There was an intense struggle between me and the studio teachers, particularly the wind studios – the studio teachers kept pushing for more time for their students, etc – eventually I had to stand up to it and put a stop to the constant pressure. I also had to deal with constant complaints about the seating of the orchestra.” In this specific situation, the conductor was receiving pressure from applied instrumental faculty to seat the orchestra according to faculty recommendations, rather than through an audition process. As with professional orchestras, concert length was also mentioned as a guiding principle for two university conductors, both of whom preferred to limit their programs to 60-75 minutes of music.

While no university conductor cited player availability as a problem for their orchestra, several mentioned the issue of player rotation within the orchestra. The

concept of player rotation, as described by one university conductor, is often based on a “geographic area” rotation, meaning that players are assigned to a particular area of the section by their audition and will rotate through several seats in that general area throughout the year. This conductor continued:

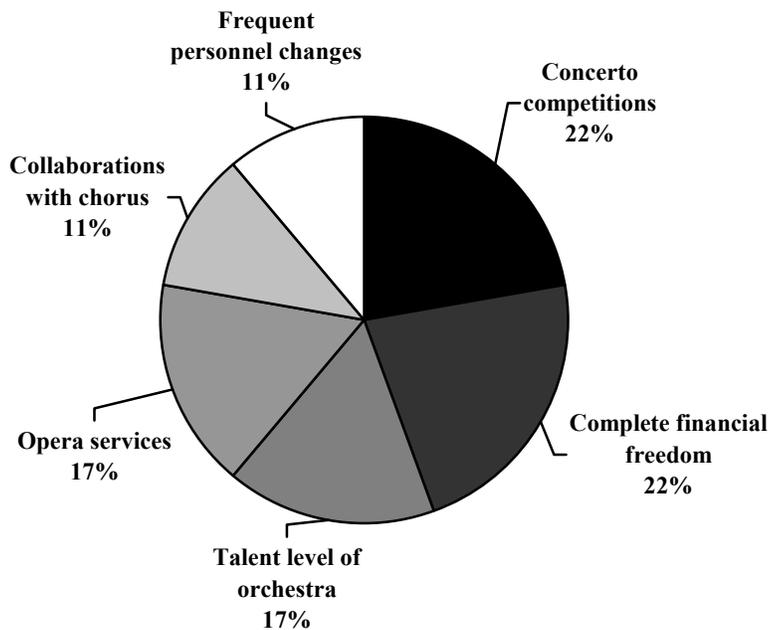
We rotate players quite a bit – even in the string section, we rotate a lot – at the beginning of the year, I develop a leadership rotation that will move among the concertmaster chair, the first desk, the principal second, and then for everyone else we move around within geographic areas of the section. The concept of player rotation is great for the players, not very good for the orchestra.

He explained that with this system there was never an opportunity for the students to establish themselves in a particular seat, to gain confidence playing next to the same stand partner on a specific part, and to “learn” the sound of the orchestra from that seat. Yet, there are advantages: students are provided with a variety of playing experiences throughout a given academic year, learning the responsibilities and challenges of the various seats in an orchestra section and having regular opportunities to sit in positions of leadership.

One final non-musical issue that affects programming choices relates directly to the role of the conductor at a university. The amount of time that a conductor can dedicate to the orchestra is often severely limited by administrative factors. As one respondent put it: “your time is not your own – the door knocks constantly, the phone rings constantly, the email is always full – there is just a steady stream of distractions that inundate the conductor.” He went on further to talk about the expectations of a university

faculty member: “The conductor must serve along with his colleagues on various committees and searches throughout each year, many of which take a significant amount of time.” Then, he said, there is the “go out and make yourself famous” expectation. “Conductors are expected to do a certain amount of guest conducting with clinics, festivals, honor orchestras, and other university and professional orchestras in an effort to gain exposure for their local program and to attract future students.” All of these things take time and energy away from the study of scores, and the programming of an upcoming season.

Fig. 8 Influence of Non-Musical Factors on Programming in University Orchestras



3.4 Conductor's Influence in Programming Decisions

One of my interview questions asked conductors if they felt they could make 100% of the repertoire decisions in their current job. It seems logical to answer this question following our discussion of the many non-musical influences that affect a conductor's programming decisions. At first glance, it might seem that a negative answer to this question would be an indication of hindrances and challenges to programming. Yet many of the conductors that answered "no" indicated that they intentionally wish for it to be so: in other words, they aggressively seek guidance and counsel on a regular basis when making repertoire decisions for an upcoming season. One respondent said, "I choose to be a team player, I want other opinions," and another, "we don't work in a vacuum – it is very rare that a music director has the chance to select a program without other influences." One professional conductor put a specific percentage to the answer, stating: "[I make] 90% [of the repertoire decisions] – the executive director also has input." Another professional conductor mentioned the influence of soloists, saying that many times a prominent guest will only be offering a limited number of works for that particular season: "If we want them to play with our orchestra, we have to play one of four pieces, three of which we recently programmed, and the fourth is Bartok, which will inevitably bring hate mail because that's what happened the last time you played Bartok, but you do it because that's what they're offering that season." A conductor of a major professional orchestra had this to say: "I like the process with close advisors, bouncing around ideas and fueling off of each other – the other advantage of this concept is that more people have really bought into the programs by the time they are announced." A conductor of a regional orchestra was less optimistic, "...it [the programming process] is

collaborative – some of which is welcomed by me, some of which is not.” One conductor of a university orchestra said “in a school, no one makes 100% of the decisions. All of these things that we have talked about have some impact on the programming process.”

Among those conductors who said that they made 100% of the repertoire decisions in their current position, the answers were not all that different from their colleagues who did not enjoy this luxury. Both collegiate and professional conductors said that they could make 100% of the repertoire decisions, but only after receiving input from others. Many conductors indicated that it was important for others to have a stake in the process. One respondent indicated that he could make 100% of the repertoire decisions with the exception of the collaborative choral works, opera and concerti. Another indicated, “I can only say that I make 100% of the repertoire decisions now because of my knowledge of the repertoire gained over many years. This wasn’t always the case in my career.” One university conductor responded quickly with “yes, of course [I do make 100% of the repertoire decisions],” but then paused a moment and reflected, “...well, I guess it’s more like 99% because I’m open to suggestions...the figure should reflect my openness!”

It does seem that for the majority of interviewed conductors programming is a collaborative process. The importance of outside opinions should not be underestimated, as it is often the comments and suggestions of others that will spark the conductor’s imagination in new and exciting ways. The inclusion of close advisors in selecting repertoire, whether members of management, players in the orchestra, or audience members, certainly builds trust and ownership within the orchestra. This sense of

ownership can give the conductor more flexibility in programming a wider array of music over the course of time, as players, management and audience members alike begin to trust that they play an important role in the process of music programming.

Chapter 4

Obligations and Responsibilities of Selecting Repertoire

4.1 Introduction

Obligation is a very strong word. I chose this term intentionally because I felt it was important to find out which aspects of programming conductors felt most strongly about. Conductors as well as performers are often rather ambiguous about their priorities in music selection, choosing to categorize pieces in broad, sweeping generalizations that inform the process very little. It is one thing for a conductor to say that he or she feels it “would be good” if more contemporary works were programmed, or that “we should all” continue to program the standard repertoire. It is another matter entirely for a conductor to say, “I feel obligated to program more contemporary music, and this is why,” or “yes, I feel very strongly that I need to program the standard repertoire.” It is the intention behind these responses that I explore in this chapter, and it is my hope that it will bring to light some of the motivations behind orchestral programming today.

4.2 Composers

The extent to which both professional and university conductors felt obligated to program specific composers was limited. Some respondents chose to align their obligations and responsibilities with certain pieces rather than with a composer’s entire oeuvre. Yet there were a handful who named certain composers about whom they felt strongly enough that they considered it an obligation to program their music. “I would say there are some educational obligations to play Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn.

Therefore, I will always program a Beethoven symphony on the first concert and spend a great deal of time on it.” Other university conductors echoed this sentiment, saying “I put pressure on myself to program certain works on a rotating basis so that the students are exposed to certain types of pieces definitely within their four-year time with the group – Beethoven symphony, Brahms symphony, etc...” and “Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart – these are both pressures from within me and from outside sources.” Perhaps one professional conductor’s response summed up the feelings of many in a similar way, “We have an obligation to perform the great music for our community. We are the major musical organization in this region. If we don’t play a Tchaikovsky symphony in a season, more than likely there will be no live performance of a Tchaikovsky symphony this year in the entire region.” Another professional conductor expanded on this thought. “No, [I don’t feel an obligation to certain composers], but marketing does want me to intersperse the “top 40” throughout the season, so to speak, and we do have to do that to some extent to survive – [it is] a place for the audience to hang their hat.” A university conductor told why he feels obligated to program certain composers. “[I feel obligated to program] Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Mozart, because the music is timeless. The music never changes, only our response to it.”

A number of the conductors at universities indicated that they felt an obligation to program music written by resident composition faculty. “At the school, I feel an obligation to program works by our faculty composers on occasion, every few years at least,” one conductor said. Another said that he felt the same obligation in another sense, “not pressure to do that, but because I believe the music is good.” At least three other conductors indicated a similar feeling about resident composition faculty at their school.

One professional conductor spoke of his obligation to program a certain number of pieces by the orchestra's composer-in-residence, more of a practical limitation than an artistic judgment.

When asked which established composers they would not program, some names seemed to receive more notice than others. 27% of the respondents listed Anton Bruckner as a composer whom they felt was 'established' in the repertoire, yet they would not conduct his music. As one conductor put it, "No Bruckner - I'm not personally a fan of his music, but I'll often have a guest conductor do a Bruckner symphony if I'm going to be gone." Another echoed much the same thought. "There are no composers that I wouldn't program, [yet] there are some that I don't conduct. Bruckner, for instance, because I don't feel very close to the music, but I will have someone else come in and do it because it is music the orchestra should play." Another was slightly more optimistic, "I don't think of it in this way. I think of it as pieces that I haven't yet done – some day I will do my first Bruckner, but I haven't yet done a Bruckner symphony."

While some of the other composers given as responses to this question might not be considered "established" by a majority of working musicians, there were others who were mentioned who would certainly have to be considered a part of mainstream repertoire. These answers are informative if only in the sense that they give us a brief glimpse into the mind of the conductor who is programming music for a new season. One conductor listed two names that he would not program, "Wagner and Carl Orff, for personal reasons. Other than that, as long as I believe in their music, I'll play the piece. Another respondent had several names on his list of composers to avoid. "Schumann – I just don't understand him, so I stay away. Mendelssohn – I've never really had an

orchestra good enough to play it, and Saint-Saëns – I just don't like [his music], it doesn't do anything for me.” Another conductor agreed with the last choice, saying “Saint-Saëns – just haven't really immersed in it yet, [but I'm] going to program the “Organ” symphony soon to check this initial impression.” A fourth conductor chose his list based more on practical concerns than personal preferences. His is a regional orchestra in a major city, and he spoke extensively about the practicality of performing some of the more difficult 20th century works, mentioning composers like “Schoenberg (certain works), Xenakis, Boulez and Carter (not all, but most).” He went further to say that the reasons these particular composers presented challenges could be either of two things, “either the audience is not ready to hear a particular composer, or the conductor is not ready personally to conduct the work.” This was the only conductor who included his own preparation and personal artistic growth as a possible limitation on repertoire choices. Outside of these respondents, other conductors did not name a composer categorically, but instead chose to name specific works that they would not conduct. Some of the works listed include: Franck, D minor symphony; Elgar, *Enigma Variations*; Mendelssohn, “Reformation” symphony; Nielsen, Symphony no. 4; Strauss, *Don Juan*; Bruckner, Symphony no. 8; Beethoven, *Wellington's Victory* and *Symphonic Metamorphosis* by Hindemith. Another small group of conductors expressed the desire to make these subjective judgments solely on the artistic and musical value of a given work, without regard to the name of the composer, or to other works written by that composer.

4.3 Standard Repertoire

When asked to what extent they felt obligated to program the standard orchestral repertoire, conductors responded in conventional fashion. Upholding a need to honor the great composers of the past by continuing to program their works, virtually all of the respondents answered this question affirmatively. In this case, it was often the second and third sentences, those that ‘explained’ their answers, which provided a more informative glimpse into the conductor’s true thoughts on this question. One conductor categorized the obligation to standard repertoire as “very personal:”

What conductor wouldn’t cherish the opportunity to conduct another Beethoven 5 or 3? Every time I come back to these chestnut pieces, I grow as a conductor and musician. Orchestras do not feel that way initially when they see the piece on the roster, but when they arrive at the rehearsal, they are immersed in the piece and recognize again why the piece is a part of the standard rep – [it is] not an obligation.

Two conductors, one of a professional orchestra and the other of a university orchestra, shared similar thoughts on their obligation to the standard repertoire. The first said, “The orchestra is more like a museum now, more so than it ever has been. In a museum, you show the best of the past – the question is how much, and the balance of works in this regard.” In virtually the same words, the second conductor said, “the orchestra repertoire is like a museum and we are the curators – we have to hold reference to the past while not losing sight of the future.” A third conductor of a major professional orchestra disagreed with his two colleagues:

We must play this music. It is the foundation of what we do. However, that said, the orchestra is not a museum – it is different. In a museum, one can walk up to a painting and walk away ten seconds later. With live performances, the music is not there unless we perform it. The painting remains in that museum regardless of whether anyone comes to see it.

Five conductors spoke to the ‘greatness’ of the standard repertoire as reasons why this music could not be avoided. “Big obligation – why is it standard repertoire? Because a lot of it is really great music, and it is the backbone of what we do. It is why we are doing what we are doing.” Another said, “Terrific obligation – this is our bread and butter – I feel it as a mission, a responsibility. It is what we do, it is our tradition. These are the pieces that are on the audition lists as a practical way to look at things.” The third conductor questioned the terminology in his response. “Obligation? It depends on your goals. I don’t think of it as an obligation. When you listen to that music, and it makes you feel the way that you feel, you just have to do it! That’s why I’m an orchestra conductor.” The fourth conductor’s response; “I think we do [have an obligation to the standard repertoire] in moderation. To ignore great works simply because they are popular is wrong. These works are loved because they are great. They become more enjoyable if they are mixed in with pieces that are less well-known.” Two other conductors echoed this final sentiment, giving almost identical quotes. The fifth conductor spoke of the need to “open up the world of orchestral music to our audiences – live performances are irreplaceable. Recordings are one thing, but just cannot replace the experience of a live concert. It’s [listening to recordings] just not the same as going to the concert hall and hearing the orchestra live.”

Several conductors of student ensembles tied their obligation to standard repertoire directly to the experience of the students in their orchestra. One said, “[The obligation is] considerable. We are here to serve the students, to teach. I don’t ever need to do *Pictures at an Exhibition* or Tchaikovsky 5 again, but the students need to play those pieces. This year we will play Dvůřák 9 because we did 7 and 8 the past two years.” Another conductor of both professional and university orchestras had stronger views on this:

I can only speak for myself regarding obligations. There are some conductors of college orchestras that believe that the students will play the standard rep when they get a job – their job is to expose them to pieces that they may never play in a professional orchestra or those that are less well known. I don’t see it that way here.” (Now speaking of a professional setting) “In [orchestra’s home city], audiences already hear the [other big orchestra] on lots of ‘out’ pieces, contemporary works, and I am hearing from everyone that they want to hear more standard repertoire. I think it is time that we play it and stop feeling like we shouldn’t, that we have to be the pioneers all the time. This concept caused much of the problem we are in now, anyway. Yes, we do have to give people a new diet, things that they haven’t heard before, but we also have to honor the tradition. For the professional orchestras, the reality is that you must play the chestnut pieces in order to fill the seats. If you don’t play Beethoven 3, you’re in trouble.

Another conductor of both professional and university orchestras perhaps sums it up best. “[Conductors do have an obligation to program standard repertoire works] as long as they have something to say about them. I don’t need to stand up and conduct the Brahms Requiem performance that Robert Shaw does with the Atlanta Symphony. I should only do that piece as long as I have something to say about it. That doesn’t mean that I have to go out and do something unusual on every piece, but it has to be sincere and personal, or it has little meaning.”

4.4 Contemporary Works

Conductors were split into three different groups when answering the question about their obligation to programming contemporary works. Again, for the purposes of this study, ‘contemporary’ works were defined as those written in the last twenty to twenty-five years. The first group of answers represented approximately 28% of the conductors interviewed, and was focused largely on the student experience in a university setting. One conductor spoke of the inherent qualities of a university as a place of experimentation. “[Programming contemporary works is a] big time obligation, particularly in a university. By definition a university is all about the free flow of ideas. It is a laboratory, and we must be plugged into it.” Another said, “It is crucial. Again, you have to do what is important for your group. The interest of the students is most important in my setting. These students will be in my group for four or five years. If they finish with that time and they don’t have an appreciation for all kinds of music, then I have failed. I at least have to expose them to different things so that they can make up their mind.” A third conductor echoed the same idea of exposing students to as many

different styles as possible. “Even though we may not understand certain works, it is important for students, and for us, to branch out and explore new areas.” Another conductor spoke on what he saw as a trend in student musicians in recent years.

Being a teacher, we have an obligation [to program contemporary works] because they are part of the repertoire. I also think that young musicians these days are excruciatingly conservative, and we have an obligation to try to connect them to the century in which they live. They can’t ignore the fact that this isn’t 1860. There are certain truths today that they need to confront and realize as artists.

The final conductor in this group spoke about the practicality of programming contemporary works with student musicians. While she agreed that there is a great obligation to program contemporary works, she acknowledged at the same time that “it is not always possible because a lot of the current music is very difficult to play.”

There were a small number of responses that were either indifferent or very cautious towards the programming of contemporary works. “It is important – I used to feel more passionately about this. I am less zealous now than I used to be on this issue,” was the response given by one conductor of both professional and university orchestras. A colleague in the same situation chose a measured approach. “There are problems here because the conductors are so busy that they are not often taking the time to really look closely at the music and not just the name of the composer. We are often just choosing the big name contemporary composers without really investigating the piece.” Finally, one university conductor was clear in prioritizing the standard repertoire over more contemporary works, saying that he felt “somewhat” of an obligation to program the

latter, but “much less so than for standard repertoire.” “I don’t know any Bolcom symphonies that are called for on audition lists. We play these works for students to be exposed to new notational systems, to hear new languages. The machinery that imposes on us an obligation to play contemporary scores is not necessarily serving anyone except the composers.”

Finally, over half of the responses to this question were enthusiastically positive, affirming the conductors’ desire to program contemporary works on an ongoing basis. Their responses give insight into the depth of conviction felt by many conductors on this issue:

This is really hard because there are so many gifted composers working right now. I feel that at this moment in history, there are more gifted composers, especially Americans, writing more interesting and quality music than ever before. There are probably ten really important composers writing music at this time – this is really significant – what period of time in history can you find ten really important composers working? It would be hard, but I really think this is true of our current time. There are fifty [composers] out there writing significant music now – maybe not all stars, but truly significant music.

Another conductor said that programming contemporary works was a “100% obligation in all respects – obligation to the composer, orchestra, conductor, audience, etc. At one time Mozart was contemporary music – who is to know which composers living today will write what will become a staple piece one hundred years from now?” The format of

programming contemporary works was on the mind of one professional conductor as he responded:

I think we have a big obligation to do that. It is tough because that is when we get a lot of negative mail about programming. Conversely, critics love it. It might be the time you get critics from another city coming because you are doing the premiere of a certain piece. I think there is something to be said for segregating [the music] somewhat. If you give the audience an opportunity to choose, then you don't have problems. We did a series last summer...all pieces written in the past 10 years – only one was a world premiere, all the rest were second, third, fourth performances. It gave us a chance to play these works in a specialized environment. People that came knew up front that this was what they were coming to hear. There was no Beethoven lollipop at the end.

And again, for some conductors, the analogy of comparing the orchestra to a museum was too tempting to resist. “I feel very strongly that we have an obligation to program living composers, works that are new. If not, we are invalidating the orchestra as an institution. We are saying that it is a museum, a repository of music from 1750-1900. Music continues to evolve, and we must evolve with it.” A professional conductor said that programming new works is “absolutely our responsibility.” “It is synonymous with a library or museum getting new books or exhibits. They can't survive on one exhibit the entire time.” And two conductors of professional and university orchestras asserted strongly their belief in the programming of contemporary works. The first called it “a great privilege, not an obligation – anybody who thinks of it as an obligation has a

problem. To work with a composer in the creative process is absolutely thrilling.” And the second conductor said “it is a must.” “Otherwise we live in the past – the composer is alive and well and we must reflect that. Composers are free to write, they are not censored in any way, and it is important to let people know that has not always been the case. We must treasure this freedom and ability to create.”

4.5 American Music

This question proved to be one where the most agreement was reached among different conductors. Fully 88% of the conductors gave an affirmative response to this question. Many conductors felt an obligation to program works by American composers as a way of promoting American culture from within. One conductor said “it is important to make sure these good American composers are as well represented as good composers from other nationalities.” Another said “every country promotes its own – from this promotion the very best will rise to the top, and people will start talking about those pieces that should last in the repertoire. American culture has played second fiddle for so long. When Ms. Thurber wanted to start a national conservatory in the nineteenth century, who did they bring in? Dvořák! It took him to point out to us the wonders of our national music.” Another professional conductor had this to say: “Definitely – we have to promote culture that is our own. I love hearing French orchestra play French music, German orchestras playing German music, etc. For an American orchestra to play a piece of Carl Ruggles is important.” And another said “it is a privilege to have a connection with American composers, to understand where they come from, to

understand their voice. It is a thrill to play music by a composer who is right there with you.”

Other conductors felt the programming of American works was their obligation to the composers themselves. One university conductor said “I love American composers - I am happy to have that obligation as an American.” Another conductor of both professional and university orchestras spoke from personal experience:

I am always shocked to guest conduct an orchestra and play the Barber Second Essay, and have most of the orchestra players say they have never played it. How can they go through an American educational institution and not play these works? I think this is just great music that people love to hear and perform – there is nothing lesser about Bernstein than Strauss, or Copland or Barber for that matter – these are great composers.

Particularly as American conductors – we aren’t all American music directors in this country by any stretch, so for those of us who are, it is our language, our rhythm, our pulse in that music.

One conductor spoke more in terms of a national obligation. “[We have a] large obligation to American composers because Europe isn’t going to do it. They are our own people – once we’ve given birth to the baby, we need to raise it.” This same composer also issued a warning with his affirmation. “We must sift through it. Too many bad pieces are being promoted with glitzy packaging and marketing with little substance to the actual music.” More conductors referred to the European model of state subsidization for orchestras when discussing their obligation to performing American works. One conductor of a major professional orchestra said, “Yeah, I think we do [have an

obligation], because in Europe all of the orchestras that get state subsidy have to perform music written by composers of their nation. In American we have no such system, thus it is up to the individual orchestra to perform music by American composers. It is a self imposed responsibility.” Another conductor referred to it as a “national responsibility.” “When you go to Europe and attend a concert, you will find national composers from that area. If we don’t do the same, we will not be protecting our own composers and promoting their work. And if we don’t, who will?”

While most conductors did feel some sense of obligation to programming American works, the responses were not unanimous. One took objection to the terminology. “Obligation is such a strong word. I use the term ‘need’ very gingerly. I suppose in orchestras we have an obligation to do a whole lot of things – including pops music. This music would die if we don’t play it.” One university conductor stated:

I am less concerned than others are. I’m actually concerned that the reverse is true. By focusing our energies on American music, we might be taking our audience energy and isolating them from things that they need to be hearing. We may be missing out on the good Europeans because of the focus on American music just for that sake. These sorts of things always mirror political trends. In particular, these times that we live in are more and more focused inward, more nationalistic, more focused on ourselves. Another part of it is just marketing. When you are going to sell some strong composer from another country, you have two strikes against you – he is strange and from another country. When you are selling some strange composer from Austin, you don’t have quite as hard a sell.

4.6 Commissioning

On the question of the importance of commissioning new works from living composers, approximately 60% of the conductors interviewed affirmed this as an important activity. Yet, as stated in the opening of this chapter, the question was designed to elicit a stronger commitment from the respondents. A sampling of those responses follows. One conductor said the obligation to commission was “extremely high – to further the art form.” Another echoed this phrase verbatim, and added that “composers rely on it to exist.” After these initial answers, reservations started to appear in the conductor’s thoughts, as evidenced in this response:

This is a more complicated answer. The conductor isn’t solely responsible in this case. It takes the cooperation of the management, board and others to make a commission a reality. I wanted to get my feet on more firm footing here before I asked the board to set aside money for a commission, but it is time. It is time for us to start moving in this direction.

Another conductor of professional and university orchestras endorsed this stance saying, “It is very important, but there are financial constraints in both places that I work right now. I’m going to have a commission in [home city] in two years, but it has taken me six years to convince the board that it is a risk worth taking, because they took that risk maybe twenty five years ago and it didn’t work.” Other conductors mentioned the financial difficulty of commissioning a new work. “With us, it is just a question of money,” one professional conductor said. “Musician costs, artist fees – those all go up and are constant – when orchestras get into financial trouble, the ‘artistic’ projects are

always the first to go. We still do it on a regular basis – several per season, usually.” A second conductor who works with both professional and collegiate groups called commissioning a “huge obligation,” but then qualified it by saying that “the funding is of course the major issue. I think it is more difficult to do it at the college level than professional. My philosophy is to go to the person you want, then find a way to make it work financially.”

An equally large number of conductors prioritized commissioning differently in their response to this question. One conductor characterized commissioning as an obligation only “on an individual basis, completely dependent on the composer. I don’t recommend commissioning just to commission.” A subset of these respondents focused on the importance of identifying those works that they deemed important enough to become a permanent part of the repertoire, more so than the important of commissioning new works. One put it this way: “My view is that we don’t need more new works. We need to create repertory works – thus, my goal is to give second performances more than commissioning, to identify those pieces that I believe are important enough to stick around.” Another said, “I think it is fun to do that [commission], but I don’t necessarily think it is an obligation. It is overdone. We need more second, third and fourth performances of works that are already out there that are very worthy of being played and having a chance to make it into the repertoire. Composers would love to visit your orchestra for a second performance just as much as for a commission, maybe even more so.”

Other conductors agreed with this opinion. “Every conductor can find a composer that you can champion. It validates the musical history of our country and

others by assisting in the creative process. There is a certain kind of glamour to the premiere, and then many times composers tell me that it is so difficult to get that second performance – we have to be committed to the second performance as well.” One professional conductor also believed that commissioning more works was maybe the wrong approach:

Lots of premieres is a misguided philosophy. We must champion those composers we really believe in, find those that you believe are the most important and play them often. Bernstein symphonies are not played enough, as an example. People just assume ‘Bernstein, oh it’s played all the time’ – well, it’s really not. This is a classic case of conductors not championing works as they perhaps should have. If I do a piece of Bright Sheng that the audience loves, then another next year, then another the next, the audience will start to anticipate those performances over time. In other works, if the music is great, the audience will respond to it and anticipate it.

Another conductor of both professional and university orchestras seemed to have given much thought to this issue as well:

I don’t think everybody needs to commission – from top to bottom, everybody at one time or another should commission works, but we shouldn’t feel obligated to do it on every season or a certain number of times per year. We should focus more of our energy on second performances and third performances – often very important works are left on the shelf after their premieres because

conductors are too busy looking for the next big premiere – if a piece is worthy, we need to spread the word about it. There are three reasons to commission – 1) support living composers, 2) play music that has its roots and impetus in our current everyday life (composers as members of our community, and 3) value and respect of the composer as artist. Our future is in blurring the dividing lines, in lowering walls. If we can introduce someone in an audience to a living composer and have that composer speak about his/her life in a meaningful way, we have accomplished something very important.

Chapter 5

Most Important Repertoire

5.1 Introduction

When asked to name five works from the “standard orchestral repertoire” that they believed were the most important for orchestras to play, many conductors paused, citing the difficulty of listing only five works. For others this question caused great difficulty and resulted in the highest number of altered or omitted answers in the interview. Several conductors chose to list only composers whom they felt were indispensable to the standard repertoire, rather than naming five specific works. The wording of this question intentionally links the value of the chosen repertoire to the orchestra, not necessarily to the audience experience, though the two are often closely intertwined. In addition, although many conductors asked for clarification as to what exactly was meant by “standard orchestral repertoire,” I declined to provide any more specific information, so as not to influence or lead the conductors toward any one answer.

5.2 Standard repertoire

One common response among all conductors was the importance of programming the works of Beethoven. In fact, the reply most often encountered was voiced as “any symphony by Beethoven,” followed closely by a specific work, the Ninth Symphony. The third, fifth and sixth symphonies followed, and the remaining five symphonies received one mention each. After the symphonies of Beethoven, the symphonies of Johannes Brahms received mention from thirteen conductors, and the Stravinsky ballets

were included ten times. Again, the answer “any Brahms symphony” was the most popular for that composer, followed by the second and fourth symphonies in particular, and finally the first symphony. For Stravinsky, the answers centered on the music for ballet, with “any Stravinsky ballet” as the most popular response, followed by the specific answers of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, *Petroushka* and *L’oiseau de feu*, in that order.

Following Stravinsky ballets were the composers Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, each mentioned by eight different conductors. Specifically, “any Mozart symphony” was the response from five conductors, with his last two symphonies receiving individual attention. Tchaikovsky’s Symphony no. 5 was cited by three conductors, while the fourth and sixth symphonies were also mentioned. “Any Tchaikovsky symphony” was the answer given by two conductors. For Shostakovich, there was little consensus among conductors as to which work should be included. Three conductors included “any Shostakovich symphony,” while two specifically stated the Fifth symphony. Symphonies 9, 10 and 11 were named once by three different conductors. Debussy’s *La Mer* was a choice for four conductors, while two more listed “any Debussy work.” Richard Strauss followed next, as two conductors chose “any Strauss tone poem,” and three others included *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige streiche*, and *Tod und Verklärung* individually. Two composers appeared four times each, J.S. Bach and Franz Joseph Haydn. The London symphonies were the works mentioned for Haydn, and Bach was referred to by name only, rather than any specific work.

Dvůřák’s Symphony no. 7 was a choice for two conductors, and his Ninth symphony was mentioned by one conductor. The Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra*

appeared twice, and his *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* was singled out by one conductor. Gustav Mahler's symphonies were chosen by three conductors, as was the *Symphonie Fantastique* by Berlioz. Other composers and works cited include: Prokofiev's First and Fifth symphonies, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe*, the fourth symphony of Lutoslawski, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, and Mussorgsky's orchestral works in general. The historical range of works included in all of the conductor's responses for this question began in the late seventeenth century, with J.S. Bach, and ended approximately 300 years later with Lutoslawski, a much larger span than I anticipated when I created the interview question. Yet, I noted that the majority of specific works mentioned fell squarely within a 100-year span from the late 18th-century to the late 19th-century, which fit very closely to my expectation for answers that favored large, romantic works.

Fig. 9 Standard repertoire composers cited in interview responses

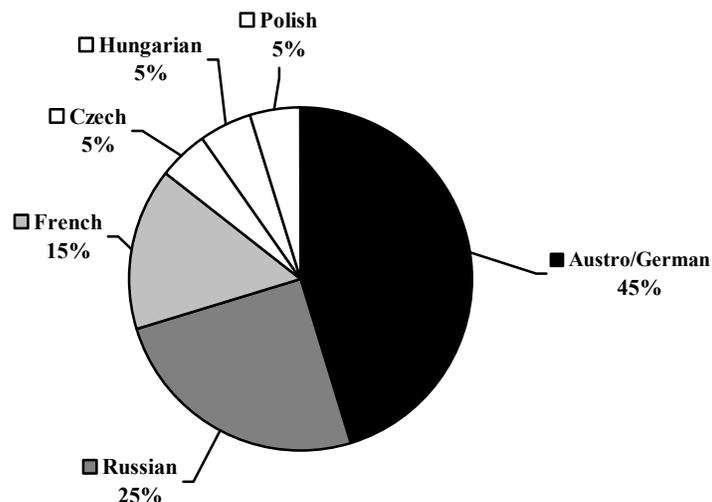
<u>COMPOSER</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Ludwig van Beethoven	22
Johannes Brahms	13
Igor Stravinsky	10
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	8
Dmitri Shostakovich	8
Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	8
Claude Debussy	6
Richard Strauss	5

Johann Sebastian Bach	4
Franz Joseph Haydn	4
Hector Berlioz	3
Béla Bartók	3
Antonin Dvůřák	3
Gustav Mahler	3
Serge Prokofiev	2
Maurice Ravel	2
Paul Hindemith	1
Witold Lutoslawski	1

5.3 Representative nationalities

A brief investigation of representative nationalities also proves interesting for the purposes of this study. In all, there were nineteen composers named as contributing to the “most important” standard repertoire. Nine of them (47%) are of Austro/German descent: Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, Strauss and Hindemith. Five (26%) are Russian: Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Three (16%) are French: Debussy, Ravel and Berlioz. Czech, Hungarian and Polish composers (Dvůřák, Bartók and Lutoslawski, respectively) represent the remaining 15% of the total. There were no American (excluding Hindemith, who falls into two categories), British, Italian or Spanish composers mentioned by any conductor.

Fig. 10 Standard Repertoire Composers by Nationality



The continued dominance of the Austro/German symphonic heritage in orchestral repertoire cannot be understated. Fully half of the works and composers listed by American conductors as the “most important” for orchestras to play were written by German composers. Certainly, these are works that have stood the test of time in a most remarkable way, yet it is worth debating whether or not this phenomenon speaks primarily to the overriding artistic value of the German romantic tradition, or instead to an intrinsic weakness in our programming philosophies. In my opinion, it is clear that audiences are driving much of the demand for romantic works, as those are the pieces that concertgoers will pay money to hear. There can be no doubt that the romantic symphonic tradition was a monumental addition to the repertoire, yet perhaps there should be an equal acknowledgment that works written during that period represent just that, one period.

5.4 Contemporary repertoire

A related question asked conductors to name five contemporary works (written since 1980) that they deemed as the most important for orchestras to play. Again the focus was on the orchestra, not necessarily the audience experience, and again some conductors chose not to list specific works, instead providing only five composers to answer the question. One conductor opted not to answer either question on “most important” works, saying that it was simply impossible to narrow the list that far: “I would do better with a top 50 than a top 5, and even then, I’m not sure I could do it.”

John Adams was the most cited composer with eleven conductors including one of his works. *Chairman Dances*, *Harmonielehre*, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* and *Shaker Loops* were all specifically mentioned, while three conductors replied “any Adams work.” John Corigliano’s name appeared eight times. His Symphony no. 1 was named by five conductors, the highest total for any one piece in the entire contemporary group. It is also noteworthy that four of the five conductors naming that particular work called it a “masterpiece.” While only one William Bolcom work was mentioned (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*), the composer himself was included by six different conductors, placing him after Adams and Corigliano in frequency. Christopher Rouse’s Symphony no. 1 was mentioned twice, and Rouse’s “works in general” were named by two more conductors. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the previous responses on standard repertoire, composers mentioned most often were all American. The second group of four composers, gathering three responses each, included John Harbison, Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Daugherty and Witold Lutoslawski. Interestingly, one of the

specific works mentioned fell outside the stated parameters of “works since 1980,” as Lutoslawski’s *Paroles tissees* was written in 1965. However, his Third and Fourth symphonies fall within the specified date range, as do Aaron Kernis’ Second Symphony and *Colored Field*, all mentioned individually. Michael Daugherty and John Harbison were mentioned by name only and not in relation to a specific work.

Luciano Berio’s *Sinfonia* was mentioned twice, highlighting the work’s importance in the contemporary repertoire, though it was composed in 1968-69, outside the parameters of the question. *Asyla*, Thomas Ades’ first large-scale orchestral work from 1997, was included by two conductors. *Afirtones of Infinity*, the 1979 Pulitzer Prize winner by Joseph Schwantner, was also mentioned by two conductors. Joan Tower’s *Concerto for Orchestra* was specifically named by one conductor, and another named “any Tower work.” Augusta Read Thomas, Nicholas Maw and Bright Sheng were each included twice, but without mention of any particular work. There were numerous composers who were mentioned by one conductor each: Chen Yi, Marie Newman, Steve Reich, Peter Lieuwen, Michael Torke, Henri Dutilleux, Libby Larsen, Steven Stucky, Frank Ticheli, Sydney Hodkinson, Stephen Paulus, Hilary Tann, Allen Shawn, Oliver Knussen, Peter Schilke, Ned Rorem and Krzysztof Penderecki.

Fig. 11 Contemporary composers cited in interview responses

<u>COMPOSER</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
John Adams	11
John Corigliano	8
William Bolcom	6

Christopher Rouse	4
Michael Daugherty	3
John Harbison	3
Aaron Jay Kernis	3
Witold Lutoslawski	3
Thomas Ades, Luciano Berio, Nicholas Maw, Joseph Schwantner, Bright Sheng, Augusta Read Thomas, Joan Tower	2
Henri Dutilleux, Sydney Hodkinson, Oliver Knussen, Libby Larsen, Peter Lieuwen, Marie Newman, Stephen Paulus, Krzysztof Penderecki, Steve Reich, Ned Rorem, Peter Schilke, Allen Shawn, Steven Stucky, Hilary Tann, Frank Ticheli, Michael Torke, Chen Yi	1

5.5 Programming implications

Given the preceding information, it is useful to consider the possible programming implications, both from the questions and the answers given by conductors. Both repertoire questions clearly asked for works that were the “most important for orchestras to play.” Implied in this wording is the assumption that such works might be different from a request for those works that were the “most important for audiences to hear.” In fact, how would such a list differ? What is it about any given work, whether a part of the standard repertoire or a contemporary work, that makes it important for an orchestra to play?

One reason involves certain technical challenges that a work presents to the musicians, elevating their performance skills and thus raising the overall technical abilities of the orchestra as a whole. One conductor of professional and university

orchestras spoke of the importance of playing baroque and early classical works for the development of string technique in his orchestra:

I think a good orchestra also has a very fine chamber component. To play baroque music, and also Haydn and Mozart in a different setting, these are crucial components of a quality orchestra. For the strings, it is the Bible of string playing and is so difficult. When the players can do these pieces, they are a long way towards playing almost any nineteenth or twentieth century piece.

A second conductor agreed with this philosophy, stating “It is very important to mix in some smaller, classical pieces that will improve the ensemble and the listening.” One university conductor put it this way: “My theory is that Mozart will make Tchaikovsky better, but Tchaikovsky will not make Mozart better. Therefore, I will always program a Mozart or Beethoven symphony on the first concert of the year and spend a great deal of time on it.” And a fourth conductor echoed much the same sentiment, “What is good for the orchestra? I am a big believer in programming Baroque and Classical music that is less thickly orchestrated to develop the orchestra’s sound and technique.” Another conductor broadened this concept by applying it to include romantic works as well: “Program a large Haydn symphony because the strings need the discipline of a Haydn symphony. Then program a Brahms symphony because the strings learn certain bowings here – differences between long and short chords.”

The representative nature of a particular piece, the extent to which one piece can exemplify a composer’s work or even an entire genre, may be another reason that some works were included. Several conductors mentioned the late Haydn symphonies as such

works, but there seemed to be little concern over which specific symphonies would be best to include in their choices of most important repertoire. It can be inferred from this that the late Haydn symphonies are all, to some extent, characteristic of Haydn's mature work, and would give the players a reasonable sampling of the genre in the late eighteenth-century. Mozart symphonies were also grouped together without specificity in large part, highlighting the respect shown this composer by acknowledging that any of his symphonies would be a worthy illustration of his output. Seven conductors thought of Beethoven's nine symphonies in this manner as a way of acknowledging the importance of his contribution to the genre. The Brahms symphonies were treated much the same way by six conductors, who chose to be intentionally vague about which symphony they would prefer, instead offering the four symphonies as a whole. Several conductors wanted to include Stravinsky's ballet music, but did not name a specific work. Some even commented that players should be exposed to "one of the ballets," or "any of the ballet music." Again, the implication is that any of these works would provide the players with a reasonable sense of Stravinsky's style in this genre.

Some works may have been included for the opposite reason, to the extent that they were somehow unique among a composer's output or among the repertoire of that period. One conductor mentioned Beethoven's Sixth symphony in this way, saying it should be included because "it was revolutionary at that time, to think in a programmatic way." *Symphonie Fantastique*, by Berlioz, was also included for its programmatic elements. Though Stravinsky's ballet music was grouped together by many conductors, at least one person felt that *Le Sacre du Printemps* was the one Stravinsky ballet that must be included, both because of the history of its scandalous premiere and because of

Stravinsky's innovative approach to the work. It might also be said that the works of Debussy, as a whole, were included because of their unique nature at the time of their composition.

The most important reason, yet the least tangible, for the inclusion of a certain composition is the artistic value of the work. Such subjective judgments are at the very essence of the work of the conductor, for much in the same way that it is an endless series of musical details that need attention in the rehearsal process to make for a successful final product, likewise it is a long sequence of successful judgments regarding the artistic value of works that will make an exciting and thoughtful season of music programming. The elusive nature of making value judgments on a piece of music is not confined to the music of any specific time period, yet the problem is particularly acute with regard to contemporary compositions. One reason for the increased difficulty in appraising modern music is the lack of performance history to assist a conductor's evaluation. Indeed, when there are no aids other than the score, a piano and his/her ear, the conductor is faced with a formidable task in trying to determine which works have true substance and can sustain as a viable part of the future repertoire.

Chapter 6

Educating the Audience

6.1 Introduction

In classical music circles, it is not unusual to hear the phrase “educating the audience.” It is used as a theory that includes numerous ideas regarding current thought on recruitment and retention of the audience, organizational marketing and perceived artistic obligations of orchestras to enlighten their audience with regard to the music being performed. Conductors of university orchestras were in near-unanimous agreement that this concept was not of great importance in their environment. Time after time, the answers from university conductors focused on the education and experience of the student, rather than that of the audience. Additionally, many university conductors felt that their audiences were already, in large part, reasonably educated on the music being performed, and that attempts on their part to further shed light on a given work might be construed as patronizing. This was not the case with professional conductors, most of whom did feel a need to educate their audiences. With rare exception, the responses in this chapter reflect the views of professional orchestra conductors.

6.2 Rationale

There seems to be a common terminology surrounding these three interview questions. “Marketing” and “sales” were two words frequently cited in this discussion on audience education. One conductor said that “we are now getting a blend of educating the audience, marketing to the audience, selling tickets, etc... it is very difficult to

separate these issues.” Another said, “I don’t like the phrase [educating the audience], but I have to be realistic and realize that if we don’t educate our audiences, there may not be any more orchestras – it is incredibly valid in that way.” He continued, “I prefer the term ‘audience development.’” One conductor spoke of his desire to “make the experience more accessible,” while another focused on the need to “bring the audience along.” The desire to cultivate a more knowledgeable audience, to make the concert-going experience more accessible, and to compete with modern entertainment choices – these rationales have all found a home in the mind of today’s professional orchestra conductors. The first of these is suitably expressed by one conductor’s statement, “Our audiences are very intelligent – maybe not about music, but they want to learn something just by coming – if we can broaden their experience by adding a little bit of extra knowledge, that is great.” Another conductor asked:

What does this [educating the audience] have to do with our culture?”

“We are so fast-paced now – I believe something happened to our educational value when Russia went up into the sky before we did in the 1960’s. We went from an art-based educational society to a science-based society. I believe we are paying the price now for two decades of neglect.

One conductor of professional and university orchestras focused on advocacy for the orchestra as he reflected, “I think of why Simon Rattle won’t conduct [music directorship] in America. He said the reason he won’t conduct in America is that he doesn’t want to spend most of his time educating people as to why we exist – and that’s too bad, but we have to do it.” The need to offer a more competitive alternative to mainstream popular culture entertainment was voiced by more than one professional

conductor. Said one respondent, “When most people think of classical music, they think of ‘long songs’ – our culture doesn’t want to concentrate, it wants to be entertained. We grow up now on three-minute pieces on the radio.” One conductor diverged from his colleagues slightly by shifting attention away from the music being performed and onto the group doing the performing.

Opening up the world of sound, of the symphony orchestra – my main goal is to move the audience from one way of thought (I’m going to [this] concert because I can recognize [the] title) to another way of thought. It’s like saying ‘I’m going to read this book because I have read it before.’ That just doesn’t make sense – this is the philosophy of those who would put on the marquee ‘Beethoven 9’ and hope that people will come because they recognize the title – we should actually be publicizing the wonderful instrument of the symphony orchestra. You would not be afraid to go to a movie if you had never seen it before – in fact, it is just the opposite. People go all the time to see things they have never seen before. I want to move our audiences to this point. My programs are influenced by this concept almost 100%....my philosophical reason for this is that I want them to remember the sound when they walk to their cars, to remember the sound the next morning when they have coffee, and to be so overcome by the sound that they will tell their friend, ‘you know John, I heard something so great, you have to come with me to hear it’ – it is the tone of the orchestra that does this.

6.3 Reservations

Several professional conductors, while acknowledging the need for some method of outreach to the audience, cautioned against going too far in this respect. One conductor focused on affirming the audience role in the concert experience rather than attempting to cultivate a deeper knowledge of the music:

I want them to know a certain sense of self-respect. Many audiences think they don't know how to listen, how to understand the music. I want them to think of themselves as valuable to the process of art in creation. Opening [the mind], plowing the field, exposing them in good ways, offering the experience – these are the sorts of terms I think about when thinking about the audience. Let me tell you what it [educating the audience] doesn't mean for me – it doesn't mean teaching them facts, dates, analysis, theory, terminology – although if they happen to learn all of these things as a side product, that's fine. We do them a great disservice when we give them information (facts, figures) that makes them feel like they are on the outside. They should feel like no one is on the outside, we are all part of the same process. The audience members have brains and they have spirits, and we want their minds and spirits to be moved, ennobled and captivated by the experience of listening to great music.

Another conductor echoed this response, “I am always very conscious of the fact that people don't come to concerts to be educated – they may be, but they don't come for that purpose. Maybe they are coming to be enlightened, to be uplifted, but not to be educated,

so we need to take this into account.” And still another said, “I think we have to be careful about feeling a passionate need to educate our audience – it can quickly become patronizing – it can become, ‘look, I’m telling you what you need to know.’” Another agreed, “At [city name], the audience hates being force-fed ‘education’ – well, I have educated them, but I have done it very subtly. If they come and are being lectured to, they will simply stop coming.” And as others did, one conductor objected to the phrase ‘educating the audience.’ “I don’t like the phrase very much – when I’m making programs, I don’t feel like I’m giving the audience medicine, that they have to hear such-and-such or this work or that work.” Another agreed, “I don’t often think about educating the audience – it’s not the right terminology.” An additional respondent said, “Never talk down to anyone – there are a lot of very educated people in this community – they don’t come here to be ‘educated.’”

6.4 Barriers

Real or imagined, there can be no doubt that many conductors of American orchestras today believe there is a barrier that exists between the orchestra and the audience. This impediment is vague in nature, yet for some conductors it remains as real an obstacle as if there were a physical wall to be hurdled before an audience member could hear the orchestra. Whether the barrier was an appearance of elitism, irrelevance to the public, or audience discomfort with the unfamiliar, many conductors sensed that the public needed assistance in breaching the wall that divided stage and auditorium. As one conductor put it:

If we continue this ivory tower approach, [where] you have to have a certain amount of wealth, wear certain clothes, or have previous knowledge, we will lose the audience altogether.

He offered possible solutions to overcoming this particular barrier, saying:

There needs to be an increase of interaction. The days of the maestro are over – the conductor has to be a human being. This also goes for the orchestra. They have to be disciples, advocates for the orchestra and for the music – they have to be an active part instead of just coming to rehearsals and going home to teach lessons.

Other conductors discussed reasons why concert attendance is not what they hoped that it would be. “Two reasons...were given in a Harris poll on audiences for why they didn’t attend classical concerts – 1) they don’t know what to wear, and 2) they don’t know when to clap,” said one conductor. Others talked about the need to make an evening at a concert more comfortable for audiences. One conductor said, “There are other ways to make the experience more accessible – using a narrator, transitions, lighting, etc. – you don’t want to cheapen your product, you just want to make it great. There has to be a reason that opera companies are doing so well and symphony orchestras are struggling.”

6.5 Method

Given the preceding concerns for audience development, it is informative to look at some of the possible solutions to the problem. While there are a wide range of methods proposed in theory, in reality there are only a handful of ideas that make it past theory to practice. The most common technique used in audience education was

speaking from the podium during a concert. 58% of interviewed conductors said that they spoke to the audience during concerts. Opinions varied on the need for such communication and how often it should occur. One conductor had some very specific ideas. “If you play a piece that is hard to listen to, then you talk to them a little bit before you play it. I think if you play a Brahms symphony, sometimes it is nice to talk briefly about what the piece means to you personally, just something to break down the barrier a little bit. For professional orchestras, this is a very good trend, as long as it is succinct, informative and again, brief.” Another said, “Speak from the podium to break the ice, [to] bridge the gap between the audience and orchestra.” A third conductor agreed, “I do talk from the podium if the piece is new, just to introduce the work a little bit – sharing the ideas is the right concept, not in a condescending way at all.” Others agreed this was a useful approach, but that it should not be overused:

I talk from the stage probably six weeks out of twenty-one, only when there is a need to inform the audience – setting the background or explaining the ‘thread’ that ties the piece together. An example of this in practice is Shostakovich’s eleventh symphony. I did a lot of research on the origin of the melodies in the piece – it is all set to songs that would have been immediately recognizable to a 1950’s Soviet audience. For Westerners, they are just melodies with no meaning, so to have some sort of connection, meaning, words to hold onto....it points out to the audience how relevant these melodies were to what Shostakovich was trying to say. When we first did this, we played it right after the September 11th tragedy. Of course, I programmed it eighteen months earlier, but the brief talk I

gave ended by saying that this piece essentially is about innocent people being murdered on one day in history, and how topical is that? It really resonated so much more with the audience...they understood the connection between this music and our current times.

A professional colleague agreed that 'less was more' in this case, "The audience doesn't come to a regular subscription concert to hear me talk, so I don't. There are times when I do, but not on regular subscriptions."

Pre-concert lectures were utilized by 37% of all conductors, making this the second most popular method of audience education. One professional conductor said, "I did pre-concert talks/conversations before every concert for many, many years. I think the mistake is to make them lectures. The people who go to those lectures are those who will read the notes anyway. We need to attract the other people. It doesn't mean that it's not substantive, it is substantive, but it is not off-putting." The vast majority of pre-concert lectures were given by outside speakers, often a music professor from a local university. Only one conductor in this group did the pre-concert talks personally. After pre-concert lectures, methods of educating the audience began to diverge more and more, with less agreement among respondents. Four separate ideas were each endorsed by 16% of conductors as effective in audience education: the use of program notes, the programming of new music, the promotion and production of children's concerts, and the use of thematic programming. Some of the comments from conductors regarding these four methods shed insight into this process.

The effectiveness of program notes was doubted by one of these conductors, who said, "Tell people to read the program notes – most don't, so you have to continually

encourage them to do this.” One interesting comment on the second method, programming new music, broadened the definition of that music. “I try to include unfamiliar works in every season. This doesn’t necessarily mean works written this year, it can be unknown works from the early twentieth century.” A belief in children’s concerts was emphasized by two conductors who said, “[Educating the audience] starts with youngsters, in educational programs for elementary through high school,” and “Start educating very early in the schools. Educating through programming is only a very small part of the larger picture of educating the audience.” And, as mentioned in previous chapters, the concept of thematic programming was central to audience education for some conductors, one of whom said, “Concert themes are tied into education – ‘there’s a reason why we are putting these pieces together, and here’s why.’” Another conductor said, “All of my programs are built around a concept – an idea, a point of reference.”

Other methods of audience outreach that received mention from conductors of both professional and university orchestras included isolating new music on a specific concert or series of concerts, using technical (theatrical) effects in concerts, publishing pre-concert newsletters, programming concerti that feature non-traditional orchestral instruments, inviting composers to visit, public speaking outside of the concert setting, and post-concert talks. Speaking on the first of these methods, one conductor said, “The more severe music, I will try to do on a special series – three weeks of new music concerts – it is isolated in a sense from the regular subscription programs, but those who want to hear that music will come and those who don’t, won’t come.” Another conductor favored a variation of this concept, where he would sponsor a series of educational symposia, “where we study one piece or set of pieces for an entire day. For example,

Shostakovich, Symphony no. 14 – eleven poems of death are the basis of this work – if you just show up to that concert, it can be a really stark experience, but if you come to the symposium to learn about the poems, the meanings, the underlying information that supports the piece, the Russian language, the concert can then be very enlightening.”

Two conductors spoke about their preference for post-concert talks, where a more informal atmosphere was cultivated. “One thing we do at [city name] is to do post-concert talks/interviews. After a concert, I will come out on stage with a few of the musicians or a soloist, and we will take audience questions and just talk very informally. Anything we can do to break down the barriers is a good thing.” Another conductor agreed, “After selected concerts, musicians from the orchestra come out and talk to the audience about what happened at the concert. These are really great because it is a very lighthearted atmosphere, lots of fun.”

6.6 Final Thoughts

Three conductors expressed thoughts that provide some sense of closure to this chapter. The fact that there seems to be little consensus on this issue should not be overlooked and may afford additional insight into the current state of orchestral music. The first conductor, now leading a university orchestra, reflected on his earlier position with a professional orchestra:

Many years ago when I was music director of the [orchestra name], I made the judgment that I needed to open up their repertoire, which I deemed too conservative and restrictive. What I didn't realize was that I had to convince the audience that I was someone they could trust to program new

repertoire. I went in with both guns blazing and left many of them in the dust, causing much more damage than I had ever imagined.

A second conductor, active with professional and university orchestras, offered this perspective:

More people are going this way now – I have been doing these things for a long time, but some still refuse to get with the program. The reality is that we have lost several generations who know something about classical music. The days of one person having a 28 subscription ticket series to the Boston Symphony, sitting in the same seat every Thursday evening, are gone.

The third conductor, who oversees the orchestra program at a major music school, shared his viewpoint:

I have had to compromise a few times in the past few seasons in order to try to educate our audience. [That meant playing] pieces that weren't necessarily the best for our orchestra but important for the audience. High quality = audience interest and attendance. This is the primary reason that audiences come. They come to trust you and know that your programs are going to be high quality, and they will come. The trend in audience development is that there is no trend. There are so many different ways out there right now, no central philosophy – it is almost like verging on panic right now. We are not getting the audiences, and somebody

has to come up with 'the' way to get them, but nobody has found the solution so far. Because this is a new avenue for all of us in classical music, it is proper to try many different ideas. Hopefully it will eventually become centralized, and we will find a focus with all of this.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

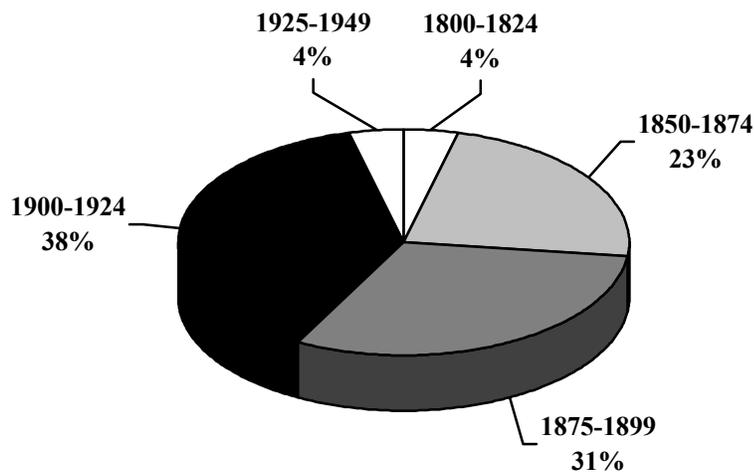
Chapter 7 focuses on a single interview question, the final question asked of each conductor. By asking conductors to average the dates of composition represented by the past season's repertoire, I hoped to gain perspective on the balance of standard and contemporary repertoire currently being programmed. As mentioned in the first chapter, I acknowledge that the question is not without flaw, as the year of publication of any given work is but one indication of the type of repertoire being performed. For example, the length of a given work, the nationality of the composer, and the study of these elements over several seasons would no doubt give a truer picture of the scope of an orchestra's repertoire. Yet, it is still important to ask questions about the pieces being performed and when those pieces were written in order to prompt additional thought and discussion on the appropriate balance of standard and contemporary repertoire. My intent with this question, therefore, was not to offer a mathematical presentation of facts, but rather to present an illustration of the conductor's perceptions regarding programming, versus the reality of actual programming choices.

7.2 Average date of composition

In order to classify the average dates of composition given in response to this question, the answers were placed into time periods of twenty-five years each, beginning in 1800 and ending in 1949. One conductor gave an average date of composition as 1800, yet it is important to note that the group in question was a chamber orchestra, an

exception to the other interviewed conductors. No responses fell within the period from 1825-1849. Beginning with 1850, however, the next seventy-five years were the time period of choice for no less than 92% of conductors. Specifically, the twenty five year period from 1850-1874 was represented by 23% of respondents, with the majority of this group falling within the first five years, from 1850-1855. 31% of conductors placed their average date of composition in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, making it the second most popular choice, behind the first quarter of the twentieth-century, which received 38% of the average dates. Furthermore, within this last time period, 70% of conductors placed their average date of composition in the first decade of the twentieth-century, and 60% of this group gave the specific date “1900” as their answer. Only one conductor’s answer was in the latter part of these twenty five years. Finally, the remaining 4% of dates fell within the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Fig. 12 Average date of composition



Are conductors satisfied with their average date of composition? A little less than 40% of all conductors expressed a desire for change in coming seasons. Of this group, only 20% wished for that date to be earlier, while approximately 80% would like their average date of composition to be later, with some desiring a shift of as much as fifty years towards the present. Some specific comments that further define the concepts at play included these quotes from three university conductors who were satisfied with their current balance of programming.

1885 – Should be there for educational situations, because we have a pretty wide range of repertoire. We don't do very much Baroque, but everything else is well represented. Our earliest piece this year is 1785, the latest is 2002.

1850 – [I am] comfortable with that date because it suggests a good balance. When you look at this list, you see Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, other romantics, Milhaud, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Stravinsky...the only thing missing is something from the last twenty five years. However, last year, we did a world premiere opera and some Lutoslawski works that would represent that time period better.

1910 – I don't know where it should be. If you think about it, the symphony orchestra as an animal has really been in its prime in the last 150 years, and so I think this number is probably fairly representative of that time span.

Three other conductors were not pleased with their average date of composition. The first, currently working with university and professional orchestras, said, “1890 and 1910 respectively (for two orchestras) – [I am] not happy with these numbers. The music of the twentieth century should be performed more aggressively, especially since we have now passed that century completely.” His colleague, working only with professional orchestras, echoed a similar sentiment, “1900-1910, somewhere in the first decade of the twentieth century – it should be more like 1950, for all of the reasons that we just talked about, the conductor’s obligation to contemporary music, etc.” The third conductor in this group is the music director for two major professional orchestras:

1915-1920 – should be 1940 or 1950, but that would mean that I would do more really contemporary works in order to bring that average up, and that is a long process of building the audience trust, so that they will get to a point where they will come to the concert even if they don’t recognize any of the names on the program, just because they trust your instincts and judgment.

And finally, two conductors offered warnings about what conclusions can be drawn from this information. The first conductor, who works with both professional and university orchestras, said, “I don’t think the average tells you as much as the extremes and the number of works from a particular period.” The second conductor, currently leading a professional orchestra, offered a similar conclusion, “This is... misleading, because it is more important that one accounts for actual time; i.e., you can’t balance out a three minute new American fanfare with a performance of Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*.

Conversely, you can’t balance John Adams’s *Harmonielehre* (40’) with Glinka’s *Ruslan*

und Ludmilla (4'). What is more important is the balance of time stretched out over the whole season.”

7.3 Conclusions

There can be no doubt that selecting repertoire for the university and professional orchestra is a daunting task. In fact, many conductors repeatedly voiced the opinion that programming music for an upcoming season was consistently their most difficult undertaking. Conductors' stated philosophies most often reflected their desire to achieve an appropriate balance of works within each season, though these ideals were continually challenged by non-musical factors. These factors differed from university to professional conductors in some respects. University conductors were challenged by applied faculty, a limited musician talent pool, and a need to balance standard repertoire with contemporary works for educational purposes. Professional conductors faced the pressures of maintaining ticket sales, rising personnel costs and high guest artist fees. One professional conductor's comment that today's conductor is responsible for a broader repertoire than ever before perhaps highlights what many others feel, that the challenge of balancing cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, time periods and musical styles within a season is more overwhelming than ever before. Conductors are often guilty of speaking in broad, generalizing terms when asked about their priorities for repertoire selection. While such language might be compared to that of an aspiring politician trying to please numerous constituencies, like that politician's rhetoric, the conductor's theories bear little effect on the programming process without strong convictions behind them. Such convictions, it would seem, are rare, as they require a high degree of certainty,

commitment and accountability on the part of the conductor. It is exactly this level of purpose and forethought that I sought to find by asking conductors about their obligations and responsibilities in the process of repertoire selection.

Conductors were asked about their perceived level of obligation in several areas: to specific composers, to standard repertoire, to contemporary repertoire, to music of American composers, and to commissioning new works. The first two areas (specific composers and standard repertoire) were inextricably linked by conductors' responses, as virtually all of the composers mentioned by name were composers of standard repertoire. The list of composers that conductors would not program showed more variety and served as another indication of the individual, subjective nature of this process. It was in this section that I noticed one of the more interesting responses of the entire study. When speaking about the challenges of programming some of the more difficult twentieth-century works, one conductor stated, "either the audience is not ready to hear a particular composer, or the conductor is not ready personally to conduct the work." This was the only conductor who included his own preparation and personal artistic growth as a possible limitation on his repertoire selection. As a young conductor myself, I appreciated this level of authenticity and found the answer refreshingly honest, as I can only presume that the conductor's level of personal musical growth at any one point in his/her career has a significant impact on the programming process.

Regarding a conductor's obligation to program standard or contemporary repertoire, there were interesting responses centered on the analogy of comparing the symphony orchestra to a museum. While two conductors argued that the orchestra repertoire should be showcased as a museum curator might showcase the best things of

the past, others found the museum analogy misleading. They pointed out that the nature of live performance rejects a comparison with inanimate displays in a museum, and that without programming contemporary works by living composers, conductors were ‘invalidating the orchestra as an institution.’ Most university conductors focused on the need for their students to gain experience performing standard repertoire works as preparation for careers as professional musicians. Fewer university conductors seemed to hold the opposite opinion that students would have ample opportunity to perform those (standard repertoire) works if and when they worked as professionals, thus they felt that their obligation as teachers was to expose students to newer, more unfamiliar repertoire. For professional conductors, the issue of balance seemed to center around how much contemporary repertoire could be programmed without adversely affecting ticket sales, as it was clear from conductors’ responses that they believe that concerts which feature standard repertoire produce consistently better sales than those that feature contemporary works. Whether this perception is accurate or not is material worthy of another study, yet the effect on the conductor’s programming remains very real. Conductors’ responses to questions about which repertoire is most important for orchestras to perform give a clear indication that orchestral programs of the twenty-first century continue to be dominated by compositions written, on average, 150 years ago. It is important to recognize that in the year 2003, conductors still consider the masterworks of the nineteenth century to be the defining works of the entire symphonic repertoire.

The issue of obligation to American composers produced the most agreement among all conductors of any of the seventeen interview questions. Responses crossed boundaries between university and professional orchestras, and conductors reached

consensus on the importance of promoting composers from within our borders, as many European nations have done for years. Other conductors pointed to the value of hearing American works performed by American orchestras, with the clear implication being that there is an unspoken understanding between the player and composer who have experienced a similar history. There was less agreement on the question of whether conductors have an obligation to commission new works. Aside from a small group of university and professional conductors who strongly believed in the obligation to commission and who committed to it on a regular basis, there were many other conductors who stopped short of calling it an obligation. Some questioned the motivation for commissioning, saying that conductors shouldn't commission for the sake of giving premieres. Rather, they believed that the correct approach was to seek out those composers whose music moved them deeply, and pursue projects in which they could have strong ownership and commitment. Still other conductors believed that a focus on commissioning new works was misguided, and that instead a conductor's purpose should be to identify those works that they believed should become a part of the standard repertoire and to commit resources and time to second, third and fourth performances of those works, thus championing, in a sense, those composers in whom they strongly believe.

Finally, there were questions about the role of the conductor in audience education. While there is certainly a good possibility that many orchestras are promoting an elitist agenda, in effect shutting out thousands of potential audience members through any number of traditions and routines that inhibit accessibility, it was not my purpose to investigate that issue. Rather, my intent was to explore the idea that conductors feel a

need to ‘explain’ the music in some fashion to the audience, and to that end, by what means they felt compelled to do so. It seems clear from the responses of university conductors that their focus is on the education of the students, not the audience.

University conductors continually referred to the ‘student experience’ as foremost in their programming process and showed little interest in tailoring programs toward the audience. Conductors of professional orchestras have a conflicting view.

Many professional conductors seem to be intently focused on the education of their audience in an effort to enlighten and enrich the concert-going experience. Many have recognized the challenges presented by modern popular culture. Today’s audiences have many choices for entertainment on any given night, and conductors are struggling to capture the imagination of a society that is immersed in visual, aural and tactile stimulation. It remains to be seen whether audiences will continue to attend orchestra concerts where the only entertainment option is that of sitting quietly and listening. It is my hope that the challenges of reaching modern audiences will make American orchestras stronger by stimulating a climate of creativity, innovation and resourcefulness, where conductors will feel compelled to cast a progressive vision for their organizations and to program with great intent and purpose toward the realization of that goal.

I trust that the interview responses presented in this treatise will act as an impetus for all conductors to re-examine our priorities in programming. Whether that means we program more traditional repertoire or more contemporary repertoire is not necessarily the issue. For me, at this point in my career, I have resolved to program more contemporary repertoire, to interact with composers more often, and to search out those composers whose works I can actively promote through performance and advocacy. It is

important for the conductor to carefully consider the issue of his or her programming philosophy. Why this music? Why is it important for this orchestra to play this piece at this time for this audience? I believe it is imperative that we show a greater awareness of cultural changes in our communities, shifting trends in audience demographics, and promising new composers and works, and then allow these issues to inform our programming. The primary issue is not necessarily to advocate the programming of more contemporary works, but instead to promote careful consideration of the core issues behind our programming as a whole in order to ensure that we are programming with foresight, purpose and conviction.

Appendix

Interview Questions

Chapter 2

1. Do you have certain goals in mind when choosing repertoire?
2. Are there specific musical criteria that you use when selecting repertoire?
3. How would you describe your philosophy of programming?

Chapter 3

4. What are the non-musical factors that impact your programming choices?
5. Do you feel that you can make 100% of the repertoire decisions?

Chapter 4

6. Are there certain composers or works that you feel obligated or pressured to program? Why?
7. Are there any established composers that you will not program?
8. To what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to program the “standard orchestral repertoire?”
9. Conversely, to what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to program the “music of our time?”
10. Do you believe that American orchestras have any obligation or responsibility to American composers and their music?
11. To what extent do you believe conductors have an obligation to commission new works from living composers?

Chapter 5

12. If you had to name five specific works from the “standard repertoire” that you believe are the most important for orchestras to play, what would they be?
13. If you had to name five specific “contemporary” (since 1980) works that you believe are the most important for orchestras to play, what would they be?

Chapter 6

14. What does the phrase “educating your audience” mean to you?
15. To what extent does this idea (educating your audience) influence your programming choices?
16. Do you feel your philosophy on this issue (educating your audience) is in line with the current trends?

Chapter 7

17. If you took the dates of composition of every piece you programmed for this season and averaged them to come up with one date, what year do you think this would be? What year do you think it should be? (i.e.....1850, 1900, etc...)

VITA

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