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# ARTISTIC SCORE STUDY: CONDUCTORS' APPROACHES TO DISCOVERING AND COMMUNICATING THE COMPOSER'S INTENT

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ARTISTIC SCORE STUDY: CONDUCTORS' APPROACHES TO DISCOVERING AND COMMUNICATING THE COMPOSER'S INTENT

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
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# Abstract

ARTISTIC SCORE STUDY: CONDUCTORS' APPROACHES TO DISCOVERING AND COMMUNICATING THE COMPOSER'S INTENT

By interviewing master conductors in the field, through this study I aim to find promising practices and approaches for conductors to create more meaningful and powerful emotional connections with the score to communicate a more complete image of the composer's intent. It is my hope that these practices will begin to guide conductors of all levels toward more meaningful music-making experiences for themselves, the ensemble, and the audience. Utilizing a qualitative, multiple case study design, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with four long-term successful wind band conductors revealed personal methods of artistic score study providing insight into how conductors approach discovering and communicating the composer's intent, as well as approaches to guiding the ensemble toward their interpretation.

Score study is a highly personal process conductors use to internalize the music, build a personal interpretation, and prepare for rehearsals and performance. One will quickly find limitations in conducting textbooks in approach to defining how conductors study a musical score in relation to revealing emotive content. As a conductor, it is vital to have a clear aural image of the music to be conducted; however, how does one uncover the emotive content of the score and synthesize it into an emotionally connected gesture? This study seeks to provide promising practices to aid conductors in discovering emotive content, transferring inner knowledge to outward physical gesture, and recreating the composer's intent through a collaborative rehearsal and performance process.

# Chapter 1

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify approaches to discover emotive content within a musical score and to connect the emotive content to conducting gesture. The intended outcome is to provide promising practices for conductors of all skill and experience levels to learn how to score study with the intent of discovering emotive content within a score and utilizing that content to develop emotionally connected gestures. Merriam-Webster defined the word *emotion* as, "a : a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body, b : a state of feeling" and *connection* as, "the act of connecting : the state of being connected."[1] When a conductor discovers the emotive content in a score, they inhabit those feelings inhere referred to as an *emotional connection* to the music. As Bruno Walter stated, "the listener perceives that the conductor's conception and personality sound forth from the playing of the orchestra, that his re-creative inspiration reveals, by means of the executants, the inner meaning of a work of music," but he does not provide insight for how conductors discover the emotive content within the music, how to inhabit those emotions, and then share those emotions with the ensemble and audience.[2] How do conductors create space in their score study, rehearsal process, and performances for the emotional and intangible elements of music?

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[1] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "emotion," accessed April 27, 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion.
[2] Walter, *Of Music and Music Making*, 82.

Undergraduate degree plans often focus on the foundations of conducting for music education majors, but lack of emphasis beyond the basics of both movement and score study. Donald Hunsberger acknowledged that after undergraduate conducting classes most students "will receive no additional formal instruction" in the art of conducting.[3] Based on Jeremy Lane's research, most undergraduate conducting students transition into score studying, teaching, and conducting ensembles without synthesizing and incorporating the information learned in theory, history, and artistic performance on their instrument through applied lessons.[4] According to a recent study, "over the past two decades, wind conducting at the graduate level has become an increasingly popular focus of study" and was an opportunity for students to pursue more in-depth knowledge and practice of the art of conducting.[5] Undergraduate conducting courses and textbooks concentrate on the physicality of conducting. It was not until pursuit of a graduate conducting degree that students were able to "be more effective in their communication to their ensembles through more focused study of their craft."[6] Thus, there are teachers and conductors in the wind band world serving their students as technicians when rehearsing and conducting an ensemble. Many ensemble directors uncover emotive content from within the score; however, very little is written about *how* this process takes place. This document serves as a resource for researching practices, beliefs, motivations, experiences, and advice from professional wind band conductors who are regarded as highly successful in the field.

[3] Hunsberger, *The Art of Conducting*, xvii.
[4] Lane, "A Basic Interpretive Analysis of Undergraduate Instrument Music Education Majors' Approaches to Score Study in Various Musical Contexts," 114.
[5] Cooper, "A Survey of Select Graduate Wind Conducting Programs in American Colleges & Universities," ii.
[6] Ibid., 5.

The information documented and analyzed from literature review and interviews provides guidance to conductors pursuing knowledge about the process of score study with the intent of discovering emotive content in the score, connecting their personal emotions to this content, developing gestures to reflect those emotions, and strategies for sharing their interpretation with ensemble and audience members.

Prior to sharing in the recreative musical process with their ensembles, conductors should study the objective information about the piece, build a personal interpretation guided by the information discovered, seek out the emotive content of the music, inhabit those emotions, and embody all of this through gesture. Musicians and audience members often know and feel the difference between an emotionally charged performance and one that simply produces the basic notes and rhythms printed on the score. There is an intangible feeling that appears by connecting on a deeper level with music. This document serves as a compilation of information from four masters in the wind band field who connect deeply with the emotive content of the music they conduct.

Bud Beyer discussed how "conductors and musicians alike present only their 'performance persona' to audiences instead of the whole, wonderful, flawed, complete person," but *how* does a conductor find the emotive content, connect their own experiences and feelings to it, and share that with the ensemble and audience through gesture?[7] A deeper emotional connection creates a more meaningful musical experience for the conductor, ensemble members, and audience, as well as better serves the intent of the composer.

[7] Beyer, *Completing the Circle*, 30.

## Procedures

Criteria were established to determine which conductors are currently prominent in the wind band field in terms of their reputation as a musician, teacher, and conductor. The conductor's overall status within the profession was examined based on awards and honors received throughout their career. The following information was reviewed for each conductor: (*a*) have taught and conducted wind bands for a minimum of fifteen years in the United States, (*b*) have produced high-quality performances consistently at major conferences and prestigious music events, (*c*) have contributed to the growth of teaching and conducting through conference presentations specific to conducting, (*d*) have assisted with conducting workshops—hosting or serving as a guest clinician, and (*e*) have contributed to books pertaining to conducting and/or score study. Conductors' efforts to promote the expansion of artistic music in the wind band repertoire through commissions, consortiums, and premiere performances were also taken into advisement. Four conductors were selected to limit the scope of the current study. In addition to the criteria established, conductors of diverse backgrounds and teaching experiences were sought to participate in the study.

The initial 16 conductors were chosen based on general knowledge of their successes, reputation within the profession, and consultation with my advisors. Information based on the criteria above was gathered for the 16 wind band conductors from around the United States. In an effort to seek diverse candidates within a small sample, in addition to the established criteria the background and career path of each

conductor was considered in the selection of the four interviewees (e.g., college versus high school teaching experience, gender, number of years in the profession).

The four conductors interviewed (either in person or via video conference) were asked questions pertaining to their (*a*) personal score study process and preparation of music for rehearsals, (*b*) how they discover emotive content in music, (*c*) how they connect to that emotive content based on their own emotions and experiences, (*d*) how they go about sharing and developing that connection within their ensemble, and (*e*) how they portray these emotions within the music to their audience. The interview questions can be found in Appendix D of this document.

Three of the four interviews were 90 minutes in length, while one lasted 60 minutes due to schedule limitations of the interviewee. The in-person interviews were recorded on a digital video camera, while the video conferencing interviews were recorded through the video conferencing application. All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recording in addition to the video recording. The mp3 audio files from the digital audio recorded were uploaded to an online system, Otter.ai, for transcription. The transcriptions were edited within Otter.ai to correct mistakes in wording such as musical terminology or names of a person who was referenced. The transcripts were downloaded to Microsoft Word documents and further edited to remove repeated words or information that was not necessary to the study, i.e., one of the interviewees describing that they needed to sneeze. The transcript for each interview can be found in Appendix E of this document.

I organized and synthesized the advice, teaching strategies, and information from the interviews into categories based on the questions asked. The responses are

presented and compared to discover common and disparate themes that emerged. While analyzing the responses to the various interview questions, I made note of the ideas discussed by the interviewees and then grouped similar or opposing views together. The groupings were designated by the information gathered, not by the question that prompted the response, as the interviewees discussed a wide range of topics in answering each question. The major groupings that appeared were: (a) score study, (b) importance of emotional content, (c) manifesting gesture, (d) rehearsal application, (e) programming, (f) audience connection, and (g) teaching conductors. Based on the groupings of information, this document contains promising practices—exercises, techniques, and suggestions—to conductors of all levels to improve their emotional connection to music through artistic score study.

## Limitations

The information presented focuses on artistic score study practices of wind band conductors and the teaching of instrumental conducting students. This project serves as a catalyst for future research and expansion in the study of how conductors connect and express emotive content in music. As such, the scope of the project is limited to four wind band conductors in the United States.

A large body of research in human emotional connection to music and the effects of music on human emotions exists. It is acknowledged that people can and do create emotional connections to music; however, the scientific study of how this interaction occurs is outside the scope of this paper. The study of human emotions versus intellect may lead to interesting findings in relation to artistic score study but

are out of the scope of this document. Some conductors may feel that emotion does not play a role in their score study process or in their conducting. However, this study focuses on conductors who search for emotive content and how they implement this into their conducting and teaching practices.

# Chapter 2

## Survey of Related Literature

This survey of literature examined a number of available conducting texts and research identifying accessible information to conductors regarding score study and discovering emotive content. There were a large number of conducting textbooks, supplemental reading materials, and published dissertations that discussed the process of teaching conducting and score study techniques. Many of the authors opened the discussion of teaching conducting with messages that pertained to the connection people have to music or how music was somehow alive or other worldly: "Music lives only when the notes fly off the page and soar into glorious sound. The performer, the conductor, releases them from bondage through his or her feeling for their message, through the power of the imagination, and by means of physical technique one devotedly acquires."[8] However, the pages that follow in conducting books focused primarily on building the physical techniques necessary to lead an ensemble through a performance. Initially, this may have made perfect sense to focus the teaching of conducting on the physicality of the art but conducting is just that—an art—and as such, there are more complex aspects that must be explored to create a meaningful musical experience for the conductor, ensemble members, and audience.

Music and conducting are forms of art, and as such, have the potential to be interpreted in numerous ways. Some composers, scholars, and theorists believe the art of music is the printed notation on the page and the music required no interpretation or emotional connection to communicate its intent. This viewpoint is important to

[8] Green, *The Modern Conductor*, xv.

note; however, this study examines the role of the conductor as interpreter and communicator, via conducting gesture, of the composer's intent.

### *Undergraduate Training: The Basics*

Undergraduate conducting curricula typically begins by defining proper posture and stance for a conductor. The first sentence of the first chapter of Donald Hunsberger's *The Art of Conducting* stated, "The foundation of good conducting technique begins with correct posture."[9] In addition to posture, body awareness was one of the first steps for a beginning conductor. Lisa Billingham believed that "conducting students should engage in body awareness prior to initiating the practice of gestural language."[10] Most undergraduate students have had musical experiences playing an instrument but have not necessarily guided players through music and emoted emotional content within music gesturally. Initially, students are typically exposed to exercises that work to improve body awareness and control in their beginning conducting courses. Elizabeth Green believed that the physicality of conducting was vital to the success of the conductor. She noted that the "gradual acceptance, by the teaching profession, of the Russian conductor Nicolai Malko's pedagogical principles" and "eleven 'physical exercises'… has been made apparent by the professional success of young conductors who have devoted serious practice to the development of their manual technique."[11] The Malko exercises, demonstrated on video by Elizabeth H. Green and referenced in her book *The Modern Conductor*, help

[9] Hunsberger, 3.
[10] Billingham, *The Complete Conductor's Guide to Laban Movement Theory*, xv.
[11] Green, xiii.

to establish control and timing of the arms, as well as begin to teach independence of hands.[12] Michael Haithcock's *The Elements of Expressive Conducting* promoted exercises for students to work through where the physical gestures were more organic, developing more natural motion and body movement when applied to conducting techniques. [13]

*The Baton*

Part of the conductor's posture and stance included holding a baton properly as "the baton is traditionally considered to be a natural extension of the arm."[14] Students should be measured and fitted for a baton that is the appropriate length for their arms and is the appropriate handle for their hand. Michael Haithcock recommended students "measure from the crease of your elbow to the tip of your middle finger, along the inside of your forearm" to determine the proper length of the baton.[15] Once this measurement was taken, Haithcock recommended that student purchase a baton that matched the length of the elbow to tip of the middle finger measurement. The baton is traditionally held in the right hand and taught in this manner for the sake of undergraduate conducting courses.

*Beat Patterns*

Prior to learning conducting patterns for various meters, students need to understand basic movement with the baton and how to initiate sound from

[12] Green, 4.
[13] Haithcock, *The Elements of Expressive Conducting*, 102.
[14] Hunsberger, 30.
[15] Haithcock, 41.

instrumentalists. In *The Elements of Expressive Conducting*, Michael Haithcock explains posture, quality of motion, musical intent, shaping sound, and basic score study before broaching the subject of conducting patterns in Chapter 14.[16] Haithcock took a distinctly different approach to teaching beginning conducting because he suggests that all of the physical gestures within conducting must be derived from musical intent.[17] Incorporating musically-driven motions from the outset of the learning process aids in focusing student attention to formulating gesture with musical intent. Divorcing the concept of eliciting specific musical sounds at the beginning of the teaching process is a disservice to the student and reiterates the path that most conducting texts take—focus on perfecting physical technique.

Students learn different conducting patterns for varying time signatures found in music. The patterns are taught at a slow speed but students must adhere to practicing them so they may become second nature. Haithcock even suggested that students "conduct complete measures slowly in a single meter until you are confident with each basic pattern before exploring the addition of expressive variables."[18] Within the structure of the basic patterns, conductors could influence the articulation and style of playing with the quality of gesture used in their pattern. "Used effectively, beat patterns will: show progress through the measure, reflect the quality of motion aligned with the character of the music, illustrate the musical contour of each phrase, contain the details necessary to demonstrate the expectation for each sound."[19] When the right hand could move confidently through patterns, students

[16] Haithcock, 81.
[17] Ibid., xxvii.
[18] Ibid., 84.
[19] Ibid., 81.

must learn to use their left hand to cue different performers when entrances in the music occur, show changes in dynamics, release the sound, and influence change in the music through impactful and meaningful gestures outside of the basic pattern.

*Incorporating Laban Movement Theory*

Rudolf Laban was a choreographer and dancer whose career focused on the study of human body movement.[20] His studies of how people move their bodies through space and time with varying weight and flow gave way to his eight "Effort Actions: float, punch, glide, slash, dab, wring, flick, press."[21] Students may explore using the eight Laban gestures to begin shaping their gestural vocabulary with the left hand through common, everyday motions.[22] Exploring how to manipulate these everyday actions through space and time could provide conductors with a variety of motions to grow the gestural vocabulary of their left hand. Lisa Billingham's *The Complete Conductor's Guide to Laban Movement Theory* discussed body awareness and provided exercises specific to conductors for building these skills and expanding their gestural vocabulary. [23] Billingham discussed the concept of being an "informed mover" and how "conducting includes movement from a physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual level" were vital to a conductor's growth, but there was still no information provided about *how* to connect emotionally with a piece of music.[24] Laban theory assists in building a conductor's body awareness and helps conductors

[20] Haithcock, 3.
[21] Billingham, 37-39.
[22] Ibid., 28.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, xvi.

become more knowledgeable about connecting sound and gesture, but it does not discuss how to connect emotionally to music.

*Score Study*

The vast majority of conducting textbooks and undergraduate conducting curricula explore score study only after students begin to move with proficiency through basic beat patterns and left-hand gestures. The process of score study *must be taught* so that students may learn how to effectively conduct the markings in the score. If the concept of score study were introduced earlier in the process, students have a frame of reference to explore more meaningful and musically driven patterns and gestures from the beginning of their practice.

Authors of conducting textbooks did not discuss the step between score study of the objective elements of music and conducting an ensemble in the first rehearsal. Examples of "objective elements" of the music include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Title of the piece
2. The composer
    a. Biographical information
    b. Compositional style
    c. Compositional output
3. Original setting of the piece
4. Historical context
    a. Time period in which the piece was written
    b. Performance practices of the time
5. Dedication of the piece, if available
6. Text, if present
7. Instrumentation
8. Transpositions
9. Technical terms
10. Form and structure analysis
11. Stylistic markings

12. Melodic content
13. Motivic manipulation
14. Harmonic structure
15. Dynamic structure
16. Textural shifts
17. Timbral shifts
18. Phrasing

Although an aural image has been created through score study of the objective elements of the music, the emotive content of the piece has not been explored. How do conductors discover emotive content, use their personal life experiences to inhabit those emotions, and portray those emotions through gesture eliciting a more emotionally connected response from their ensemble?

*Lack of Emotional Content*

The focus of Brock McElheran's *Conducting Technique* was "making the performers want to do their best."[25] McElheran continued by providing information pertaining to conducting pattern, baton grip, and further physical aspects of conducting.[26] Joseph A. Labuta stated in his *Basic Conducting Technique*, that portraying a sense of command as though "The baton is the symbol of leadership authority for the conductor."[27] No mention of emotional content is provided in reference to shaping an emotional and musical journey during the rehearsal process and final performance. Although a great deal of expression could be shown with the right hand and within the beat pattern, very little time was spent developing the left-hand technique and gestural vocabulary in both McElheran and Labuta's methods.

[25] McElheran, *Conducting Nuances*, 3.
[26] Green, *The Modern Conductor*; or McElheran, *Conducting Nuances*; or Labuta, *Basic Conducting Technique*, 8-138.
[27] Labuta, 7.

In Labuta's *Basic Conducting Technique*, the concept of score study and constructing an interpretation of the work was discussed but only at a basic level. Labuta examined the objective elements of score study with an overarching goal for the conductor to create an aural image of the piece for themselves.[28] This information was vital to the success of a conductor but was quickly directed toward using the aural image to "anticipate problems of conducting" and to "anticipate problems of ensemble and rehearsal."[29] Although predicting difficulties in physical conducting and ensemble rehearsal are important aspects to consider when preparing to rehearse a piece of music, there was no discussion, direction, or information regarding how a conductor discovers emotive content within the score and builds an emotional connection based on their own emotions and experiences.

Donald Hunsberger's *The Art of Conducting* provided, like many other conducting texts, includes a wealth of information about the physical patterns and basic movements that conductors must learn.[30] Within the chapter dedicated to score study, his text supplied a large list of terminology and information concerning the study of objective elements of the score.[31] Hunsberger applied this score knowledge to aspects of the rehearsal environment such as leadership, time management, and post-rehearsal evaluation—all important facets for conductors to consider.[32] Hunsberger briefly discussed interpretation and encouraged readers to think beyond the rehearsal of the music to the performance. He asked, "How do you want your

[28] Labuta, 64.
[29] Ibid, 64-65.
[30] Hunsberger, 9.
[31] Ibid., 51-72.
[32] Ibid., 73-77.

audience to respond to this work? How can you project your concept to the audience?," but there was no formal guidance on how to build an emotional connection to a score and then project those ideas.[33] Hunsberger's book provided an abundance of technical resources—transposition charts, musical examples, terminology lists—however, none of the information taught a conductor how to emotionally connect to the music they were studying and conducting.[34]

According to Hunsberger, "Appropriate conducting gestures grow out of the musical requirements indicated in the score; all you must do is find and identify these requirements and then apply the right set of gestures."[35] There are many objective elements of a score that a conductor must consider when studying a score, and once the available objective elements of the music have been explored, the conductor may begin to make informed decisions about how to build their own personal interpretation of the piece.

Elizabeth Green's *The Modern Conductor* provided a large number of exercises, both described in the text and in video format, that are practical in developing awareness of moving the hands and arms evenly through space and time. In the forward, Mark Gibson wrote: "On the most basic level, the conductor is responsible for communicating information about moment of attack and tempo. These two unglamorous questions, "When do we come in?" and "How fast does this go?" lie at the core of the craft, before any question of interpretation, inspiration, architecture, or emotional depth–in short, art—and be addressed."[36] Creating music

[33] Hunsberger, 53.
[34] Ibid., 54-72.
[35] Ibid., 51.
[36] Green, 5-196.

and the act of conducting is an art form in and of itself. The great French composition teacher Nadia Boulanger stated, "We are often mistaken about art. Art is not emotion. Art is the medium in which emotion is expressed."[37] If art is the vehicle for which emotions are expressed, why would we place craft "before any question of…emotional depth?"[38] Conductors should strive to connect emotionally to the music and improve their craft through the lens of creating art with emotive content. Director of Bands Emeritus at Stetson University, Bobby L. Adams discussed in his book *Music from Skill to Art* that art cannot be created at the highest level without craft, but it is possible to improve the craft through the lens of the music.[39] Must these two ideas remain separate? Parker Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach* and educational activist, employs readers to consider the arduous task teachers face in terms of compartmentalized thinking: "The culture of disconnection that undermines teaching and learning is driven partly by fear. But is it also driven out by Western commitment to thinking in polarities, a thought that elevates disconnection into an intellectual virtue. This way of thinking is embedded in our culture that we rarely escape it, even when we try."[40] Clarity in the process of discovering emotive content in musical scores and then inhabiting those emotions has yet to be seen. The teaching of conducting must be elevated to a holistic approach—teaching the conducting technique through art and discovering the emotive content through study.

Frank Battisti and Robert Garofalo's *Guide to Score Study* supplied readers with a well-organized and detailed approach to studying objective aspects of the

[37] Jordan, *The Musician's Soul*, 30.
[38] Green, xviii.
[39] Adams, *Music:From Skill to Art*, 59.
[40] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 61.

score.[41] Throughout the book, there was mention of emotive content in the score and emotional connection as a conductor but no clarity on how to work toward discovering these aspects of the music. After the initial process of studying objective material in the score, the authors suggest that conductors "continue to develop expressive feelings about the music away from the score as well as with the score" but how could conductors connect with these feelings?[42] What advice or specific exercises could be recommended to conductors to find emotive content in a score and then inhabit those emotions through an artistic score study process? In the section about score interpretation in *Guide to Score Study*, imagination was merely mentioned.[43] How could conductors work to expand their imagination and hone their musical intuition? Overall, the information concerning interpretation of the score was focused on the objective aspects of a score, did not provide direction on seeking emotive content within the music or connecting emotionally to the music.

Michael Haithcock's *The Elements of Expressive Conducting* took a different approach to teaching beginning conductors.[44] Instead of beginning immediately with information regarding physical aspects of conducting (posture, baton grip, patterns), Haithcock discussed his methodology of "developing an efficient and compelling language of non-verbal communication" that was used "to provide clear and compelling musical leadership."[45] Similar to ideas presented in introductory material of other texts, Haithcock had the student explore body movement and awareness,

[41] Battisti, *Guide to Score Study*, 4-7.
[42] Ibid., 23.
[43] Ibid., 55.
[44] Haithcock, 1.
[45] Ibid.

followed by exercises centered on eliciting specific musical sounds and ideas. Throughout the text, Haithcock consistently focused the physical movements back to the concept of sound.[46] His approach works more toward the idea of teaching the technique through the lens of the art. However, a conductor may know exactly *how* they want something to sound and may move beautifully and effectively to elicit the sound while note being emotionally connected to the music the entire time they are conducting. Considering the myriad roles the conductor plays during rehearsal and performance, how can conductors stay in the moment and emotionally connected to the music while managing these various roles and potential distractions? Is it possible to analyze sounds without the communication of emotional content being interrupted?

Frederick Harris' *Conducting With Feeling* begins to look more closely at how feeling plays a role in conducting.[47] He discussed how "it is this feeling derived from the music and communicated to the audience through the fusion of the musicians and the conductor, that is so lasting in our memories" and how "scores should be interpreted on the basis of emotional energy" but did not provide clarity of how conductors did that or begin working towards that. Harris discussed how conducting research typically falls into two categories: "curricula development/content and communication."[48] This was true; however, a majority of the research pertaining to conducting curriculum was focused on teaching gestures.[49] The authors have shown that score study was an important aspect of the conducting

[46] Haithcock, 3.
[47] Harris, *Conducting With Feeling*, 8.
[48] Ibid., 23.
[49] Mitchell, "Score Study Procedures and Processes Among Instrumental Music Teachers and Students of Varying Experience;" or Hamilton, "A Recommended Curriculum for Teaching Score Study in the Undergraduate Instrumental Conducting Class," 8.

curriculum but the information regarding what and how scores should be studied focused on the objective factors and only briefly mentions interpretation. No mention of how to create an emotional connection to the music was provided. Craig V. Hamilton's breakdown of score analysis in his dissertation, "A Recommended Curriculum for Teaching Score Study in the Undergraduate Instrumental Conducting Class," he suggested that conductors "develop a feeling or emotion about the piece" but with no further instruction or suggestion of how to go about doing that.[50] Jeremy Lane studied undergraduate students' approach to score study in relation to expressive conducting.[51] He stated that, "Score study as a process towards expressive music making has been virtually unexplored in music education research." [52] Lane further discussed how students did not appear to transfer knowledge from other areas of study when approaching score study. Score study as a holistic process explores all facets of the music—including the conductor's emotional connection. Studies show, students who received specific instruction about applying knowledge from other subject areas were more successful at communicating their interpretation through physical gesture. If specific instruction in application of knowledge from other subjects that can be done with some aspects of score study, where can emotional connection be drawn from? How can conductors be encouraged to tap into feelings and emotions when learning to conduct a piece of music?

As people choose to pursue music, whether as a career or as a hobby, they experienced an emotional connection to music. The great conductor Bruno Walter

[50] Hamilton, "A Recommended Curriculum for Teaching Score Study in the Undergraduate Instrumental Conducting Class," 78.
[51] Lane, 114.
[52] Ibid.

described music as "dispensable nourishment of the soul."[53] Many musicians reference the indescribable connection to music that they feel, but in the study and rehearsal of music, a majority of their focus is placed on the technical aspects of creating music. Bobby L. Adams discussed the two "lanes" of music in respect to technique and musicality and believed that technique should be taught through the lens of music.[54] Although in his book he referenced large ensemble rehearsals, why is the same concept not applied to how conducting is taught? The first step in creating more emotionally connected conductors is teaching the craft through the lens of creating art. In addition to this restructuring of how conducting is taught, conductors must be provided tools to learn how to build an emotional connection to the music they are conducting. Although an abstract concept, there are many successful conductors who have achieved this and can provide the conducting world with guidance, advice, and exercises to act as tools to begin conductors on the journey of connecting emotionally with the music they are conducting. There is no substitute for practice over time, life experiences, or conducting ensembles, but if conductors can be encouraged to find emotional connection with the musical score from the beginning of their career, there is higher potential for more meaningful and impactful connection earlier in their development. This study aims to collect information and advice from top-tier conductors who have understood and developed the personal emotional connection to a musical score through study and provide that information, as well as promising pedagogical exercises to assist conductors on the journey to becoming more emotionally connected to the music they are conducting. More

[53] Walter, 10.
[54] Adams, 70.

emotionally connected music-making from the conductor will provide a more meaningful and impactful experience for both the ensemble musicians and the members of the audience.

# Chapter 3

## Introduction of the Conductors

The four interviewees submitted unpublished biographical information for the use of this document. The following information provides a brief career overview of each conductor selected for this study.

### *Gary Green*

Gary D. Green serves as Emeritus Professor of Music and Director of Bands at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida. Prior to his appointment at University of Miami, Professor Green held the position of Director of Bands for ten years at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut. Throughout his time at UC, Professor Green lead commissioning and recording projects of new pieces for wind ensemble and continued projects of this nature during his twenty-two year tenure at the University of Miami. His contributions to the growth and development of wind band repertoire are tremendous and include large-scale works such as David Maslanka's *Symphony No. 3* (1991/2007) and Michael Colgrass' *Urban Requiem* (1995). Professor Green has been involved in commissions and consortia from composers such as Mason Bates, Steven Bryant, Steve Danyew, Michael Daugherty, Paul Dooley, Kenneth Fuchs, David Gillingham, John Harbison, David Maslanka, William Penn, Joel Puckett, Thomas Sleeper, James Stephenson, James Syler, Christopher Theofanidis, Frank Ticheli, and Eric Whitacre.

During his tenure at the University of Miami, Professor Green was the conductor of the Frost Wind Ensemble, taught graduate conducting students in the wind and percussion areas, as well as served as Chairman of Instrumental performance for eighteen years. In 2002, he was awarded the Phillip Frost Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship, and in 2007 he was inducted into the Bands of America Hall of fame. Professor Green was awarded the Distinguished Service to Music Award for his contributions to the field of conducting by Kappa Kappa Psi, National Honorary Band Fraternity.

Professor Green is an active member of numerous professional organizations that serve to further the growth of music education, as well as specifically the wind band world. He holds memberships with the American Bandmasters Association, the College Band Director's National Association, the National Association for Music Education, the Florida Bandmasters Association, and the Florida Music Educators Association.

In addition to his many former students who hold collegiate band director positions around the United States, Professor Green has impacted students of all levels by serving as a guest conductor and clinician in all fifty states, with the exception of Alaska. His musical reach extends outside of the United States to Taipei, Taiwan where he conducted the Republic of China Army Band and the Taiwan National Wind Ensemble in 2005 as a part of the International Band Association Festival. Green has conducted in numerous other countries, such as Austria, Germany, Japan, and England.

***Craig Kirchhoff***

Craig Kirchhoff is Professor Emeritus of Conducting and Director of University Bands at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Prior to his appointment at the University of Minnesota, Professor Kirchhoff held the position of Director of Bands at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio for fourteen years, as Director of Bands at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington for two years, and as Associate Director of Bands at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for one year.

Throughout his career, Professor Kirchhoff has commissioned and worked with many composers in an effort to expand the wind band repertoire. Composers, such as Dominick Argento, Warren Benson, William Bolcom, Henry Brant, Susan Botti, Elliott Carter, Michael Colgrass, John Corigliano, Michael Daugherty, Karel Husa, Libby Larsen, George Perle, Vincent Persichetti, Carter Pann, Stephen Paulus, Kevin Puts, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Gunther Schuller, Joseph Schwantner, Elliott Schwartz, James Stephenson, Steven Stucky, Frank Ticheli, Dana Wilson, Chen Yi, have collaborated with Professor Kirchhoff.

During Kirchhoff's 22-year tenure at the University of Minnesota, he conducted the University Wind Ensemble, guest conducted the University Opera program, lead the graduate program in Wind Ensemble Conducting, and directed all facets of the University of Minnesota band program. He has been the recipient of many awards and honors throughout his career, including The Ohio State University Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award and The Ohio State University School of Music Distinguished Teaching Award. Kirchhoff has served as an advisor for several

organizations including the BandQuest Series published by The American Composers Forum, SmartMusic by MakeMusic Corporation, and the Windependence Wind Band Series published by Boosey & Hawkes.

Professor Kirchhoff is a member of the American Bandmasters Association, the National Band Association, the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, the Music Educators National Conference, a past president of the College Band Directors National Association, and the founding editor and principal advisor of the *College Band Directors National Association Journal*.[55] These professional organizations advocate for the development of music education and the wind band genre. Through these organizations and events such as The Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, Professor Kirchhoff has been presented with a number of awards and honors including the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic Medal of Honor in 2018, the College Band Directors National Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019, and the Phi Beta Mu Bandmaster of the Year Award in 2019.

In high demand and named a Yamaha Master Educator, Professor Kirchhoff has traveled throughout the United States and around the world to locations such as Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Taiwan, Europe, and Scandinavia to serve as a guest conductor, clinician, and lecturer. He worked with the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra during Frederick Fennell's tenure as Music Director and has taken part in recordings with the group on the Kosei Publishing label.

[55] *College Band Directors National Association Journal*, Columbus, Ohio: The Association, 1984.

***Mallory Thompson***

Mallory Thompson is currently serving as the Director of Bands, professor of music, coordinator of the conducting program, and holds the title of the John W. Beattie Chair of Music at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is the third person in the history of Northwestern University to hold the title of Director of Bands and in 2003 she was named a Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence. In addition to her role as Director of Bands, Dr. Thompson has served as the Artistic Director of the Northshore Concert Band beginning in 2003 and prior to this appointment served as the Principal Guest Conductor beginning in 2000.

As Director of Bands, Dr. Thompson conducts the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting, and oversees all aspects of the band program. Throughout her career, Dr. Thompson has been involved in commissioning many new works for wind bands and has released five albums with the Northwestern University Symphonic Wind Ensemble on the Summit Records label.

In addition to her responsibilities with Northwestern University and the Northshore Concert Band, Thompson serves as a guest conductor, clinician, and lecturer throughout the United States and Canada. The College Band Directors National Association regional and national conventions, the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, the Interlochen Arts Academy, various state music conventions, and the Aspen Music Festival have all hosted Dr. Thompson as a clinician or guest conductor. She has served as a guest conductor with professional ensembles such as the United States Air Force Band, the United States Army Band

"Pershing's Own," the United States Army Field Band, the United States Coast Guard Band, the United States Navy Band, the West Point Band, the Dallas Wind Symphony, Symphony Silicon Valley, the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Monarch Brass Ensemble, and Banda Sinfônica in Sao Pãulo, Brazil.

Dr. Thompson supports the advancement of the wind band world and music education through her affiliations with Pi Kappa Lambda, the College Band Directors National Association, and the American Bandmasters Association. She has taught numerous students throughout her time at Northwestern University, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, who are now members of the music profession around the country.

***Alfred Watkins***

Alfred Watkins served as Director of Bands at Lassiter High School in Marietta, Georgia for 32 years prior to his retirement from public school teaching. Prior to his time at Lassiter, Mr. Watkins served as Director of Bands at Murphy High School in the Atlanta Public School System in Atlanta, Georgia for six years. From a mere 78-member band program, Watkins developed both the size and performance ability of the Lassiter Band program. At the time of his retirement, the band program housed four symphonic bands, the 250-member Trojan Marching Band, two jazz bands, and many chamber ensembles.

Throughout his career, Mr. Watkins has been involved in numerous commissioning projects; is the Co-Founder, Musical Director, and Conductor of the Cobb Wind Symphony founded in 1999; is a founding member and Chairman of the

Board of Directors of the Minority Band Directors National Association; and has been recognized nationally on many occasions for his contributions to the development, growth, and advocacy of music education and wind bands. His Lassiter High School ensembles were recognized on the national level earning awards such as the Sudler Flag of Honor presented by the John Philip Sousa Foundation in 1988, and the Marching Trojan Band earning the title of National Champion in 1998 and 2002 at the Bands of America (BOA) Grand National Championships. Watkins' bands were invited to perform at concert ensemble events in the country including multiple appearances at the Georgia Music Educators Association Convention, the National Band Association Biennial Conference, the Bands of America National Concert Band Festival, the Black Music Caucus Convention, the Atlanta International Band and Orchestra Clinic, the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, as well as various state conventions around the country.

Watkins' professional affiliations include National Band Association, Minority Band Directors National Association, Music Educators National Conference, Georgia Music Educators Association, American School Band Directors Association, the NAACP, Kappa Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, and Phi Beta Mu National School Bandmaster Fraternity. His contributions to music education have been recognized as he has received awards such as the Certificate of Excellence from the National Band Association, the Sudler Order of Merit from the John Philip Sousa Foundation, the Edwin Franko Goldman Award from the American School Band Directors Association, and induction into the Hall of Fame for organizations such as American Bandmasters Association, Bands of America, Phi Beta Mu,

Georgia Bandmasters Association, and Florida A&M University. Although retired from public school teaching, Mr. Watkins maintains an active schedule as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer around the United States.

## Collected Responses Organized by Question

Each of the four conductors selected for this study participated in a one-on-one semi-structured interview. According to William Adams, "the semi-structured interview (SSI) employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up *why* or *how* questions."[56] Professor Craig Kirchhoff was interviewed in-person at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma on June 14, 2021; Dr. Mallory Thompson was interviewed via Zoom video conferencing on June 20, 2021; Mr. Alfred Watkins was interviewed in-person at his home in Kennesaw, Georgia on June 26, 2021; and Professor Gary Green was interviewed via Zoom video conferencing on July 13, 2021. Determination of whether a candidate was interviewed in-person versus Zoom video conferencing was based solely on availability and travel schedule of each conductor.

The interview questions were organized into three main categories: Personal Experience, Sharing Emotion with the Ensemble and Audience, and Teaching and Mentoring Conductors. The following is a summarization of the responses each interviewee provided for each question. Some responses may not answer the question directly, but the information may contribute to the general topic, answer a later

[56] William C. Adams, "Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews," in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. (Hoboken: NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 492.

question, and/or yield insight into the interviewee's thought process. The responses are listed alphabetically by last name of the conductor for each question that they answered.

### *Personal Experience*

*Question 1: Walk me through your overall score study process from opening the score for the first time to conducting in rehearsal for the first time.*

**Professor Gary Green** felt that the process of score study differed depending on the piece—if the piece was an established part of the repertoire versus preparing a piece for a premiere performance. When working with a composer on the premiere of a piece of music, the conductor may begin the score study process with only a portion of the score and the score may change throughout the process of preparing the piece for performance. Although a changing score presents a challenge in terms of study, the conductor is typically able to have direct contact with the composer. Professor Green commented that when the composer was available to assist in the score study and rehearsal process "that kind of trumps everything" in terms of how to interpret the musical ideas. Though working directly with the composer in the preparation of a new piece was an exciting endeavor, Professor Green noted the risk involved in committing to a premiere of a work. He discussed how he had to be "either in love with that particular piece or that particular composer" because time was limited. He questioned why a conductor would invest such a great deal of time and energy learning a piece that they were not passionate about conducting. Professor Green indicated that some form of score study was necessary for conductors to commit to

programming a piece of music–there must be a general awareness of the piece to make that decision–but the process of repertoire selection is out of the scope this document. Score study may aid in repertoire selection, but the focus of this research is to discover emotive content in the score in preparation for rehearsals and performance–as though the piece were already selected as a part of a concert program.

Professor Green felt it was imperative whether communication between a living composer and conductor could be established or if the composer were deceased, that it was the responsibility of the conductor to "ingest as much information as possible" about the composer. If Professor Green selected music written by a composer who was no longer living, he focused his study on reading about the composer and seeking as much information as possible to understand the composer's ideas, what kind of person they were, and their attitude toward life. In addition to reading about the composer, conductors should seek access to people who knew them–people who knew the composer personally or worked with them–so that the conductor was building "a living history of people." Professor Green believed that composers have "a spirituality about them that transcends everyone else" and this allowed them "to speak in poetic terms that others cannot do." A conductor was going to "reorganize and reinvent" the work of the composer, and therefore it was important to understand the composer as an artist and person—"Every second line G in treble clef is a second line G. And that's all it is. [It] has no meaning beyond that unless you come to grips with why the person chose that particular note and in that particular place. So, before I would start anything, I would want to know as much history, both

actual and spiritual, as I could possibly find out before I began." Understanding the composer in a comprehensive way provided a path to discovering more in-depth emotive content within the score.

Professor Green stated, "If music doesn't exist to speak to another human being in a way that somehow changes them, or affects them, then I don't understand why music exists at all." He believed strongly that music was an art, but "technique trumps art." He explained that there cannot be art without the presence of technique in this way:

> Art stands on the shoulders of technique. If you don't have good technique, you can't have good art. It's impossible. It is impossible. Without it, the idea of perfection is one that's human, and not for us to discuss in terms of possibility. There are very few perfect things in our lives. But I can think of a few things that are perfect, but those are really beyond the scope. So, the idea "I have to be perfect in order to this" is frailty of humans, [of the] human mind. But to try and attain that is essential. You have to try. And so that's technique. It's either in tune or it's out of tune. So, how far out of tune can it be and be okay? You have to answer that question, not me. But I need to have good technique, so that I can define what I believe is art.

Professor Green proceeded to discuss how his score study process was also "an investigation of tempo, and structure, form." He warned conductors that it was easy to "get hung up on these things…. You lose track of where you are, relative to what you're trying to do. You can get so close to the trees that you can't any longer see the forest." Conductors must study the objective details of a piece of music but remember to place those details in the context of the piece as a whole and within the message the composer was attempting to convey through those details.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** approached score study in a three-part process that did not "happen necessarily in any order; they could be happening simultaneously." Professor Kirchhoff stated that "really knowing and understanding

the composer" was a prerequisite to studying the score itself. He sought answers to questions such as, "Was there a relationship with the composer and another person that created this work? What was their emotional involvement in that? What was the kind of relationship?" The answers to these questions guided him to explore the inspiration behind the work. Once this knowledge was acquired, the "intellectual understanding" of the score may begin. He believed this portion of score study was most familiar to conductors because it was the opportunity to gather information and to discover "the real DNA of the piece. How does the piece work? How is it constructed?"

The second major part of Professor Kirchhoff's score study process was the "emotional understanding of the score." He explained that as a younger conductor he ignored this part of the process and believed that if the ensemble's technical skill was in place—intonation, alignment, etc.—"that the emotional picture would immediately come to the fore." Professor Kirchhoff discussed that when he studied scores that were less overtly programmatic (e.g., Edgard Varese's *Octandre*), he had to use his imagination "to create that emotional connection for me, not so much for the players, but for me so that I can have a point of view"—the conductor's interpretation of the music.[57]

According to Professor Kirchhoff, building a personal viewpoint of the music was necessary because the conductor revealed their view of the music to the ensemble throughout the rehearsal process. This viewpoint must be something that the players could understand because in rehearsals the players were constantly looking to

[57] Edgard Varese, *Octandre*, ed. Chou Wen-Chung (Milan, Italy: Casa Ricordi, 2000).

experience something similar to “that seminal moment where music changed for them.” The players seek guidance from the podium that provides special insight into the music so that they may have a stronger emotional understanding of the music.

The third part of Professor Kirchhoff’s process involved internalizing the score. He believed that when the music resides in us “it responds or interacts with all of our life…all the things that we’ve experienced…it becomes very, very powerful.” He discussed his reasoning for not utilizing piano as a part of his score study process, as many conductors advocate playing instrumental parts of the score on piano regularly during their study. Professor Kirchhoff admitted part of his reasoning for not using piano was that he felt his piano playing skills were lacking. He also referenced famed conductor Georg Solti, most well-known in the United States for serving as the music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra 1969-1991, as a conductor who “warns against using the piano to score study because he felt that the palate of the piano is, I would use the word monolithic.”[58]

In the score study process Professor Kirchhoff made decisions about what he believed the “emotional environment” of the music was. Based on his knowledge of the composer and through his three-part process, he attempted to decipher the message the composer was trying to “impart on the audience” and selected words to help define that for himself as the conductor. Professor Kirchhoff felt that understanding the emotional projection of the music was vital and used imagination to create a narrative within the music, not as much for the ensemble, but to guide his thinking and conducting. He discovered when his graduate conducting students were

[58] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Sir Georg Solti," In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 17, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Georg-Solti.

asked to define the emotional projection of a specific moment in the score, that they struggled with this task. He felt, “There’s nothing really in our training that prepares us for that. And I think that’s what it’s all about.”

Professor Kirchhoff defined internalization as being able to hear the music in its entirety in his mind and that this process required a great deal of “time on task” to accomplish it. Part of the internalization process involved using what he called the “timbre muscle in your brain.” This figurative muscle was the individual person’s concept of sound. Professor Kirchhoff described how a guest conductor could conduct his ensemble without rehearsal, and it would automatically sound different compared to when he was conducting his ensemble. This was due to each person having a unique concept of timbre. He believed that the internalization process was imperative to score study so that the conductor was able to hear the music vividly in their mind and have no doubt about how they want the music to sound.

Professor Kirchhoff continued to discuss internalization by describing how he could study music in any location when the music resides inside of him so vividly. When he studied music internally, whether on a walk with his wife, sitting in a faculty meeting or alone in his office, he found that if his internal image was strong, the music “can’t help but get out.” Based on the location of his internal study, if he were limited physically and the music must find a way out of him, “the only way you can externalize the music if through the breath.” He defined the breath as, “the key to everything” and that it was a person’s “connection to the universe.”

Professor Kirchhoff believed that if conductors had a strong image of the music in their mind, “you rehearse to remove the distractions to what you believe is

the essence of the music." In speaking with professional instrumental players, he found that many of them feel that they experience the "greatest emotional connection to the music" in the first reading of the piece. He believed that in many instances when the rehearsal process begins, both performers and conductor focus their energies on striving for technical perfection and "ultimately that's a complex thing that drives that connection away." To avoid this move toward a technique-focused rehearsal, Professor Kirchhoff recommended that rehearsals "continually maintain the focus on the emotional connection and the meaning of the music" by "removing distractions," such as poor intonation or rhythmic inaccuracy. He was firm in his conviction that the conductor was not rehearsing the ensemble with the goal of perfection, but with the goal of removing distractions from what the music *should,* in the mind and ear of the conductor, sound like. Professor Kirchhoff discussed how his conducting throughout rehearsal was "continually shifting" to aid the ensemble in adjusting their playing to his aural image of the piece. He stated that, "conducting is not really a movement art, it's a listening art" because it is a "stimulus response. You hear the stimulus of the group playing, and you react to that." The conductor's response was the change in their conducting to drive the ensemble back toward the conductor's vision.

Professor Kirchhoff briefly discussed the importance of programming music for an ensemble in relation to how it impacts the emotional connection to the music. If the music were too technically challenging for the ensemble, the rehearsals would be "consumed with repairing technique" and "you can't be emotionally connected to the music if everyone is just trying to survive." He believed there was an "epidemic"

of over-programming in our country, but, when he selects music, he preferred to challenge an ensemble musically rather than technically. When programming, he has found that some pieces were completely "devoid of deep meaning," but that there were varying levels of emotional depth to different pieces. He discussed how not all music would be a "*Music for Prague [1968]*, or something as deep as that," but that there needs to be "something there that you [the conductor] can grab onto."[59] As someone involved in the publishing industry, he felt there were pieces being published that were "not irrelevant, but meaningless" in terms of containing emotional meaning.

To help himself connect emotionally to the music, Professor Kirchhoff created a story for the piece of music in his mind. He utilized this story to aid in connecting to experiences and emotions that he may not have experienced personally. For example, he explained how as a father he cannot imagine losing his child but questioned if his lack of personal experience should prevent him from conducting a piece that was inspired by the loss of a child. When the music presents him with situations and emotions that he has not experienced personally, he believed he had to have "tremendous empathy," and he utilized his imagination to connect with those emotions.

The story that Professor Kirchhoff created in his mind for the music was not typically shared with the ensemble–he considered this a tool for himself only. He stated that, "in no way would I expect them [the players] to buy into my story because the whole goal is for them to create their own images." In rehearsal he strove to be

[59] Karel Husa, *Music for Prague 1968*, (New York Associated Music Publishers, Inc, 1968).

"as transparent as I can be with my own feelings" because this provided the ensemble permission to create their own images that aid in connecting them to the music emotionally. Professor Kirchhoff believed that he must be vulnerable to help the ensemble members feel more comfortable and safe so that they would risk being vulnerable in their playing. He defined vulnerability as a "conduit to one's deeper emotions," rather than an emotion itself. Professor Kirchhoff felt that becoming more vulnerable happens over time and a person must truly accept themselves as a person.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** stated that, "even before opening a score, I try to have a context in my mind in which the piece lives." Dr. Thompson believed that a conductor must learn about the composer and their life, in addition to the timeframe in which the piece was written, prior to studying the actual music. Timeframe provided historical context globally, as well as in reference to the life and career of the composer. Acquiring historical information prior to studying the music allowed Dr. Thompson to approach the music with a "set of expectations." When beginning the score study process, she utilized this set of expectations to begin comparing the specific piece of music to all of her prior knowledge. Dr. Thompson asked many questions throughout the beginning of her study to draw "conclusions and comparisons" about the music: "What does it remind me of? What am I expecting it to be? How does it agree with those expectations? How does it deny those expectations? What are some surprises?"

After preliminary research, Dr. Thompson discussed how her first look at the score was typically "big picture." She reviewed the entire piece and took time to "generally notice" things—not marking the music yet but taking note of what she was

seeing on the page. Her approach to study of the objective elements of the musical score fit into the scheme of macro-micro-macro. Once she has looked at the big picture, she sought out large "structural points—significant changes in texture, obvious melodic sections, dramatic orchestration changes, key changes, changes in rhythmic activity." Continuing by observing information in the score on a large scale, Dr. Thompson would mark "an X with a stem—an X like a note head with a stem" to indicate a moment in the music where she was curious about the harmony. She returned to her markings at a later time to analyze the individual harmonies. Dr. Thompson enjoys melodies—"I'll sing the melodies. I'll play the melodies at the piano"—and as she learned the melodies, she would make note of important intervals that she observed.

Dr. Thompson's goal in studying was "to get as quickly as I can to what it sounds like." She was constantly questioning the music to better understand what the piece sounds like: "What are the expressive elements that carry the piece forward? Is it melody? Is it harmony? Is it rhythm? Is it atmosphere—as it might be created by orchestration or special colors? How does it go? What makes it tick?" Through this process, her focus narrows and she begins to observe and ask questions to discover more detailed information—the micro portion of her study: "What's happening here? This is providing a different sort of energy. How did we get here? How are getting out of it? Harmonically, what do these non-chord tones provide? Are they providing dissonance? Or are they providing kind of like an elastic band of flexibility and expression?" These questions help her discover the "emotional carrier, the expressive carrier" of the music and understand how "those elements change over the course of a

piece." Dr. Thompson believed the harmonic and phrasal analysis of a piece were important pieces of the puzzle, but the information acquired from those objective aspects of the music were "tools that are being used to put forth the most important elements of the music, which is how it goes, what does it say, and how is it being expressive?"

Dr. Thompson described how over time she has "become a lot more patient with building my relationship with the piece and letting the process flow in an organic way, as opposed to just trying to get to the answers or trying to get to labels that will enable me to explain the piece." She aims to have a visceral experience with the music rather than abandoning her study with solely understanding the information presented on the pages of the score. She discussed how she wants to sing, feel, smell, taste, and visualize the score. Through these experiences, she was reminded of other pieces of music and places she has visited as she was "intuitively sort of seeing what I remember both in my mind, in my ear, and in my body." Dr. Thompson believed that "if it lives in my experience, it's fair game." Her goal throughout her score study process was to become "attached in my mind and in my body to how I want it [the music] to feel and how I want it to flow."

Dr. Thompson claimed that during her score study process "I stubbornly resist making decisions about how I'm going to move until the last possible moment." She may wait until "the day before the first rehearsal" to determine how she plans to conduct the music. She explains:

> I think I'm just incredibly mindful about not putting my hands in front of the music that I'm making. And by that, I mean we, as conductors, can miss really important things if we start to move too soon. Because then our interpretation will be limited by the way that our arms are comfortable moving. I really want

> to get attached in my mind and in my body to how I want it to feel and I how I want it to flow. So that's the thing that motivates the way that I move my arms.

She felt that most young conductors move too quickly away from studying the music to contemplating how their arms would move. She admits that earlier in her career she was guilty of this practice. Dr. Thompson believed that younger conductors want to solidify how they plan to move their arms with the goal of alleviating their own anxieties about conducting the music. Presently, she prefers to "sit with it [the score] as long as possible" prior to considering her gestures and finds it "really exciting" when she does not have a gesture in mind for a specific moment in the music. Thompson wished that younger conductors would view the idea of not having a gesture or a gesture not producing the desired result in rehearsal, as a gift rather than a negative. If young conductors could shift their mindset about ineffective gesture to a positive place, "you've got the makings of a really great growth process."

Dr. Thompson was aware prior to the first rehearsal if she had not thought of a gesture for a point in the music, even though she did not conduct through the score prior to rehearsal. When she was "audiating…and feeling the energy of the piece" in her study, if she encountered a moment in the music that felt incongruous, she spent time seeking out how she wanted to hear and feel that music in her mind and body. There are certain musical moments where she considers gesture more carefully. She takes special care when the ensemble is "entering sound and entering silence." Dr. Thompson is consistently "mindful" of those moments because she believes "you're establishing an atmosphere and being in touch with that can either set something up for success, or you can just be chasing after it, trying to reclaim it."

Prior to opening a score, **Mr. Alfred Watkins** ensured he knows information about the composer, and, if the work were not a new commission, has obtained some general knowledge about the piece of music. He investigated the composer's background—where and when they lived, what stage of their career they were in when the piece was written, what was happening in the composer's life before and during the time the piece was composed, and what was happening historically at the time the piece was written. The answers to these questions provide insight into the composer's decision making throughout the work and help Mr. Watkins make interpretive decisions as he score studies. He felt strongly that taking the time to understand the composer and then to "become the embodiment of whatever the work is" when studying, allows him to have the flexibility to study and perform any composer—he was not limited to a select set of composers that he was comfortable performing.

When initially opening the score, Mr. Watkins typically sought out what he believed to be large moments in the music and observed "how the composer is leading me through and how long those moments last." To assist him in discovering these large moments, he made note of aspects such as orchestration, large dynamic shifts, or "repeated material either melodically or rhythmically." At this point in his process, he was not singing the music, but solely observing and becoming acquainted with the score. The second time he looked through the score, he was seeking more specific organizational information about the music by making note of "how the composer shaped the earliest part of the piece."

> Oftentimes, just like anything else, just like a book or a movie or any other large production, it [the music] will start off in a place of thought–with an

> initial thought that is going to be a germ for the rest of the piece–whether it's a rhythmic motif, or whether it's a harmonic palate…or most often it's melodic material.

Mr. Watkins discussed how this information in combination with knowledge of the composer's background, leads him to have a better understanding of how the composer was developing the music.

To aid in his study process, Mr. Watkins then sought out as many different audio recordings of the piece that he could attain. He utilized these recordings to give himself a general understanding, a "*Reader's Digest* version" as he described it, of the ideas presented, the large-scale form, and how the piece sounds. He discussed how early in his career he would listen to recordings of conductors he respected, such as Frederick Fennell, founder of the Eastman Wind Ensemble, and Harry Begian, long time Director of Bands at the University of Illinois; and attempted to copy their interpretations with his own ensemble. He equated utilizing the interpretation of master conductors as the same approach some applied instrumental teachers use when teaching lessons. Students learn how to interpret by initially copying the interpretations of their teachers in their playing, and then using those examples and experiences to form their own opinions later in their careers. Mr. Watkins believed "studying from masters will be a good reference point," and then the conductor uses those experiences as tools to begin forming their own interpretations.

Mr. Watkins felt it was important to listen to recordings because he had to remind himself that music was "an aural art form" and it was easy to become "paralyzed by looking at the score" and "shut your other part of the brain off, which is the artistic part." He spends about half of a day listening to recordings of the work,

and then the next day or two ruminating over what he had listened to. At this point in the process, if Mr. Watkins felt as though he did not understand or connect with a piece of music, he would make the decision not to perform it at that time. He discussed Karel Husa's *Music for Prague 1968* as an example of a piece he felt he did not understand until one of his parents died.[60] Once he had felt "complete and total despair," he believed he understood more clearly Husa's emotional intent in *Music for Prague 1968*.[61] At the conclusion of this portion of his study process, Mr. Watkins did not return to recordings of the work, with the exception of investigating tempo decisions made by conductors of note.

After Mr. Watkins had spent time reflecting on the piece, he would return to the score to begin studying the objective elements of the music and marking his score. His approach to marking his score was highly methodical. He believed form and structure of a piece were exceptionally important. Mr. Watkins worked to define form and structure as quickly as possible because if he felt he were able to understand and follow the form, then the performers would be able to; and, in turn, the audience would be able to understand and follow the piece. He stated, "If you can't convince us, as interpreters, or the performers that play single-line instruments that "This is worthy of more study," then the audience was done. Then you've lost the whole essence of what we're trying to do in terms of communication through performance." When studying form and structure, Mr. Watkins believed that "It's not going to go too far away from what we've already gotten, because we all studied the same material." All of the musicians involved in the process of creating and recreating a

[60] Husa.
[61] Ibid.

piece of music—composer, conductor, performers—have generally studied "the same material" in terms of musical forms utilized throughout music history.

Following his study of form, Mr. Watkins identified and marked melodic material in a specific color throughout the entire score, and then returned to the beginning of the score to study the harmonic language of the piece. Mr. Watkins strove to "digest a piece as the composer has intended first" and believed that his job as "an interpreter is to recreate the magic the composer intended." After spending serval weeks engaged in understanding aspects such as "voicing, the colors, the form, treatment of melodies, treatment of rhythms, sequences," Mr. Watkins felt he had "ownership" of the piece. At this time, he would "sleep on it for three or four days" prior to raising interpretive questions about the music such as "how high the high point should be, or how soft and gentle the soft moments should be" so that he may begin to interpret what he believed the composer was attempting to communicate to the audience. Concurrently, Mr. Watkins would contact the composer, or a person who knew the composer, to seek out answers to his interpretive questions as the final phase of his study process.

*Question 2: In your score preparation, what role does emotional inference play in the process? How do you look for and find meaning in a composition and then translate those emotions into gesture?*

**Professor Gary Green** believed when studying music "the emotional connection to something like that is greater than yourself." He discussed that studying a new piece and preparing for the premiere of a work was a risk for the conductor.

After investing a great deal of time and energy in studying a work, the conductor was vulnerable because it was entirely possible to discover that a deep connection to the piece was difficult or impossible to form. But if a connection was formed, Professor Green felt that "You totally give up. You become servant. Your idea is not you, you are a servant to that music. And it's your job to recreate, not create their vision."

Professor Green considered physical gesture to be important, "but the physical gesture that shows something that is without direct connection to the heart, or to the part of your being that causes you to connect with this music, is a waste of time and an undesirable trait." He stated that "a gesture can be beautiful without meaning, but if the music has meaning to you, then your gesture will follow." Professor Green felt strongly that although it was important to study successful conductors, each conductor must find their own unique style of conducting that represents them as a person and was inspired by the music. Professor Green stated firmly that:

> What matters is that your musicians that you work with will know whether you connect or not [to the music]. They'll know whether your gesture is fake or not. They'll know that. There's some sort of intangible synapse of energy that happens from the instant that you stand on the podium and begin your gesture until sound comes out. And it's a true desire to have a meaningful relationship with the music and the people with which you are going to produce that. So that deep-seated feeling that you have inside of you will cause your gesture to be what it is. And they work together. One is not independent of the other. It's okay to study videos and things, films of conductors. It's okay to like something that somebody else does and to try to imitate that. But it is not okay to try to be someone else. That is not okay. It's the worst thing you could possibly do. So, the gesture is a result of all the things we talked about before [in the score study process].

Professor Green discussed how musicians were "beyond critical," particularly when observing conductors. Many musicians feel the need to be "impressed" when viewing

a rehearsal or performance of a conductor, but how the conductor looks was secondary to how well they connect to the music and the musicians.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** believed his internalization process was a "discovery process" in which he simultaneously develops his emotional understanding of the music. When he strove to internalize the music, "it's not an intellectual process. It's a kinesthetic process" through which the music became so vivid in his mind and body that he felt "it can't help but get out." Professor Kirchhoff discussed how the internalization process and the concurrent process of building emotional connection to the music were not "cut and dry processes." He explained when people hold an important musical experience in their memory, they typically did not remember what the music sounded like in that moment, "but the feeling of that is what is so powerful in the memory." He stated that "We [conductors] give our players the permission to feel because they see us being vulnerable and open, and that translates to the audience who then create their own images. Then, that's the cathartic moment. That's why people go to the concert hall, rather than listen to a CD."

Professor Kirchhoff paraphrased Northwestern University's famed theatre professor emeritus Bud Beyer's idea that "to move people emotionally, you have to move them physically. There has to be some physical response to a stimulus" and that, Professor Kirchhoff believed, was when there was a strong emotional connection. He discussed world famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma's thoughts on music and emotion, paraphrasing a statement Ma made in a YouTube video: "Music is a mode of transportation because it moves people from one place to another emotional place to another emotional place." Professor Kirchhoff described how if conductors were

only rehearsing their ensemble for technical perfection, then the music was "dead on arrival" and the entire experience lacked the "transcendental, transformational sense about it" that he believed was vital to the music-making process.

In discussion with instrumentalists in the Minnesota Orchestra, Professor Kirchhoff found that the players in the ensemble felt more connected to the music when the "intensity of these rehearsals was so palpable" it felt "like a life and death experience with the music" due to the intensity of the conductor that "manifested itself physically." He believed that the players "loved it because it wasn't ordinary. It was extraordinary." To aid in bringing passion and intensity to rehearsals, Professor Kirchhoff holds composer Warren Benson's words in his mind: "There are no rehearsals. There are only concerts" and believed that band directors of all levels should keep in mind that "we give concerts because we rehearse. Professional orchestras rehearse because they have to give concerts."

Professor Kirchhoff conceded that he did not achieve this level of intensity and emotional connection in every rehearsal. There were times that the focus of the rehearsal must be the technique, but this should not be all the time. To aid the rehearsal process he believed that conductors should utilize the word "we" when providing feedback to the ensemble. Addressing the group as a member of the group allows the rehearsal to feel like a collaborative environment for the members of the ensemble.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** discussed how the "emotional and cognitive" were not two "separate lanes," but they coexist. She stated that "the emotional is not a substitute for the cognitive," and that when studying the score both aspects were "part

of the conversation that you have in allowing the piece to speak to you." She does not specifically seek out emotional content in the music when she is studying a score. She explained:

> I'm not trying to superimpose something that isn't there. I think it's simple. I think simplest is best. And it [the music] just talks to me. I ask questions and I hear it. And things come up. My feelings aren't more important than the composer's feelings, certainly. I'm trying to grasp it in the same way as if someone is speaking to me. I don't know how they feel, I can only interpret what they're saying through my own experience. But I'm trying to understand what they mean, even though I don't know what it is to be them. I can't help but view what they're telling me through the lens of my own experience. I'm going to be part of that interpretation. And I think it's a very similar thing. I think that music-making is a relationship with a piece.

In addition to the relationship she builds with the piece throughout her study, the ensemble must be a part of the emotional relationship with the music. When the conductor begins expanding their relationship with the piece by sharing it with the ensemble in rehearsal, she believes that "if there's too much of you [the conductor], there's not enough room for the players to put themselves into it…. There has to be a place for them to contribute something that's going to make the piece magical."

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed that conductors must know the subtleties of the music "so that their face and their bodies, not just their arms, can tell that message." He preferred to observe orchestral conductors because he felt they were not teaching a "range of thoughts." The players in professional orchestras have the depth of experience on their instrument and in life that would allow them to layer their emotions into their playing. He discussed how some professional musicians prefer that the conductor only dictate the objective changes and elements of the music such as "louder, softer, shorter, or longer" because as a senior member of the ensemble, they may know the music more intimately than the conductor.

Mr. Watkins discussed the differences in professional musicians and those in grade school and collegiate-level ensembles by the fact that "our students are in the process of discovering that [life], and for us to think that we can gesture them through life—we can't." For example, when the music required the conductor and members of the ensemble to grapple with the emotions associated with death, young students may struggle more with connecting emotionally to this idea because they may not have experienced it in their life. Mr. Watkins went on further to say that students may have experienced something as profound as death, but, because of their lack of maturity, the students may process and approach their understanding of death differently than older musicians. He provided the example of when a young child loses their grandmother, they may associate her with being a "great baker," but when the child realized they would never taste their grandmother's cookies again, they begin to feel sadness and loss. Mr. Watkins believed, "We can coach our ensembles through what they should think based on their experiences. We assume that the younger they are, the less experiences they have, or that they haven't been magnified, but they're there [the experiences]." Mr. Watkins suggested that conductors aid younger ensembles in understanding the emotional content of a piece with more than gesture because the players may not have the life experience and musical knowledge yet to grasp it. He believed conductors must provide more specific instruction about how to interpret the music so that young players experience those changes in the music and relate them to the changing emotional landscape of the music.

To discover emotional content in the score, Mr. Watkins believed that first the conductor know where the composer was in their life and then be able to "put your

experiences in" to the interpretation of the music. He discussed how the emotional content was present in the score in the form of expressive markings, but the system of notation that we utilize did not provide a wide enough range of markings to truly express the intent of the composer. For example, he stated, "all fortes are not created alike" and that it was the "conductor's responsibility to have a full handle on what the composer is trying to say and get that message to the performers."

Mr. Watkins stated that "I think it's incumbent upon conductors to think artistically and not always think analytically because it's an aural art form." He discussed Mark Camphouse's work *A Movement for Rosa* as an example.[62] Mr. Watkins described the different moments in Mrs. Rosa Parks' life that were represented by the various sections of the piece. He focused his attention on a passage of music that he described as a "jazz dance in 5/4" and believed this "indicated that she wasn't just a little seamstress…that she had a life, that she perhaps listened to jazz music in the house with her husband, Raymond." He continued to question and explore the music by examining more about Mrs. Parks' life so that he better understood the composer's intent. Mr. Watkins described his thinking in this way:

> And you pull up more layers, and you think, "Oh, she was a 16-year-old." What do 16-year-olds do? Well, they dance. They dance and they sing, and they emulate popular culture around them. And so, when I'm interpreting that, then I can go through her life, as if I'm Rosa Parks, and try to understand what Rosa Parks was going through.

Next in his process, Mr. Watkins related the experiences and emotions that he uncovered to his own life, as well as "every encounter that we have, as to our personality, our soul…every intelligent encounter, every thought-provoking

[62] Mark Camphouse, *A Movement for Rosa* (Ruidoso, NM: TRN Music Publisher, Inc., 1994).

encounter." After acquiring this information, he recommended that conductors "write down a range of emotions" that they want to feel through the course of the piece, as well as convey to their ensemble.

*Question 3: What do you do to expand and feed your imagination? Does vocabulary and imagination play a role in artistic expression?*

**Professor Gary Green** believed that "imagination is critical" and that "the way you go about using your imagination to define how you want something to either feel or sound is the key to what makes you work, and what makes you different from another conductor, another teacher." Professor Green discussed how band directors' default to using terms in rehearsal such as "blend and balance" quite frequently. He warned that these terms were vague in articulating how the music should sound through the following example:

> You can hear it in your mind's eye right now, you can hear a beautiful flute. And in your mind's eye, you can hear a beautiful oboe. But if you have an oboe and flute play together, now it's a "floboe," and there are millions of those combinations. How can I possibly get the blend and balance to be correct? …the idea of how you want your imagination to work depends on how you see the music. Your ear sees the music.

Professor Green made a comparison with visual art by displaying a print of a painting by Claude Monet. He questioned what might be noticed first in the piece and asked if this would remain the same if the woman identified were wearing a different color dress. He believed the change in the woman's dress color that caused a shift in the initial focus of the painting, was the musical equivalent of adjusting the volume of an instrument in an ensemble to create a different point of focus for the listener. Briefly, Professor Green also compared this same musical concept to an author's choice of

word placement in poetry and that "The correct word in the correct place—there's just so much to trigger your thinking." He felt conductors must have a clear image in their mind of the music so when adjustments to the ensemble sound were made in rehearsal, the conductor was able to provide specific reasoning as for why the changes were being made.

As Professor Green discussed the idea that conductors must have concrete reasoning as to why they want the ensemble to sound a particular way, he returns to the notion of the composer's intent. The interpretive decisions that the conductor made must be established based on the composer's intent because conductors and ensembles were recreating the art that originated from the composer. Professor Green's awareness of maintaining the composer's intent was elevated after an encounter with composer David Maslanka. Professor Green explained that his ensemble was rehearsing a portion of Maslanka's *Child's Garden of Dreams* with the composer in residence at Professor Green's institution.[63] When Professor Green conducted the ensemble through a portion of the music at a significantly slower tempo—120BPM instead of the composer's marked tempo of 176BPM—he was questioned by the composer as to his reasoning for altering the tempo so drastically.[64] Professor Green explained to Maslanka that his ensemble could "play all the notes" at 120BPM, but Maslanka insisted that the music must be performed faster even if the ensemble missed notes. Maslanka proceeded to admonish Professor Green by telling him, in front of his ensemble, "Don't impose your restrictions on my music." The

[63] David Maslanka, *Child's Garden of Dreams*, (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1988).
[64] Ibid.

composer's intent must be considered when determining interpretation of a piece so that it aids in advocating why a decision had been made.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** believed that "imagination is absolutely key" for artistic expression and that "curiosity is key to imagination." She discussed that she had "always, from the time I was a very small child, had a very active imagination" and that was "in her nature." Dr. Thompson explains that she had always been curious and observed "things in life and in people." She felt that "everyone can grow their imagination," but "people have to unlock that on their own." She recommended that a person begin by seeking out one thing that they were curious about "and pursue it." Once a person had begun exploring and unlocking their imagination, "the key to using creativity productively and effectively in music-making is when what is in your imagination becomes visceral."

Dr. Thompson further discussed how imagination manifests itself in a visceral way by stating:

> An emotion becomes a feeling, and that's something that you experience in your body in a natural way. It's not just a memory, but it affects you – it affects your face, it affects your atmosphere, it affects the way you move. If you find delight in something, delight feels a certain way. And so much music is so delightful. That does something to your eyes, it does something to the center of gravity in your body. Then it's a matter of not only having imagination, but I think for conductors, making that leap from just being creative to having a sensation somewhere in your body that connects to that element of creativity is key.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed imagination was a major part of all fine arts, citing examples such as painters and sculptors using imagination to create their works of art and dancers constructing choreography from a point of stillness. He discussed how people begin learning to use their imagination as a child through activities such

as building with blocks and molding with Play-Doh. Mr. Watkins recommended "thinking and dreaming and reading about the lives of great creators, and people that had imagination are good grounding sources" to improve imaginative thinking as an adult. He referenced the brilliance of Walt Disney by explaining:

> I love going to Disney because he built an empire based on the life and times of a rodent. Real life and times of a rodent. He gave us Tomorrowland, which is to imagine the time "tomorrow" never comes. He gives us a community based on a fantasy land, a world that does not exist, except in our minds. He even called one part of his parks "Imagination" for all of us to spur on imagination.

Mr. Watkins discussed how people use imagination every day in simple tasks such as selecting their clothing for the day. He believed that people did not realize how they utilized their imaginations on a regular basis. Mr. Watkins noted that when selecting attire "people say it's based on mood, but it's also imagination. We have to put combinations together based on how we feel and how we choose to be perceived."

Mr. Watkins discussed his current study of Greek philosopher Socrates and his Socratic method. He believed it was his own imagination that led him to the study of the Socratic method. He also explained that he memorized enough information about the Socratic method in school to answer test questions about it, but he did not retain the knowledge in his long-term memory. He believed that there was a great deal of the current education system that promoted the memorization of information but not the task of truly "acquiring information and using it." He felt that this culture bolsters the use of the analytical side of the brain, but not any use of creative thought process and imagination. There was no application of the knowledge to encourage true learning—only memorization and reiterating of information.

*Question 4: In rehearsal and performance, what are some obstacles you have faced that have disconnected you from the music? What advice do you have on how to avoid those disconnections you have felt?*

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** began by acknowledging that "we're all human. We're going to get distracted by certain things." He believed conductors live "in this world of anticipation of what's to come. And there's anticipation and expectation." Professor Kirchhoff recommended that conductors must work to "live in the moment." Conductors would anticipate what was to come, the moment when it arrived in the music, and then conductors spend time "evaluating" and analyzing what they heard. During the time that the conductor was evaluating what they just heard, "the next twenty measures of music have gone by with no input from us because we're reflecting." In opposition to reflecting on the music after it had occurred, many conductors would focus their mental energy on anticipating a particular musical moment and disregard the music leading up to that specific moment.

Professor Kirchhoff discussed how as a conductor he is constantly shifting between being emotionally connected to the music and being a facilitator. He explained that shifting between these two roles is about "priorities" and that in some instances the conductor needs to fill the role of a facilitator to aid the ensemble in navigating a portion of the music. He believed being a facilitator when the ensemble was in need of assistance, was "just the reality of conducting." For conductors to be able shift effectively, Professor Kirchhoff returns to the notion that the conductor must have studied the score thoroughly and know their "viewpoint" of the music.

Professor Kirchhoff believed it was possible for a conductor to conduct the music but not be emotionally connected and invested in the music. He reiterated that when this happened the conductor was displaying a "lack of preparation" in the score study process and that conductors have "either cheated the emotional piece or you've cheated the internalization piece." Professor Kirchhoff discussed that the score study process was "hard work," but believed that the "intellectual part" of score study was the "easy part." In addition to preparation in the score study process, Professor Kirchhoff briefly explained how people's individual personalities effects how they connect to the music: "There are some people who conduct and exude really heartfelt music-making, and there are other people that don't. It's just who they are. They may be great technicians and all of that, but that's just who they are. I hate that expression. You can't escape who you are. Frightens man to death." Professor Kirchhoff believed that there were conductors who were able to study the analytical part of the music, but then skip finding emotional meaning and begin work on the internalization process. He also believed there were many conductors who live in one world or the other of score study—those who could only illuminate and discover detailed intellectual information and those who "slobber all over the music and really don't understand it."

Professor Kirchhoff defined vulnerability as a "conduit to one's deeper emotions" and believed that for a conductor to connect emotionally with music the conduit must be able to open. He discussed that once a conductor experiences a moment of emotional connection to a piece of music, they must understand that "not every time on the podium was going to be this revelatory emotional experience. But what's important was for people to remember how that [the connection to music]

felt." He believed that once a conductor had experienced being emotionally connected to a piece of music while conducting a live ensemble, they would crave that feeling of connection. He explained that "It's almost like a strange kind of drug. You're afraid of it because it has consequences, actually very difficult consequences, because you're putting yourself in a place of great risk." Professor Kirchhoff paraphrased a Martha Graham quote from her biography, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*, that he believed served as advice and encouragement for conductors to continue chasing the feeling of emotional connection and taking the risk to be vulnerable even if they were scared or intimidated by it. The direct quote is:

> There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep yourself open and aware to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.[65]

Professor Kirchhoff believed that if a conductor could study with a teacher who helped them to "feel safe" and feel as though they could "allow the kind of vulnerability" to occur, they would improve over time. He acknowledged that there was no substitute for time, and that a conductor who sought to improve their emotional connection with music had to "keep going after it."

In addition to study of the intellectual aspects of the music and allowing oneself to be vulnerable, Professor Kirchhoff explained that conductors need "a

[65]Agnes De Mille, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham,* (New York: Random House, 1991), 264.

special kind of humility." He defined humility as "really understanding, coming to grips with who you are. All the good and all the bad." He stated that "humility is a characteristic, I believe, of a true artist." Professor Kirchhoff explained that if there were no humility present, then the conduit was closed, and there was no space for further "exploration of oneself" and "more growth" as a musician and conductor. As a teacher, he felt as though he could not teach a student in concrete terms how to find emotional connection to music, but that he could guide them toward it. He discussed how connecting to the music was "an experiential thing" and once a student had experienced it, he could work with them to discover how to have that experience again. Professor Kirchhoff believed, "the older you get, the easier it is—you've experienced more [in life]."

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** believed firmly that conductors should not attempt to avoid anything: "I think avoidance is too much energy." She equated avoiding obstacles as a conductor to driving a car and trying not to get in an accident. Dr. Thompson affirmed that if a conductor encountered an obstacle they should "get around it. Navigate." She stated that "the best thing I do is show up. Whether it's for a rehearsal or a performance, I just need to show up." She believed it was not the responsibility of the conductor to try and control the music. Dr. Thompson plans for rehearsals and has goals of what she wants to accomplish within a rehearsal, but when she is conducting the ensemble, she tries to let go and make her "mind as blank as possible, trust the work, and listen to what the music wants to be in this moment on this day." She views a conductor trying to control the music and the situation as an obstacle.

Dr. Thompson explained that conducting the music was "not about some esoteric experience." She felt that music-making and staying connected to the music was so much simpler than this: "just being there, feeling it, being with the people that are making the sound and enjoying it," and "doing everything you can to allow them to do their best and allow the music to speak in a natural way." Dr. Thompson discussed a number of obstacles and distractions that were the responsibility of the conductor to address for themselves:

> I think that if you're too self-aware, if you're not prepared enough, that can be a bad distraction. I think if you feel the need to impress somebody, that could be a distraction. I think if you're afraid of failure, whatever that might mean to any individual, that could be a distraction. Those could be really bad distractions.

*Question 5: How do you know when you have completely connected with a piece? What has that felt like for you in the past?*

**Professor Gary Green** explained that he connects with the music well before day one of ensemble rehearsals, but that he was not sure if he had ever felt completely connected to a piece of music. He discussed how he grappled with self-doubt and questioned his interpretive decisions throughout the score study process: "Should I do this? Should I do that?" But he stated that:

> I know how I feel about the music. And I know how I feel about the people that are producing it. And I know that rehearsals and concerts are the same process. The only difference is in the concert, there are people there that have the opportunity to be affected by what's already happened, or what's happening at the moment. There's a connection between me and the spirituality or the humanity of the person that I'm trying to conduct. And there are moments when I'm conducting the music, where the page transcends the moment, the music just happens.

Professor Green discussed his time teaching at the University of Miami and how both his conducting students and the students performing in the ensembles were all highly-skilled musicians. He questioned his interpretive decisions in his preparation because he felt so strongly about being prepared for rehearsals as to not waste the time and talents of the performers. Professor Green had concerns and wondered, "Am I trying to find something in myself, rather than something in the music?" He valued the ensemble's time and felt that "the reason that they're there is too critical." He connected with the music before rehearsal because if he, the conductor, was not able to connect with the music, he did not want to coerce the ensemble into performing music he did not feel was worthy of their time.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** discussed how when he was conducting, he felt he was "riding this energy" when he was completely connected to the music. He felt that both he and the ensemble were "one with that energy," and because of that, there was "no effort" in the music-making. He believed that the ensemble "has taken special initiative" when these moments of complete connection happen and appreciated that he was not "rigidly guiding this process." He described the feeling of connection as "very seductive to feel that because you want to keep recreating that experience."

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** stated, "I would be reluctant to have an ego to say that I've ever completely connected with a piece." She felt that connecting to the music was about the evolving relationship the conductor and the ensemble build with the music, rather than an absolute of being completely connected or not. Dr. Thompson described when she felt she had a close relationship to a piece: "I feel like

I cease to exist. If I've done a good job with preparing my group, they feel that way too. That it's just very free and spontaneous, that there was no technique, there was no thought, or very little thought…. When I feel like that, I feel like I'm going to live forever. That's how it feels." She discussed how there were moments in the music where the focus must be more technical, but "that's responsible" and necessary for the music to speak.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed he forms an emotional connection with a piece early on in the study process, because if he did not, he would not perform the work with his ensemble. He felt the connection he forms with the music was "intrinsic" and if the composer's intent behind writing a work was solely to challenge their own compositional techniques, the work was not worth performing because there was no emotional content to connect with. Mr. Watkins explained that the wind band repertoire was vast enough now that conductors should not be performing pieces in which both conductor and ensemble cannot find connection.

Mr. Watkins discussed that programming "has a huge impact on the maintenance of the art form." He believed that if, "You can't maintain the art form, then you won't have an audience," and with such a wide variety of music in the world and easy access to it, audience members would not continue to seek out the classical world if the repertoire performed were lacking emotional content necessary for connection.

*Question 6: In your experience, is it possible to actively seek meaningful music-making moments in both rehearsal and performance? What role does score preparation play in this?*

**Professor Gary Green** discussed how meaningful moments of music could happen in rehearsal and stated, "You're gonna leave some of your best moments of music in the rehearsal hall." He believed a conductor cannot "make music," that they "have to let music happen" after you have taken the time to study and understand the details of the score. Professor Green referenced the famous choral conductor, Robert Shaw, explaining that once a conductor knows the details of the score and their interpretation of it, "you are in a position to step effortlessly into the realm of the spirit." Professor Green believed that allowing the music to happen was the goal of the conductor.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** expected "something really meaningful every single day" from her ensemble. She believed that experiencing meaningful musical experiences should be the goal, not only for collegiate ensembles, but ensembles of all levels. Dr. Thompson felt it was more important as a conductor to strive for musical moments with younger ensembles because they were unaware of what it was they were experiencing. She says, "how wonderful to be the first person to create a moment, or create an atmosphere where they [young students] can create a moment, and let them know it was a moment?"

Dr. Thompson stated that preparation was "everything." In addition to preparing for rehearsal through score study, she believed that "caring about the group" and the relationship between the conductor and the ensemble were "key" in

producing meaningful musical experiences. She discussed how the conductor must not only care for the ensemble, but also empower them, be respectful of their talent, intellect, and abilities, and nurture these qualities so that they may grow to be independent of the conductor. Dr. Thompson reflected upon her own rehearsals and admitted that she was "very guilty with my group of not acknowledging the magic every day," because she was "so fixed on getting the last 3% out of them." Once she felt that a sufficient amount of progress had been made in rehearsals, she would record a small number of her rehearsals. Upon review of the recordings, she had revelatory moments when she realized how exceptional her ensemble sounded.

Dr. Thompson believed meaningful musical experiences happen "organically" and cannot be forced or prescribed. The conductor strives for the ensemble "to be able to hear and feel what you feel." Dr. Thompson thought, "That enthusiasm and that commitment to the music, and that commitment to them [the ensemble] is the thing that drives toward the experience."

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** strongly believed meaningful musical experiences could happen in both rehearsal and performance. He stated, "you must leave a little space for enthusiasm, for excitement, for God to speak," when the group was playing and that caused the players to be "at their keenness level of concentration at the point of performance." Mr. Watkins thought that the conductor must cultivate a high level of performance in rehearsal, so that the actual performance "may take it over the edge" musically.

To aid the ensemble in finding their musical "peak" in performance, one example Mr. Watkins described was how he discovers the ensemble's musical

limitations in rehearsals by working with a range of tempi. He believed that the highest or lowest tempo in rehearsal would fluctuate by about five beats per minute in the performance. In rehearsal, Mr. Watkins sought out the tempo that still allowed for clarity of the musical ideas to better understand how far he could manipulate the tempo in the concert setting without the music becoming chaotic or losing the intent of the music. Mr. Watkins wanted to push the ensemble to the edge of their abilities in their playing of the music so that the performance had an energy to it that would not only create an experience for the ensemble members, but also generate an experience for the audience.

### *Sharing Emotion with the Ensemble & Audience*

*Question 1: What makes an experience musical?*

**Professor Gary Green** felt as though he could "listen to it…know it," and provided examples and resources, but he could not define a musical experience in exact words. He discussed examples of when he believed he or others have had a musical experience, and that a teacher could guide a student toward a musical experience, but a teacher cannot definitively teach a student *how* to have a musical experience. When an applied instrumental teacher provided an example of expressive playing to an individual student and encouraged them to include those elements in their own playing, this would help the student sound more musical and begin to understand the concept. This style of teaching becomes more difficult with an ensemble of individual musicians. Although more difficult to have a large group of individuals be highly attuned to the same musical ideas, Professor Green believed if

the key factors of "intent" and "human contact" were present it was possible for a musical experience to manifest in an ensemble setting. As a conductor, he believed the intent should be "the need to discover and to share discovery with as many souls."

Professor Green relayed a discussion with composer Frank Ticheli about a performance of his work *Angels in the Architecture* (2009). Professor Green recounts that although Ticheli thought the performance was technically proficient, he "couldn't find a trace of humanity anywhere in the performance." In addition to Professor Green and Ticheli's discussion of *Angels in the Architecture*, Professor Green questioned Ticheli about what he, as a composer, looks for in a conductor. The conversation with Ticheli was lengthy, but the first comment Ticheli made to Professor Green was, "I look for a conductor to find something in my music that I didn't know was there." Professor Green believed there were many elements that encourage the manifestation of a musical experience, but "these things depend on the vibration of a human—one human soul to vibrate in harmony with another." He thought that these ideas around humanity and the human soul in relation to music did not "resonate" or have any meaning to people who did not care about having a musical experience.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** returns to cellist Yo-Yo Ma's idea that music transports a person "to another place." He felt that when a person had a musical experience, they were "overwhelmed by it" and "nothing else matters." Professor Kirchhoff had difficulty putting the concept of a musical experience into words and believed that as humans, "we're really inadequate vessels."

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** believed there were prerequisites that need to be in place for an ensemble and conductor to have a musical experience together. She felt the music must be at the appropriate level for the ensemble and that both conductor and ensemble were "well prepared" to perform the music. Dr. Thompson believed the ensemble should play "with freedom, spontaneity, energy, commitment, generosity of spirit," as well as "courage to do more than play well." She felt "vulnerability" was an important factor. The ensemble members and conductor must "want to send something of beauty into the world." Once the ensemble sends their music into the world, the audience "will do with it what they will, we [the performers] have no control over that. But we do have control over our own artistic intent."

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** felt he had a musical experiences based on "the response from the performers and the response from the audience" during performance. He believed there was a "nuance and an electricity during the performance that's extraordinary," and that the conductor, performers, and audience members were able to recognize "something unusual is happening." Mr. Watkins stated, "the electricity involved in that is available to all of humankind." He believed all people could connect to the "indescribable part of life" and have an "intangible in us," but he did not feel as though he had the words to describe a musical experience in a definitive manner. Mr. Watkins thought that the conductor must lead the ensemble toward a musical experience through their "energy and conversation, we must draw those emotions out of our performers." He did not believe a conductor could exclusively draw these emotions from an ensemble through their conducting in rehearsal.

*Question 2: How do you encourage ensemble members to develop their own feelings about a piece of music?*

**Professor Gary Green** believed the first step in helping an ensemble connect to the music being performed was approaching the music-making process as a team: "When we got to rehearsal, it was not them and me, it was us." He discussed how most members of an ensemble want to be there and share the common goal of producing a high-quality performance. Professor Green felt, particularly during his time at University of Miami, an understanding between the ensemble and conductor of they were all "in this together" must occur, and he would "show them as much as [he] could—where [he] thought the music needed to go." Although he showed them his vision of the music, he recognized that "it was totally in their hands to make sure that that happened." In true fashion of working as a team, Professor Green discussed how sometimes the ensemble "would encourage [him] rather than [he] encourage them." He embraced what he learned from the players.

To create this environment of "we're in this together," Professor Green explained that conductors must be their authentic selves: "You have to be you. Number one: have to be you." Professor Green returned to the notion that "the technique has to be considered first" for the music to happen. He utilized the example of an ensemble slowing down through a rubato section of music. Professor Green discussed how although the music was slowing down, the subdivision of the beat must remain intact because the music occurs between the beat points. The space between the beats must feel predictable while the tempo of the music was shifting. He

believed that “it’s the movement of the baton or how you [the conductor] use space to get to the ictus that determined the direction of the music.”

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** discussed that an important factor of drawing the ensemble into developing their own feelings about the music was the language that the conductor used throughout the rehearsal process. He believed students “become so numb to the language” because majority of the instruction provided in rehearsal “is devoid of any imagination and creativity: ‘You’re dragging, you’re rushing, softer, louder.’” Professor Kirchhoff discussed the use of metaphors and short stories in rehearsal. He recognized that “nobody wants to hear us [conductors] talk” in rehearsal, therefore the metaphors and stories must be brief and to the point. Metaphors and stories created mental images that aid in the ensemble understanding the conductor’s interpretation of the music. Professor Kirchhoff acknowledged that outside of professional ensembles, there were moments of technical explanation that cannot always be avoided because the students were still in the process of learning how to create specific sounds and aural images on their instrument.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** stated that she was “more of a doer than a talker.” She was opposed to sharing her personal feelings with the ensemble on a regular basis because she was “more private.” She recognized that other conductors feel comfortable doing this, but she prefers to lead by example more than discuss the emotional content of the piece with the ensemble. She stated firmly, “I will be absolutely committed to what I’m doing. I will be vulnerable. I hope I will be believable, but I’m not going to talk about it. I’m going to do it.” She strove to rehearse in “the character of the music” and create the “atmosphere” of the music.

When Dr. Thompson spoke to the ensemble, she provided brief metaphors to aid the musicians in understanding her interpretation of the music. She provided an example from preparation for the 50th anniversary concert for the Northwestern University Symphonic Wind Ensemble:

> The last piece on this four-hour concert was the Prokofiev *Ode to the End of the War*. At the end of the piece, there's this incessant trumpet fanfare that just keeps coming. And they played it well. But I said, "you need to play it like it's a warning. This isn't a celebration. This is a warning that the war may be over, technically, but you have to play this with urgency, like it's a warning." Then it never sounded the same again.[66]

Thompson sought to grow the imaginations of her ensemble members but felt strongly about minimizing the amount of talking and direct sharing of personal feelings with the ensemble.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed that to encourage players to attach their own feelings to a piece of music, the conductor must provide the players a vocabulary in order to learn the expressive language of music. He contrasted teaching ensemble musicians about the language of music to the general progression of learning the English language. Mr. Watkins described how young children initially imitate what they hear, then attach to "simple words" first (e.g., dog, cat, etc.), then meaning of the different words were defined to sharpen their "deductive reasoning" skills. The students eventually learn about the different types of words (e.g., noun, verb), they learn sentence structure and grammar, and then their sentences become paragraphs, which become full papers. Mr. Watkins believed academic subjects were all taught in generally the same way, but in music the student did not begin with a foundation of

[66] Sergei Prokofiev, *Ode to the End of War*, (Melville, NY: Belwin Mills, 1979.

vocabulary to define expressive ideas they may already feel in their "minds and bodies," young players did not "automatically relate to [the emotion in music] as musicians."

Mr. Watkins discussed how there were a number of famous musicians in the Songwriters Hall of Fame who were renowned for their abilities as an artist, but they did not have the ability to read musical notation. He stated, "there's an artistic side," and in addition to young ensemble members having the skills to read musical notation, conductors "must teach our younger ensembles in particular how musical lines were developed, how a melody is constructed" so they begin to connect to the music in an emotional way. Mr. Watkins discussed using everyday actions to help students understand musical concepts. For example, when teaching rubato, he described the action of walking to a chair and sitting down. The walk may be brisk but then a person naturally slows down as they approach the chair. Then the action of sitting may be an even slower pace. The movement was organic and evenly paced—what he would like the music to be as well.

Mr. Watkins believed in simplifying descriptive metaphors to help younger students begin to understand musical concepts. He discussed how some musicians thought that when a conductor had a section or portion of an ensemble utilize the same technique to perform a specific section of music with the intention of unifying the sound concept, this had "muted the musicianship" of all of the players. Mr. Watkins disagreed with this and believed each individual performer still maintains expressive freedom within the section or ensemble sound. Unifying the sound did not remove space for expression.

*Question 3: How do you use the emotional connection as a vehicle to improve the technique of the ensemble?*

**Professor Gary Green** discussed how conductors "have to bring to the table a willingness to sacrifice everything in order to find a way" to assist the ensemble in connecting to the music. He stated, "There's something that you [the conductor] will bring to the music, to the score, to your students that will cause you to want them to know it so bad, you will find a way to connect." He explained conductors *could* learn from master teachers such as Elizabeth Green and her conducting videos but warns conductors cannot look like her. Professor Green examined how a "good [conducting] teacher" would guide a conducting student toward being the best version of themselves as a conductor and not toward attempting to look exactly like another conductor. Professor Green explained:

> But you can conduct like you, and you can be convincing. You can want to have your story told through your ensemble. A teacher can help you, look at you, and then you can discuss with that person how you feel at that moment. There will be lots of deep times of self-evaluation: "Did I really do this? What was my logic for doing it? Why did I do it? What was I trying to do?" A good teacher, I think, will help you with that more than the actual technique. You should bring with you all the music.

Professor Green felt strongly about guiding his ensemble musicians and his conducting students in getting "the inside out." Professor Green expected the conducting student to bring the music with them internally. In his teaching, he utilized performing on an instrument or singing as an avenue for helping the conducting student realize the music externally rather than explain it with words.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** challenged his ensemble members to think about

the music in an expressive way by questioning them in rehearsal. He would pose questions and statements such as, “tell me about how letter B to C feels,” and found that “students almost always have answers, and oftentimes the right answers.” Professor Kirchhoff believed that when the ensemble members were emotionally invested, the technique improved at a faster rate. He presented a caveat that “you have to be very judicious in how you do those things [questioning the ensemble] because players come to play.”

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** discussed how the technique could be improved through the lens of music, but there were times in rehearsal where the focus must be on technique. She believed in the importance of how the conductor approached rehearsals: “The point is not that you’re trying to get rid of things that are wrong. You must make it clear to them [the ensemble], “we need to work on this, so we can do this.” The point of doing it was to free up this creative, expressive potential and to enable and expose it.” Dr. Thompson discussed how the motivation for spending time focused on technique was how the music would sound as a result of that work. She believed the conductor must help the members of the ensemble understand the importance of the time spent adjusting technique by presenting it in the context of how it would serve the music.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed that a conductor could teach technique through the lens of music, as well as the music “improves the motivation for a person’s interest in the piece.” Guiding the ensemble to understand the expressive elements of the music allows the ensemble members to be “engaged intellectually in their individual parts as opposed to just playing notes.” Mr. Watkins discussed how it was

the conductor's responsibility to "share the ideas" in the music with the ensemble so the players were more engaged with making music. He equated this to a strong title or introduction of a book—the author had piqued the reader's interest so they were captivated quickly and want to continue reading.

In addition to drawing player's attention to the expressive elements of the music, Mr. Watkins explained that the conductor should provide background information pertaining to the composer and time period that the piece was written. This would aid the ensemble in understanding *why* certain musical decisions were made. He discussed, as an example, how *cantabile* and *dolce* should not be performed in the same manner, and a conductor holds the responsibility of bringing awareness to the historical implications of the musical terminology utilized by the composer.

Mr. Watkins believed in employing the study and comparison of other genres of music, as well as incorporating other areas of the fine arts outside of music—dance, visual arts—to provide a stylistic model of his interpretation of the music. He encouraged his players to draw connections between music and other art forms and found this effective in aiding ensemble members in understanding his aural image of the music. He provided a comparison of a tap dancer and a rapper:

> You can bring a dancer into rehearsal, or you can send a video out of a tap dancer. You can compare the tap dancer's articulation to a rapper that's speaking. Although the words are different, the tap dancer doesn't use words, the rhythmic poetry is exactly the same. So, why does that communicate with most citizens of the world? Because there's a rhythm involved in it, and there's an inflection in the phrasing.

Mr. Watkins believed that many classically-trained musicians were "musical snobs" and did not typically make comparable connections outside of music because they

lack appreciation for all aspects of the fine arts. He felt that providing these correlations to his players developed their interest and investment in music-making.

*Question 4: How does your emotional connection to a piece impact the ensemble and the audience?*

**Professor Gary Green** discussed the differences in concert goers. Some of the audience would be in attendance due to obligation, such as friend or family member performing, or earning a grade in a music appreciation class, and some would attend to be moved by the music. Professor Green quoted composer John Corigliano to provide the perspective of a composer: "You have to hope that you can write one thing that will have any meaning for any human being on the earth other than you." Professor Green encouraged conductors to "work hard and hope" because "there are no guarantees" when it came to connecting with the audience. He cited that in a recording of David Maslanka's *Song Book: For Flute and Wind Ensemble*, the listener could hear how much the flute player cared about the music. Professor Green provided the following advice to conductors:[67]

> Connection is hard to understand. You know, there's gonna be people in your life that are gonna say, "You're really good." And there are gonna be people in your life who say, "you're not very good." But both of those are imposters. The only person that makes a difference is you. You decide. You have to be strong, strong willed. It's a tough game. Because it's art. Because it's not controlled by the mind, it's controlled by a larger spirit…I taught for 15 some years. I look at kids who are just starting to teach, and I'd give anything to be able to do that again. It was so fun. It was hard. But enjoy the ride. Don't worry about it. Just work hard. That's all.

[67] Christine Nield (flute), with University of Miami Wind Ensemble and Gary Green (conductor), *Song Book: For Flute and Wind Ensemble*, Albany Records TROY690, 2004, CD.

Green was highly aware that each individual person—composer, conductor, ensemble member, audience member—approached music in their own unique way, and therefore, control and absolute judgements must be relinquished when reflecting upon performance.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** believed that a conductor never truly knows how they were impacting ensemble members and audience. She felt a conductor could glean insight into it through ensemble members and audience members expressing how it had affected them, but a conductor would never actually know. She compared giving emotionally to the ensemble and the audience to giving a gift:

> That's the lonely life—that you don't know. You have to keep giving no matter what. You give with a pure heart and with a great deal of vulnerability. You give it away and you never know for sure what kind of impact it has. You don't give a gift to get something, you give it because you think it's valuable and it makes you feel good to do it.

Dr. Thompson believed that a conductor should give all that they could emotionally in rehearsal and performance, but in the end, the conductor would never absolutely know the impact.

*Question 5: Is it possible to be emotionally connected while conducting AND analyze at the same time? How do you manage that in a rehearsal setting? At what point in your life did you come to this conclusion?*

**Professor Gary Green** agreed with the teaching and writing of famed composer and conductor Gunther Schuller (1925-2015), the "conductor has to get outside of himself or herself" to look at their conducting. Professor Green explained that within the first chapter of Schuller's book, *The Compleat Conductor*, the

discussion was centered around the conductor concurrently observing and analyzing "their conducting…the way they feel about the music, what's going on in the room, what the music sounds like."[68] He recommended conductors record themselves so they could review all of these aspects of their conducting from an "outside" perspective. He acknowledged when conductors review recordings of themselves, it may be "disappointing," but believed this method to be extremely useful in aiding a conductor's performance.

Professor Green believed it was possible to be aware of all of these aspects while conducting, but if a conductor were so emotionally invested they were ignoring these other factors, they were not doing their job. He returned to the notion that the technique of the ensemble must be in place for art to be created and to aid the conductor was staying emotionally connected to the music. Professor Green believed that analyzing did not change the conductor's emotions, but it pulls focus away from the emotional connection that the conductor craves.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** believed shifting between staying emotionally connected to the music and analyzing the music was a skill that took  time to develop. He felt he learned it "later than it should have happened," but each conductor would learn it in their own time—some faster than others. Professor Kirchhoff discussed how the "pressure" and "the reality that no music is better than what is sounds" were the enemies of the conductor. The "pressure" conductors feel was due to the judgement of their ensemble in performance and feeling as though that was a reflection upon themselves. If the music were performed with poor technique,

[68] Gunther Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Professor Kirchhoff believed the music would only be viewed as a poor rendition of the composer's intent. He provided the following advice to conductors:

> So, as long as your motives are pure, that you're really going after the music, you're going after emotional connection, and you're going after an experience, hopefully an experience that the students will feel and be able to communicate to the audience, you're going to be okay. It's a balancing act. It's a tough one.

Professor Kirchhoff reminisced on how he reminded himself daily of a Martha Graham quote to provide himself "courage" throughout his career as a collegiate band director.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** believed it was "imperative" to be "sensitive to and aware of what's going on in the room" while conducting, and that she did not "have the ability to fully perform, evaluate, and judge what [she is] doing at the same time." If the awareness of the technique were not present and if the conductor's focus were 100% on feelings, "it's a little selfish." She discussed how in rehearsal she occasionally "misses things that are so good" because she was extremely fixated on pushing the ensemble to perform the music to their highest potential. Dr. Thompson created an atmosphere and understanding with her ensemble that the "highest compliment [she] can give them [the ensemble] is to continue to push them." She discussed how this may not work for all conductors, but she believed so strongly in the skill and talent of her ensemble she would not allow them to *not* reach their full potential.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed that "the conductor must be trained to listen to what music is coming out [of the ensemble] 100% of the time," and the conductor must be prepared to guide the ensemble at any time. He discussed how conductors must stay connected to the ensemble and "we can't leave them alone." He provided

the analogy that the "best golfers wouldn't need swing coaches. If we leave them alone, then basketball players wouldn't need a coach on the sideline," and explained that "everyone needs to be reminded of the short-term goals and objectives on a piece of music." Mr. Watkins explained how the conductor and ensemble "at some point in time, throw the technique out," focus their energies on the music-making. He drew on the comparison of a computer running a program in the background while most of the work was being done in the program open on the screen—the technique must be present but with enough preparation, the performers were utilizing muscle memory for the technique and focusing their mental energies on the emotion and expression in the music.

***Teaching & Mentoring Conductors***

*Question 1: Please describe how you teach score study. Do you believe conducting technique can be taught through the lens of music-making?*

**Professor Gary Green** discussed how his students came to lessons having studied the score on their own and expected they be able to "sing or play everything on the score." He questioned his students about their musical decisions and why they conducted certain moments in a specific way. He challenged his students to consider why they had made their musical and gestural decisions because "they all had to have a reason for it to be the way it that is was." Professor Green acknowledged his students' conducting styles all looked different—he believed a conductor should find their own voice on the podium and not try to be someone they were not—but their

technique needed to be driven by "something greater"—vision. He explained that the technique had to be present for the art to emerge, but "the art comes first."

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** discussed when teaching undergraduate conducting students, he reduced the number of excerpts studied and performed in class to allow himself the be more "thorough" in his teaching. Although undergraduate students were younger and less experienced than graduate students, Professor Kirchhoff took generally the same approach to guiding students toward having a musical experience while conducting. When he provided instruction in the area of score study, he challenged his conducting students to make musical decisions and "communicate emotionally" about the excerpt. Once a musical decision was made, his students were to "write into their score what objective items of music-making—altered dynamics, crescendos, diminuendos—they were going to utilize to communicate those emotional ideas or that emotional projection." Professor Kirchhoff acknowledged that students experienced varying levels of success, but they were all capable of forming a "conductor viewpoint" and communicating their viewpoint through physical conducting gestures.

In conducting classes, Professor Kirchhoff focused his instruction on aiding the students in eliciting the distinct musical response that they desired from the ensemble. He delayed discussing beat patterns until the class was working with excerpts that included asymmetrical patterns, such as 5/4. Professor Kirchhoff required "that before every student could use their batons, or their hands, they had to start the ensemble with their breath, and had to give three specific preparations of a different style, or dynamic." He believed this helped the students become more

cognizant of "how important the breath was to everything for the conductor." Professor Kirchhoff's pedagogy in providing feedback to students as they performed and experimented on the podium was centered around "how to repair the technique to get the musical result that they wanted." After a student conducted an excerpt, he questioned them and challenged them to reflect on the musical response they received from the ensemble based on their physical gestures: "What was less successful? What didn't work? What did you have trouble with?" Professor Kirchhoff believed firmly that conducting students must "practice by doing," but all of the gestures, the physical technique, must be focused around eliciting a specific musical response.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** stated, "it's like trumpet. You have to learn some fingers, right?" She believed "music can and should be used as the thing that helps you find a purpose for your technique"—the technique serves the art.

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** believed that in teaching conductors the "artistry must never leave the artist. We must add the other layer of intellectual thought." He discussed how artistry and analysis were "on opposites sides of the brain," but must be developed simultaneously. Mr. Watkins described how it was imperative conductors develop a musical vocabulary, as well as technical vocabulary of "baton technique." He compared expanding a student's musical vocabulary to a student learning the English language: "the broader the vocabulary, the broader their musicianship is going to be." If he were teaching young conductors, he would ask them to create a list of "everything within the realm of organized music…everything that they should know and hear." This activity would aid in the growth of their musical and artistic vocabulary.

Mr. Watkins explained how learning baton technique and physical gesture was "no different than learning the periodic table in chemistry." He discussed how:

> There are certain mechanics that we must learn in order to be competent in chemistry, and the periodic table is critical. It's no different than the multiplication tables in mathematics. They insist that we learn those before we were able to go to the next level. So, baton technique for most people is that.

He acknowledged "that moving both arms with an object in our hand is about as foreign as riding a bicycle backwards," but was a fundamental skill set conductors must learn in their study. Mr. Watkins compared inorganic conducting technique to being the "follow dancer" dancing a pas de deux, a ballroom dance. He discussed how the follow dancer had to develop a skill set, a vocabulary of technique, to imitate the "lead dancer," but backwards. The job of the follow dancer was to learn an unnatural physical technique to serve the art of ballroom dancing.

*Question 2: How can conducting books and programs encourage and develop a conductor's ability to connect on an emotional level with the music they are studying and conducting?*

**Professor Gary Green** discussed how there were many books available to conductors, but "it depends on the reason for reading the book." He believed many conducting textbooks would aid in the improvement of physical technique, "but they will not help you be a better musician." He explained he always felt "really disappointed" with the "basic conducting books" that he used when teaching conducting classes. He supplemented the books with outside materials because he found the books "never talk about music." Professor Green recommended books such as Bruno Walter's *Of Music and Music Making*, Rollo May's *The Courage to Create*,

and Bruce Adolphe's *What to Listen for in the World* because he believed "they can help you be a better musician."[69]

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** believed that conducting courses at the undergraduate level have become "too difficult." He felt the physical technique of conducting beat patterns was the simple part of conducting—he stated: "My granddaughters can do that"—but courses have put too much pressure and emphasis on technique rather than expressive music-making.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** approached each conducting student "in a very individual way, in a very personal way," because each person must find their distinct path toward connecting with music. She provided ideas and examples to guide her students to help them "look musical," but there was no way for her to definitively help a student "feel music." Dr. Thompson compared this process to a Rubik's Cube:

> There's a fundamental question: what makes somebody a technician or an artist? I think that this is where the student's work really exists. They ultimately have to build their own relationship with music. I can make almost anyone look musical. I can't make them feel music. I can help them learn about score study, and I can raise questions and give them examples of ways that they could try to build their relationship with music, and have that sort of visceral, very personal connection. But ultimately, it's like a Rubik's Cube, each person is a Rubik's Cube, and they have to figure out their own sequencing. I'll throw lots and lots of ideas their way, but they have to unlock it.

*Question 3: To be connected to the music and then share that connection with the ensemble a conductor must be vulnerable. How would you go about guiding a student conductor to being more vulnerable and trusting of the ensemble in front of them?*

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[69] Bruno Walter, tr. Paul Hamburger, *Of Music and Music Making*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957). Rollo May, *The Courage to Create*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1994). Bruce Adolphe, *What to Listen for in the World*, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996).

**Professor Gary Green** explained that if a conductor were not able to be vulnerable "there's no chance for you to ever express yourself in an artful way to people who are in your ensemble." He returned to the idea that "you have to be you," and believed each conductor must discover how to be vulnerable for themselves even though it could "cause you [the conductor] a lot of real pain" to acquire it. Professor Green encouraged his students to look inward and question themselves—"What do you care for? What do you stand for? Who are you?"—to initiate the process of becoming vulnerable. Professor Green discussed how conductors must "work hard. Do the best you can," and "Just show up." He believed that success was measured by "the way you went after something, by the way you tried at that moment," because success was not measured by "a moment, it's lots of moments."

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** believed strongly in creating an environment in the conducting classroom where the students feel safe. To assist in shaping this environment, large classes were divided in half which aided in providing opportunities for the students to conduct a live ensemble every class period they attended. The more the students were able to conduct a live ensemble, the more comfortable they became with it. Professor Kirchhoff assisted his students not by providing a "right or wrong perspective" on their conducting but challenged them to analyze what they felt was successful and what was not each time they conducted. After briefly analyzing their own performance, Professor Kirchhoff discussed how to improve the technique to best serve their individual's conducting and musical ideas. He acknowledged not providing the students with a concrete "right or wrong" solution to aid their conducting, but providing them with multiple ideas to consider,

frustrated them. Although frustrating for the student, he believed this method allowed for more growth as an independent musician and conductor.

Professor Kirchhoff felt that requiring the students to provide feedback to each other for each conducting opportunity was insightful and assisted in building a sense of "community" within the class. The students supplied feedback in both written and oral format during each class period. Professor Kirchhoff established "explicit instructions about how they [the students] were going to debrief" so the feedback was beneficial for each student.

*Question 4: What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges in transitioning from playing an instrument to conducting in terms of how one connects emotionally with a piece of music?*

**Professor Gary Green** returned to the idea that the conductor's primary instrument was their "best teacher" in terms of discovering for themselves how the music feels. He acknowledged that once a conductor had a clear image in their mind, the challenge was "to get an ensemble to come along with you in the way you feel about an interpretation." Professor Green essentially discussed the concept of the conductor utilizing impulse of will—"you [the conductor] have to train yourself, and steal yourself to the idea, 'this is where I want to go'"—to aid the ensemble in moving musically toward a unified interpretation.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** discussed how transitioning from a player to a conductor required a different type of listening. In his experience, undergraduate conducting students were typically "overwhelmed" by the ensemble sound during the

first experience on podium and typically confessed they "didn't hear anything" when questioned after they had stopped conducting. Professor Kirchhoff believed shifting their listening perspective came with time and practice in front of an ensemble. For this reason, he believed it was imperative to provide the students with conducting opportunities every class meeting. In addition to practicing their listening with a live ensemble, he assigned specific pieces of music and asked the students to listen to the piece while following along in the score. The students were tasked with only listening and following one line within the score of multiple instruments. Professor Kirchhoff felt this exercise drew their attention to the concept that "to listen to some people, you have to ignore others rather than hearing everything."

*Question 5: What specific exercises or activities, if any, do you have that you recommend to students to build a stronger connection to the score?*

**Professor Gary Green** felt that all of the preparation conductors do was a "responsibility," not an activity. He believed firmly "this idea of a link to the past is real" and encouraged conductors to make contact with as many people as they could to understand the composer and their music.

**Professor Craig Kirchhoff** explained that the "easy answer" was that conductors need to study more, but "the more practical answer is they just have to listen to a lot of music, a lot of great music." He explained that students need to be "inundated" with great music so they can continue to develop their musicianship. He recommended conductors attempt to attend live rehearsals and concerts to hear great music, as well as see excellent conductors at work. Professor Kirchhoff

acknowledged depending on the location and resources of a student, this may not be possible, but there were a wide range of quality digital resources available online—for example, The Berlin Philharmonic *Digital Concert Hall*.[70] He believed with online resources, students should seek out music of "a wide palate of styles" because being "surrounded by great music" was one path toward building "emotional connections to music." Professor Kirchhoff stated:

> You have to love music. You have to love teaching. You have to love people. And you just have to love music. And irrationally. Nobody loves anything rationally, I hope. But it's got to be a real love affair with music because it takes you someplace. It's that mode of transportation.

**Dr. Mallory Thompson** discussed that she began to feel music at "a very young age" because her "first relationship to music was through dance, through ballet." She recommended various activities to conductors that may aid their kinesthetic relationship to music, as well as more awareness of their body such as dance or Tai Chi. Dr. Thompson explained that to be more emotionally connected to the music, a conductor must "value" developing their personal relationship with music. She stated, "I think the primary attribute is that you value having that kind of relationship [with music]; that you seek it, that you crave it, that you will do what it takes to find it." She described building this relationship as "the trickiest part" of developing as a conductor because it was "so personal" compared to the "physical technique, audiation, score study, rehearsal techniques, performance practice." Seeking this relationship was a "lifelong pursuit…that would be influenced by any

[70]Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, "Digital Concert Hall," Feburary, 9, 2022, https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en?utm_source=www.berliner-philharmoniker.de&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=brandbar.

number of experiences that a person has in their life; positive and negative." Dr. Thompson believed "the great thing about music," was "you can take everything and make it positive, because you can make something beautiful and meaningful out of it."

**Mr. Alfred Watkins** discussed how conductors, especially in conducting workshops, tend to not thoroughly listen to what the ensemble played and the conductor was overly concerned about their physical technique. When working with conductors, he made an effort to draw a conductor's attention back to the music instead of their technique. He questioned conductors about how they envision a specific section of music should sound, as well as if the ensemble performed the intended interpretation. Mr. Watkins discussed how conductors need to reconnect with their aural image of a piece, and how if ensemble performers would play genuinely what they believed the conductor was gesturing, this feedback would aid the conductor in understanding how their gestures were perceived, as well as how their conducting impacts the sound of the ensemble. He discussed how if the conductor did not "ask them [the performers] anything, they shouldn't do anything." He believed this occurs too often and provided conductors a false sense of how their gesture influenced the ensemble.

# Chapter 4

## Synthesis of the Interview Responses

After analysis of the four interviews, common themes appeared, but each conductor presented their own unique viewpoint and perspective for each topic. The nature of the open-ended interview questions produced answers that occasionally strayed away from the specific question, but the information still provided insight into that person's overall view of score study, teaching of music, and teaching of conducting. Regardless of the answer directly responding to the question, the information obtained was useful to the field of conducting and beneficial in the research of this topic.

### *Score Study*

*Gathering Background Information*

When beginning the score study process, all four conductors believed in acquiring background information pertaining to the composer, their life, and understanding the historical and cultural context in which the music was written. In addition to understanding the world surrounding the composer, it was imperative for them to attain information specifically about the composer's life at the time the music was written and what may have happened in their life leading up to the music being composed. Professors Green and Kirchhoff discussed striving to understand the composer as a person, in an attempt to envision what they may have been experiencing emotionally at the time the music was written. Professor Green believed that if the composer were no longer living, it was the responsibility of the conductor

to seek out people who knew the composer directly to create a "living history of people." All four conductors stressed the importance of seeking to understand the composer to better interpret their intent and message within their music.

In addition to aiding in the search for emotional content of the score, understanding the historical context of the music allows the conductor to consider how to make specific musical decisions based on performance practice of music from time (e.g., how woodwind trills were performed in the Classical era versus the Romantic era). Dr. Thompson explained the information helped her approach a score, whether it was new to her or not, with a "set of expectations." Both Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins discussed how there were few "new ideas" appearing in compositions, and that the conductor was comparing and drawing conclusions about the music based on prior knowledge of music history. Both conductors and composers typically have background knowledge of many of the same prominent composers throughout history. The influence of notable composers of the past has, in some way, shaped how composers think about and write music today. Many foundational compositional techniques reappear within new music and thus, Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins drew on knowledge of those techniques to gain better understanding of the score.

*Approaches to a Premiere Performance*

For some conductors, preparing and performing the premiere of a piece can be a different process based on how score study is approached. Professor Green explained his initial study of the score was approached differently based on whether

the work was established within the wind band repertoire or if the work were being prepared for a premiere. Preparing for a premiere performance can introduce challenges that an established work would not. Professor Green discussed that, on occasion, the conductor begins the process of studying a premiere without the complete score, or that the score may change throughout the study and rehearsal processes. Although a changing score was challenging to work with, the general score study process that Professor Green, Professor Kirchhoff, and Dr. Thompson describe would not be heavily impacted. The conductor may have to backtrack in their study if the score were changed after study had begun, but the overall process remained intact. However, Mr. Watkins' process was impacted by a premiere in that he reported spending time listening to recordings of the work prior to ruminating on the piece for a number of days. This element of his process would have to be altered or electronically produced recordings could be utilized if the composer were to provide them. Although a premiere of a work may alter the score study process, preparation of a premiere typically involved a direct line of communication with the composer. Professor Green, Professor Kirchhoff, and Mr. Watkins all spoke directly to how vital it was to communicate with the composer if the option were available to the conductor.

*Organization of Study*

Every conductor must find their own system of score study that best prepares them for communicating the composer's intent. Professor Kirchhoff views his score study practice in three parts: (a) the intellectual study of the objective elements of the

score, (b) the emotional understanding of the score, and (c) the internalization of the score. However, he discussed that these three facets of his study happen simultaneously. Similarly, Dr. Thompson discussed how she did not "have a checklist," but generally begins with an overview and then moved into more detailed study. Concurrent with her study of the objective elements of the score, Dr. Thompson continually questions the music to grasp a better understanding of it and build a relationship with it, but she allows the process to "flow in an organic way" rather than be bound by strict procedure. Mr. Watkins discussed a similar process of working from large scale to detailed study, but his process was more structured and followed specific steps that he had set for himself. Within the initial study process, both Professor Green and Mr. Watkins discussed how a conductor should reconsider performing a work with their ensemble that they did not connect with on an emotional level. Professor Kirchhoff discussed how some works were "devoid" of emotional content and he avoids studying and performing works of this nature.

*Curiosity*

All four conductors discussed, whether directly or indirectly, that they had a sense of curiosity about the music they were studying. Dr. Thompson explained that she constantly questions the music in an attempt to "understand the tools that are being used to put forth the most important elements…the emotional carrier, the expressive carrier, and knowing that those elements change over the course of the piece." Dr. Thompson mentioned how the emotional elements could "change over the

course of the piece," and Professor Kirchhoff recognized this as well. He called this understanding the "emotional projection" of the piece.

### *Importance of Emotional Content*

All four conductors discussed how music is a recreative art, and that if the emotional content of the score is not uncovered, art cannot be created. Music is a performance art and is deemed "recreative" because the conductor and the ensemble are not directly creating the music—the composer has done this. The notion that the performance of music is a "recreative" art directly contradicts the praxial view that the art is the act of performing the music.[71] Although these opposing philosophies are hotly debated, many musicians and philosophers acknowledge that "there is no single noncontentious understanding of what constitutes musical practice."[72] The interviewees believe that the conductor and ensemble acquire the task of presenting the composer's ideas to the audience and, in turn, take on the responsibility of representing the composer's intent to the best of their collective abilities. The research and study of the background of a piece, attempting to understand the composer as a person, and study of the objective elements of the music all coalesces in recreating the music that the composer envisioned—bringing the composer's voice and message to the audience. Art, according to Merriam-Webster, is "something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings," but who defined the qualifications of something being deemed

[71] Philip Alperson, "Robust Praxialism and the Anti-Aesthetic Turn," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 174, https://doi.org/10.2979/pme.2010.18.2.171.
[72] Ibid.

beautiful?[73] Generally, art is not an exact science, and neither is the process of recreating that which an artist, in this case a composer, created from their imagination.

*Utilizing Life Experiences*

Each interviewee discussed how not only the study of the score impacted the performance of the music, but also the life experiences and perspective each individual conductor brings with them affects how the music was understood, felt, taught, rehearsed, and conducted. Both Professor Kirchhoff and Mr. Watkins mentioned Karel Husa's work *Music for Prague 1968* in their interviews.[74] Professor Kirchhoff discussed how this work housed an immense depth of emotions throughout. Mr. Watkins described how he felt he did not relate to the emotions in the work until one of his parents had passed away. Mr. Watkins returned to the work after this life event because he believed he recognized and had a better understanding of the emotions Husa intended within the music.

Although conductors utilized their personal life experiences to guide them in understanding and relating to the emotions the composer intended to come through the music, Dr. Thompson discussed how she was "not trying to superimpose something that isn't there." She felt that many conductors attempt to place their own emotions and implications on the music rather than seeking to discover the intent of the composer. Professor Green considered this as well, and would ask himself, "Am I

[73] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "art," accessed February 14, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art.
[74] Husa.

trying to find something in myself, rather than something in the music?" Dr. Thompson described the process of discovering the composer's emotional intent in the same way two people would have a conversation—she asked questions of the music, "listens" to the response, and attempts to "interpret what [the composer is] saying through her own experience." Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins both believed that many conductors overcomplicate the process of seeking emotional content and, generally, conductors must simplify how they approach music. Professor Kirchhoff summed up these ideas by stating that the conductor must have "tremendous empathy" for the emotions found in the score. He believed if a conductor had not experienced a particular emotion, they could utilize their imagination to gain better understanding, or they could consider returning to the piece later in life.

*Building a Relationship with Music*

All four interviewees discussed in varying ways the idea that the act of making music holds more meaning than solely reproducing the sounds the composer intended—the pitches and rhythms on the page. Professor Green, Professor Kirchhoff, and Dr. Thompson personified music by describing how they build a "relationship" with the music throughout their study process. Professor Kirchhoff described the intensity with which he believed a conductor must love music in order to find authentic emotional connection as "irrational." Professors Green and Kirchhoff discussed the importance of conductors playing their primary instrument. Both believed that when performing on the instrument, the player had a more kinesthetic experience with the music and could connect with the emotional content

of the music as they produce the sounds themselves. This differs from conductors as they did not physically produce sound with an instrument, they only influence it through their informed gestures.

*Imagination*

The interviewees utilized imagination to assist in creating their personal aural image, their interpretation, of the music in their mind. Dr. Thompson and Professor Green stated the importance of imagination being "absolutely key" and "critical," respectively, to artistic expression. The interviewees all strove throughout their study process to ensure that their interpretation was vivid to the point that it became less internal and more kinesthetic. Professors Green and Kirchhoff expressly discussed how they believed the internal image of the music must be so strong that it "can't help but get out" in a physical manner. Dr. Thompson described wanting to be able to sing, feel, smell, taste, and visualize the score in her mind. Similar to how Professor Kirchhoff's process evolved simultaneously, Dr. Thompson believed that the "emotional and cognitive coexist" together and that they were not two "separate lanes" throughout the score study process. As these two elements of the music were acquired by the conductor, they manifest in the kinesthetic realization of the music—gesture.

*Utilizing More Expansive Vocabulary*

Professor Green stated: "There's a spirit to composers that allow them to speak in poetic terms that others cannot do," however all four interviewees discussed

the notion that most conductors do not utilize a creative and artistic vocabulary when speaking to their ensembles. Composer Warren Benson felt strongly as well that conductors must expand their vocabulary:

> I wish I could hear more conductors and instrumental teachers using better and larger vocabularies that relate to beauty, aesthetics, to charm, to gentleness, strength and power without rancor or anger, to useful tonal vibrance, live sound, to grace of movement, to stillness, to fervor, to the depth of great age, the exultation of great happiness, the feel of millennia, the sweetness and purity of lullabies, the precision of fine watches, the reach into time—space of great love and respect, the care of phrasing, the delicacy of balance, the ease of warmth, the resonance of history, the susurrus of wind in the pines and whisperings in churches, the intimacy of the solo instrument, the kind weight of togetherness and the rising spirit of creating something, bringing something to life from cold print, living music, moving music.[75]

Both Professor Kirchhoff and Mr. Watkins discussed selecting specific words to describe various aspects of the music both in their own study and when communicating with the ensemble. Mr. Watkins believed that "the broader [the conductor's] vocabulary, the broader their musicianship is going to be," and that the expressive markings available in musical notation are insufficient in depicting the vast range of emotive content present in music. All four conductors described utilizing language to create imagery to aid themselves and the ensemble in connecting emotionally to the music. Dr. Thompson and Professor Kirchhoff placed importance on employing concise language to maximize time playing in rehearsal, and Dr. Thompson believed that a "well-placed adjective" is highly effective when striving to be succinct yet specific.

[75] Warren Benson, "On Being Emotionally 'Moved' at a Band Concert," *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles* vol. 5, (1998): 40.

### *Manifesting Gesture*

Conducting gesture was derived from the cognitive and emotional understanding of the music that created the vivid mental image and individual interpretation of the music. Professor Green described how conductors could produce gestures that were "beautiful," but if those gestures were not derived from the music, they were "meaningless." As part of her process, Dr. Thompson delays contemplating gesture because she believed the right gesture would manifest from her image of the music when she was conducting the ensemble in rehearsal.

#### *Attention to Technique*

Although gesture was the physical product of the aural image, all four conductors agree that a strong foundation of conducting technique must be in place for gesture to be understood by the ensemble. Professor Kirchhoff and Mr. Watkins believed conducting classes overcomplicate learning physical conducting technique. The foundational techniques, similar in nature to the fundamental techniques required to play an instrument, were vital and require practice, but the technique alone cannot accurately portray the full scope of the composer's message within the music. Intense study, development of a powerful aural image, and allowing that image to dictate the physical gesture would provide the ensemble with better insight into the emotional content of the music and the composer's intent.

### *Rehearsal Application*

*Ensemble Technique*

Each interviewee discussed that the conductor's physical technique was not the only form of technique required to genuinely create art. Additionally, the four conductors believed that the ensemble must have proficient technique performing on their instruments as individuals and as a group. Early in his career, Professor Kirchhoff thought that if the technical elements of the ensemble's playing were in place, the expressive elements would manifest on their own. He did not address the emotional content thoroughly in his preparation of the score or in the rehearsal of the ensemble. All four conductors discussed the importance of ensemble technique, as well as how occasionally rehearsals must be focused more specifically on improving technique in order to serve the art of music-making.

*Balanced Rehearsal – Technique vs Emotion*

Each conductor maintains their own method of encouraging the ensemble to see the larger scope of the rehearsal process, but, generally, all four conductors strove to assist their ensemble members in understanding that segments of rehearsal that were focused on the improvement of technique serve the greater good of music-making. The conductors felt that encouraging the players to shift their mindset and motivation for rehearsing technique aids in generating a more focused rehearsal environment, builds a stronger sense of unity amongst the players, and could improve the overall moral of group. Professor Kirchhoff admitted that rehearsing an ensemble

was a “balancing act,” but all four conductors agree that neither the emotional content nor the technique could be completely abandoned throughout the rehearsal process.

Mr. Watkins discussed how some musicians view unifying section technique, (e.g., bowing in a violin section) in an ensemble as eliminating the opportunity for the individual performer to be expressive. Striving to unify the concept of sound within a section was an aspect of technical rehearsal that must be maintained in an ensemble setting. The individual performer still maintains expressive freedom within that sound concept. Mr. Watkins believed that with enough preparation, the technique would become muscle memory and the performers could focus their mental energy on expressing the music. Professor Kirchhoff stated, “The enemy is the reality that no music is better than what it sounds,” and Professor Green summed up the importance of technique by stating, “Art stands on the shoulders of technique. If you don’t have good technique, you can’t have good art. It’s impossible.”

*Rehearsal Mindset*

In addition to artistic score study, the mindset with which a conductor approaches rehearsals and how they communicate with their ensemble has an enormous impact on whether meaningful music-making will happen. Dr. Thompson and Professor Kirchhoff discussed similar ideas of how they approach the rehearsal process. Dr. Thompson stated, “The point [of rehearsal] is not that you’re [the conductor] trying to get rid of things that are wrong…. The point of doing it [rehearsing technique] is to free up creative, expressive potential and to enable and expose it [the music].” When she came across moments in the music that need to be

rehearsed for improvement of technique, she refers to them as “opportunities,” rather than mistakes. Similarly, Professor Kirchhoff approached rehearsal with the mindset of “removing distractions” from his aural image rather than “fixing” what the ensemble was producing.

Although these approaches were positive in nature, all four conductors discussed the importance of intensity of the rehearsal. Mr. Watkins believed it was important to push the ensemble to the edge of their abilities in rehearsal to know where the technical threshold stands for the performance. Dr. Thompson took a similar approach to Mr. Watkins in that she became “fixed on getting the last 3% out of [the ensemble]” each rehearsal. Professor Kirchhoff felt that the members of the ensemble thrive on the energy of the conductor, and an intense and passionate rehearsal could generate an “extraordinary” experience that the players, as artists, crave. Professor Green affirmed that the player’s time and talents must be respected by using rehearsal time efficiently.

Each conductor stressed the importance of studying and connecting with the music prior to rehearsing the music with the ensemble. Throughout the rehearsal process, Professor Kirchhoff revealed his personal viewpoint of the music to the ensemble and believed that his interpretation must be one that he could guide the players toward connecting with individually. He felt he must be “transparent with [his] own feelings” to set an example and provide “permission” for the performers to form their own connection to the music. Dr. Thompson believed that as she expands her relationship with the music by sharing it with the ensemble, if she imposed too much of herself on the ensemble through her interpretation, there was no space for the

individual players to add their own creativity to the performance. This, similar to the "two lanes" of technique and expression of emotion, was a balancing act between guiding the ensemble toward the conductor's personal interpretation and allowing creative space for the performers.

*Gestural Balancing Act*

Another balancing act that conductors maintained during rehearsal was pertaining to their physical gesture. Professor Kirchhoff discussed how his conducting had to "continually shift" in order to guide the ensemble toward his interpretation of the music in contrast to being a "facilitator" in moments where the players required assistance with the technical demands of the piece. As discussed, the physical gesture was motivated by the conductor's aural image of the music, and therefore if the conductor did not maintain a vivid image of the music in their mind, they would have difficulty adjusting their gesture in the moment.

*Creating Space for the Intangible*

When strong emotional connection to music is formed and a meaningful musical experience occurs, the feeling is indescribable for many musicians. Professor Kirchhoff believed conductors must approach music-making with "motives that are pure." Similarly, Dr. Thompson suggested that conductors must "give with a pure heart," in an attempt to create meaningful emotional connection with the ensemble and audience through music. Each of the four conductors discussed the concept of

vulnerability in their own way, but all agreed that vulnerability on the part of the conductor is key in forming connection to the ensemble and audience through music.

Mr. Watkins felt that he experienced music based on the "response from the performers and the response from the audience." He believed there was "indescribable" energy that was "available to all humankind" that manifests during a performance and therefore he believed the conductor must "leave a little space for enthusiasm, for excitement, for God to speak" when performing a concert. Both Professors Green and Kirchhoff noted that they found it difficult to put into words their definition of a musical experience, and in discussion of how each conductor experienced music, all four interviewees referenced the encounter being other worldly.

Professors Green and Kirchhoff both utilized the term "transcendental" when describing a musical experience. In their own ways, each of the conductors described how a musical experience cannot be prescribed, forced, or manufactured; it must happen, as Dr. Thompson stated, "organically." The interviewees mindsets in how they approach score study and in how they approach rehearsal and performance were centered around creating space for a meaningful musical experience for themselves, the ensemble, and the audience. Professor Green strove to connect with the "spirituality…of a person" when conducting an ensemble and believed this relationship was paramount in creating space for an "intangible synapse of energy that happens from the instant you [the conductor] stand on the podium." Professor Kirchhoff also referenced an "energy" that both he and the ensemble were mutually attuned to for a meaningful experience to occur. He believed the feeling of a musical

experience was “seductive,” and therefore musicians seek out and crave feeling it once they have experienced it. Dr. Thompson described the feeling of a musical experience as though she and the ensemble “cease to exist” and that it felt “free and spontaneous.” Each of the conductors referenced a feeling a freedom when a musical moment occurs. Dr. Thompson believed that conductors must work more diligently to create space for these moments with younger ensembles so that the conductor had the opportunity to make the students aware of how special these moments are.

### *Programming*

All four conductors briefly discussed the importance of programming repertoire at various moments of their interviews. Professor Green questioned how if he, as the conductor, could not form a connection with the music, how would he guide the members of the ensemble in doing so? Dr. Thompson and Professor Kirchhoff referenced selecting repertoire that was appropriate for the technical abilities of the ensemble. If the members of the ensemble cannot grasp the techniques required to perform the music, the focus of their playing would remain on the technique and not on creating meaningful music. Both Professor Green and Mr. Watkins discussed that there was a repertoire of quality music available to wind bands, and they did not believe in wasting their ensemble’s time with music that was unworthy of them. Dr. Thompson valued the time of the ensemble members and believed it was the conductor’s responsibility to “empower” and “nurture” the ensemble. She discussed that a strong relationship between the ensemble and conductor builds “commitment to the music” so that the conductor and ensemble

work more cohesively toward sending "something of beauty into the world." Mr. Watkins stated that programming "has a huge impact on the maintenance of the art form." He felt strongly that if a conductor cannot find emotional connection with a piece, the ensemble and audience would have difficulty in connecting as well. If conductors completely disregard connecting with the audience, the audience would eventually stop seeking out performances.

### *Audience Connection*

Just as musicians have their own reasons for pursuing music, audience members have their own individual motivations for attending a concert. Professor Green discussed the disparities in concert goers and that some audience members were there out of obligation and that "they're not going to be moved by anything." Conductors did not know the motivation for their audience member's attendance, but both Professor Green and Dr. Thompson explained the importance of the conductor's artistic intent. Dr. Thompson believed that once the ensemble delivers their rendition of the music to the audience, the audience would "do with it what they will." She discussed how a conductor would never truly know their direct impact on the ensemble members and audience but believed that a conductor should continue to put forth all of their emotional efforts in both rehearsals and performances. Professor Green agreed with this sentiment and believed conductors should "work hard and hope," because "there are no guarantees" in terms of how others would connect to the music.

### *Teaching Conductors*

*Individualized Study*

All four interviewees discussed that conducting was a highly individualized art. Similar to their notion that a musical moment cannot be forced, students of conducting cannot be provided prescribed gesture to be a more musical conductor, they must be guided to discover their own personal relationship to music and their ensemble members. The gesture utilized must originate from the musical intent and the conductor's individual interpretation. Each of the conductors discussed questioning conducting students in various ways. Professor Kirchhoff and Mr. Watkins encouraged students to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of their gesture based on the response of the ensemble. They both discussed the importance of the listening. Many conducting students focus their mental energy on their physical gesture as they conduct and, in turn, they did not listen intently to the playing from the ensemble. Mr. Watkins discussed directing conductor's ears back to the ensemble, and Professor Kirchhoff explained that conducting an ensemble was the "stimulus" and the conductor must listen to the "response" that their gesture elicits from the ensemble.

*Encouraging Independence*

Although a supportive professional community, conducting student must eventually make musical decisions independently of their conducting professors. Professors Green and Kirchhoff asked their conducting students to perform self-evaluation and decide if the response from the ensemble matched their aural image of

the music. Professor Green wanted his students to consider the logic for utilizing a specific gesture in relation to their aural image. Professor Kirchhoff approached aiding his students by questioning how to "repair the technique to get the music they wanted." All four conductors discussed providing examples to students to aid them in appearing musical, but that each conductor must seek out their own personal vocabulary of gesture that was specific to them and clearly conveys the intended interpretation to the ensemble.

## Promising Practices

Based on the suggestions, teachings, experiences, and discussions with Professor Gary Green, Professor Craig Kirchhoff, Dr. Mallory Thompson, and Mr. Alfred Watkins, the following are promising practices recommended to conductors to aid in becoming a more emotionally connected conductor through artistic score study.

### *Score Study Process*

#### *Time*

All four the of the interviewees discussed spending ample time studying the music prior to conducting a live ensemble in rehearsal. Mr. Watkins described how he spends weeks studying scores prior to rehearsing an ensemble. Dr. Thompson specifically discussed how she has become more patient with her score study practices throughout her career. She has moved away from studying rapidly with the goal of attaching labels to describe the music, and now strives to build a relationship with the music. There is no substitute for a conductor allowing themselves time to

study and ingest the music. When beginning the score study process, a conductor must be aware that artful study and internalization of the score requires a great deal of time. Conductors should begin the process of selecting repertoire and studying the score, well in advance of the first rehearsal. Score study is a highly personal process and therefore, the exact amount of time required for each conductor and each score will fluctuate based on the individual completing the study.

*Gathering Background Information*

Music is the creation of the composer, and it is, as Professor Green stated, the "responsibility" of the conductor to represent the composer's intent and message through the recreative process of performing the music with an ensemble. All four interviewees explained that the role of the conductor is to represent the message of the composer, the artist, through the performance of the music. Based on the importance that all four interviewees placed on bringing forth the composer's intent, I suggest conductors approach the score study process with the mindset of striving to uncover the message and emotional content that the composer intended. Prior to studying the objective elements of the music, it is recommended that conductors seek out as much information as possible surrounding the composer of the piece, the time period in which the piece was written, and any information that may be pertinent in gaining understanding of the inception of the piece.

Knowledge of the historical background of a piece is vital in understanding the historical implications surrounding the music. Conductors must have a strong grasp of music history and world history, or be willing to seek out the information, to provide insight into external influences on the composer and recognize historically

relevant musical considerations. Familiarity of compositional techniques utilized prior to and during the time the piece the was written, understanding of the technical considerations of performing the parts, knowledge of the evolution of musical instruments, recognition of performance practice of the time, and awareness of the significance of the piece within the repertoire are some of the elements a conductor should consider to create a broader and deeper understanding of the score.

*Composer Investigation*

All of the interviewees discussed the immeasurable importance of striving to understand the composer as a person to aid in uncovering their message and emotional content of the music. Professor Green and Mr. Watkins explained the significance of communicating directly with living composers when the opportunity is available to the conductor. The composer may provide clarity to the message and meaning of the music for the conductor. If the composer is not accessible or no longer living, Professor Green and Mr. Watkins highly recommend attempting to communicate with people who knew or worked with the composer directly, or to acquire as many written accounts of the composer as possible. When Professor Kirchhoff discovers a connection between the composer and another person, he poses many questions that investigate the person's potential influence on the composer and the specific piece of music being studied. He asks questions pertaining to the nature of the relationship between the composer and the other person, whether this relationship had an impact on the creation of the work, and what the "emotional involvement" of the other person was with the composer during the compositional process.

Based on the recommendations of the interviewees, I suggest conductors seek to communicate as much as possible with the composer to gain better understanding of their musical intent. Whether or not the composer is available to correspond with the conductor, I recommend researching and gathering as much information about the composer, their life, their relationships, and their inspiration for the music as attainable. Composer research should not be limited to printed sources, and I recommend conductors solicit information from people who knew the composer personally or professionally. In addition, conductors can pursue discussion with other conductors who have experience recreating the specific piece being studied or other music that the composer has produced. Information acquired from another conductor about the composer and their work will be shrouded in that conductor's individual viewpoint, interpretation of the music, personal feelings about the composer and music, as well as their rehearsal and performance experience with the music. I recommend that conductors remain cognizant of this as they consider information gathered from other conductors. Conductors must strive to gain understanding of the inspiration for the piece, as well as the composer as a person, to attain a more holistic view of the inspiration for the work and begin the process of discovering the emotive content within the music.

*Other Background Information*

Each of the interviewees described the importance of collecting any information that is relevant to the piece being studied. Other factors the conductor might consider in their background research:

1. If the work is an original composition for that particular genre, or if it is an arrangement or transcription
2. If not originally written for that medium, seeking information about the arranger or transcriber
3. Knowledge of the composition date in comparison to the publication date
    a. If there is a large span of time between the two dates, why this occurred
4. If the work was written in honor or memory of someone
5. If the piece was commissioned and by whom
6. If the piece includes a dedication to a person, group of people or event
7. If the work was written to be performed at a specific event
8. Where, when, and who—ensemble and conductor—premiered the work

The conductor must strive to uncover as much information about the work and its creation to aid in their overall approach to understanding, connecting with, conducting, rehearsing, and performing the music.

*Studying the Objective Elements of the Music*

Once significant background knowledge has been gathered, the conductor must begin the process of studying the music. Both Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins clearly described utilizing a macro-micro-macro approach to studying the objective elements of the music. The concept of macro-micro-macro, as defined by professor of music Dr. Shelley Jagow, should be familiar to many conductors as a teaching

strategy utilized to structure a rehearsal cycle or lesson.[76] Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins both begin their process by taking a cursory look through the score in its entirety. Dr. Thompson specifically discussed "noticing" elements of the music as she took in a broad view of the score. Both Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins explained that they might make multiple sweeping views of the score prior to seeking more detailed musical information. They observe what appear to be impactful moments in the music by becoming aware of large-scale changes to elements such as time, tempo, and orchestration. Based on their processes, I recommend a similar process. Begin the process of studying the work by taking note of information provided at the beginning of the score such as: whether the score is in concert pitch or transposed, the instrumentation, the initial tempo, time, and key signature markings, the opening dynamic marking, and the orchestration utilized to begin the work. After reviewing the initial markings, take a look through the score and make note of moments that look important due to change in either style, tempo, time signature, dynamics, or dramatic shift in orchestration.

*Discovering Musical Form*

Most conductors learn about musical forms in music theory or form and analysis course in college. Mr. Watkins pointedly discussed the significance of conductors understanding the form of the work. He believed the work must have a form that can be followed and understood by the conductor, and, in turn, the ensemble members and audience. As a part of the score study process, all four

[76] Shelley Jagow, *Teaching Instrumental Music: Developing the Complete Band Program*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Meredith Music Publications, 2020), 204-205.

interviewees recommend that a conductor study the objective elements of the music including but not limited to the melodic content, harmonic progressions and overall harmonic language, rhythmic content, stylistic indications, expression and articulation markings, use of and changes to orchestration, time and tempo alterations, and dynamic shifts. Dr. Thompson discussed that she makes note of reoccurring intervals as she studies. Dr. Thompson and Mr. Watkins discussed how there are not many brand-new compositional techniques and conductors can more quickly understand a work that is new to them by having prior knowledge of compositional trends throughout history.

A conductor must seek to understand the form so that they may lead the ensemble through the music from beginning to end in a clear and effective manner. Developed from discussion with the interviewees, I recommend studying the various objective elements of the score after taking in an initial review of the piece. The macro-micro-macro approach is effective because it provides general awareness to the conductor of the overall projection of the piece, then focuses attention on procuring more specific and detailed information about the music, and, lastly, placing the detailed material back into the context of the entire piece. Discovering and analyzing the musical elements of the score (e.g., melodic content, rhythmic content, harmonic language, important intervals, reoccurring material or patterns), as well as making note of how the music changes through the course of the piece (e.g., tempo, time signature, key, stylistic changes) contributes to awareness of an overall form. In addition to utilizing the musical elements to understand and label the form of the piece, the conductor may also consider researching to discover how other musicians

have defined the form of the piece. The entire score study process is practiced to aid the conductor in cultivating their personal aural image of the piece. If form and analysis information is acquired through study of another musician's findings, and even if the conductor believes that information to be from a credible source, the conductor must still take the time to study the work and decide based on their findings if they agree with that musician's ideas about the piece. A conductor must understand *why* a piece of music has been deemed a specific form so that they can better lead their ensemble in understanding the structure and projection of the piece.

### ***Study of Abstract Elements of the Music***

#### *Questioning the Music*

Throughout the process of studying the objective elements of the music, the conductor must question the compositional decisions of the composer to begin the process of understanding how the objective musical elements create, impact, and portray the composer's message and intent. Professor Green believes many conductors become fixated on studying the objective elements of the music but then fail to utilize that detailed information to comprehend the bigger picture of understanding the composer's intent of the entire work. Essentially, conductors must be aware in the context of macro-micro-macro study to shift back to a macro view of the piece and place the acquired information into the larger context of the work. The role of the conductor in the recreative process is to aid in communicating the composer's intent. The detailed study of the objective elements of the score is necessary, but to conclude studying at this point in the process highly diminishes the

chances that emotional content will be uncovered, and therefore the composer's intent will not be fully realized. The emotional connection to the music on the part of the conductor, ensemble, and audience may not occur.

After analyzing the processes used by the four interviewees, I recommend that as conductors study the objective elements of the music, they begin questioning the composer's motives for making their compositional choices throughout the piece. While studying, conductors should ask questions comparable to, "Why did the composer shift the orchestration at this moment? Why did the composer choose to have this specific instrument resolve the suspension? Why did the composer begin and end the piece in this manner? What was the composer trying to accomplish by restructuring the accompaniment although the melody remains unchanged?" to begin gaining deeper understanding of the music. The objective elements of the music serve the greater purpose of relaying the message and emotional content behind the composition itself. Questioning the composer's decisions, in addition to considering all of the background information acquired about the piece, may help a conductor to discover the emotional content and meaning in the score past the objective musical elements. The process of questioning the composer's motives in an effort to understand their intent should occur on the micro level—seeking understanding of details within the music—as well as on the macro level by exploring and questioning the large-scale form and progression of the piece.

*Building a Personal Relationship with the Music*

Each of the interviewees discussed the idea that every conductor carries their personal life experiences with them as they encounter and study music. These experiences aid a conductor in relating to and empathizing with the intent of the composer. Professor Kirchhoff discussed creating a narrative for the music so that he can better connect his personal experiences to the message and emotions found in the music. Dr. Thompson explained that each conductor's personal life experiences have distinctive influence on their interpretation of and relationship with the music. As part of her score study process, Dr. Thompson feels as though she is having a conversation with the score. She asks questions of it and seeks out the answers, rather than attempting to impose her own personal feelings over the composer's intent. Dr. Thompson explained that building a relationship with a piece of music is similar to building a relationship with a person—she listens, makes observations, and then attempts to empathize with the responses she acquires, like she would listen to a friend explain a situation that she was not present for, but relates to the emotions involved in a situation from her own life. Like life experience, Dr. Thompson referenced the fact that conductors will also bring prior experiences with other pieces of music to the study of a piece.

Considering the two approaches discussed, I recommend combining them in an effort to build a more vivid aural picture and emotional connection to the music. I suggest that either after a conductor has questioned the motives of the composer's musical decisions or simultaneously, the conductor must examine the answers to the questions and attempt to empathize with the emotions and motivations they discover.

This process cannot be rushed and requires the conductor to ruminate over their personal life experiences. The conductor must utilize their life experiences to connect to the emotions found in the score so that their conducting can tell the composer's full story, and they can experience the music in a more emotional and personal way.

While engaging in work associating their personal experiences and emotions to the music, I recommend the conductor create a narrative for themselves based on the emotional content that they discover throughout the score. Attaching a narrative may provide a more substantial connection to the emotional content of the music for a conductor. The conductor must be aware that formulating a narrative is a learning tool or exercise to build connection to the music. The conductor's narrative cannot outweigh or eclipse the composer's message and intent of the music.

*Expanding Imagination*

In addition to empathizing with the composer's message, imagination is vital in uncovering emotive content and creating a vivid aural image of the music. Both the objective elements of the score and the emotive content together produce the conductor's aural image of the music. Dr. Thompson explained that each person has to find their own path to tapping into their imagination. She recommends finding one thing that a conductor is curious about, then the conductor should take steps to learn about and explore the object of their curiosity. She provided examples of "food … art … nature," but discussed that exploration does not specifically need to be in music. She believed if a conductor uses imagination "effectively in music-making," the process becomes more visceral. Mr. Watkins encouraged conductors to learn about

and come into contact with creative people in the world. Observing and learning from creative people will inspire a conductor's own personal creativity. Mr. Watkins recommended reading about and speaking to individuals who are considered highly imaginative in order to inspire the conductor's own creative thinking.

Due to the importance each interviewee placed on utilizing imagination, I recommend conductors strive to expand and utilize their imaginations more often to aid in their connection to the music they study and conduct. Growing a conductor's imagination does not have to begin with music but utilizing the imagination more frequently and encouraging curiosity will lead a conductor to become more curious about the score. I recommend a conductor seek out information about creative and imaginative people. Conductors should seek out books, articles, documentaries, and any information they can acquire about people who have had a successful career based on their imagination and creative thinking. Learning about the thought processes and motivations of creative people can be highly inspirational for conductors and lead to new pathways to thinking about and approaching music.

To expand a conductor's imagination, I recommend identifying an activity or subject that the conductor has interest in and feels comfortable exploring. Trying out and learning about new things can aid a conductor in thinking in different ways, as well as ignite an excitement and passion for something that the conductor can then draw upon when studying and relating to the emotional content within the music. To further broaden and develop imagination and ways of thinking, conductors should consider activities that they may not feel completely comfortable exploring. A conductor should not attempt an activity that will cause serious physical or mental

harm to themselves. They should consider attempting an endeavor that has caused them some level of fear and anxiety in the past due to lack of knowledge, but they can remain safe attempting. Some examples may be singing karaoke at a public establishment, hiking, experimenting with a new art form such as painting or sculpting, meditation, and any number of activities. Exploring an activity that aims to push a conductor outside of their comfort zone will create new life experiences for that conductor to draw upon in future study, as well as potentially build a stronger sense of confidence and curiosity in the conductor.

*Creating a More Expansive Musical Language*

The musical language that is currently available to conductors is limited in the depth of vocabulary and terminology. For example, there can be a variety of aural definitions and concepts of "forte" throughout one piece of music dependent upon the instrumentation or the trajectory of the piece. Conductors must utilize clear and specific language to differentiate the various forte markings throughout a piece so that the ensemble understands how to perform each one in a distinct manner, as well as the gain understanding of the differing emotional content in each moment of music. As Professor Kirchhoff attempts to decipher the message of the composer, he selects words that help define that message for himself. The process of creating a narrative will challenge a conductor to broaden their vocabulary, as well as bring their personal aural image, their interpretation of the music, into more well-defined terms. Professor Kirchhoff and Dr. Thompson both discussed how the emotional landscape of a piece can change throughout the work. Mr. Watkins recommended conductors write down a

"range of emotions" they have uncovered throughout the work. Professor Kirchhoff recommended that a conductor map out and understand the emotional projection of a piece. Understanding the scope of and where the emotional energy of the music is going, a conductor can pace the energy of their physical gesture, as well as guide the ensemble through the various emotions portrayed throughout the work.

Expanding imagination and utilizing creative thinking to develop a narrative for a piece can aid the conductor in connecting on an emotional level with a piece of music, as well as help the ensemble in understanding the emotional content and message that the composer intended. Based on the information gathered, I recommend conductors locate where they feel the emotional energy of the music changes, and then write a minimum of three words that describe the emotional content of that moment in the score. Additionally, it may be useful to include words that describe the character and atmosphere of the different segments of music. I recommend using a feeling wheel and a thesaurus throughout this exercise, both of which are easily accessible online, to expand the conductor's vocabulary. A feeling wheel provides the user a wide range of vocabulary to choose from. Creator of the feeling wheel, Dr. Gloria Willcox, described the tool as such:

> The Feeling Wheel is designed to aid people in learning to recognize and communicate about their feelings. It consists of an inner circle with 5 sectors and two outer concentric circles. The sectors are each labeled with the name of a primary feeling, viz., mad, sad, scared, joyful, powerful, and peaceful. The outer rings contain names of secondary feelings related to the primary ones. The wheel has proven useful in assisting clients to learn how to identify, to express, to generate, and to change feelings. Suggestions for employment of the Feeling Wheel are provided.[77]

[77] Gloria Willcox, "The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy," *Transactional Analysis Journal* vol. 12, no. 4 (October 1982): 274, https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378201200411.

Following the process of labeling the changes throughout the entire piece, I recommend that the conductor map out the emotional energy of the piece in a document separate from the score. Whether computer generated or handwritten, the conductor should make a graph with the horizontal axis representing the length of the piece segmented by the emotional changes listed in chronological order. The vertical access of the graph represents the energy level of the music from lowest energy at the bottom to highest energy at the top. Utilizing the vocabulary chosen to represent each section of music, the conductor can create a visual representation of what they believe to be the emotional energy at any given moment in the music, as well as see the "emotional projection," as Professor Kirchhoff called it, in visual format for the entire piece. This graph provides the conductor with a visual tool that can aid them in pacing the energy of their conducting and provide a roadmap to guide the ensemble through the emotional changes of the music. The graph can be utilized to aid the ensemble more directly in understanding the conductor's vision for the piece if the conductor feels comfortable sharing the image with the ensemble.

*Internalizing the Music*

Based on Professor Kirchhoff's description of his internalization process, all four conductors strive to internalize the music in their own way. A conductor must aim to hear a vivid interpretation of the music in their mind prior to conducting the ensemble. The score study process is how the conductor builds their personal viewpoint, or interpretation, of the composer's intent. Playing an instrument, singing each line of the score, and studying both the objective and emotional aspects of the

music allow the conductor to make informed, distinctive decisions about how they want the ensemble to portray the composer's message within the music. To successfully lead the ensemble in preparing and performing a comprehensive recreation of the composer's music, the conductor must have a clear and detailed image of the music in their mind—it is essential the conductor has the end result of what they want the music to sound like in mind prior to embarking on the rehearsal process. Holding a vivid image of the music in their mind, a conductor can lead and guide the ensemble more effectively so as to maintain efficient rehearsals and provide more opportunity for musical moments to occur in both rehearsal and performance. To aid a conductor in the internalization process, I recommend following the previously discussed exercises and suggestions to construct a highly detailed, extremely clear, and emotionally connected image of the music to where the conductor cannot only hear the music in their mind but feel the energy and shaping of the music in their body. As previously stated, there is no substitute for time. The conductor must be prepared to spend a great deal of time studying, analyzing, playing, and immersing themselves in the music to internalize and feel the music inside their body.

*Creating Kinesthetic Connection to the Music*

To aid conductors in studying the objective elements of the music, as well as becoming more connected kinesthetically, both Professors Green and Kirchhoff highly recommended that conductors incorporate playing their primary instrument as a part of their study. Professor Green and Dr. Thompson specifically referenced

singing as part of study as well. All of the conductors discussed the notion that the study of music is a kinesthetic process in addition to being intellectual. Dr. Thompson described how she wants to sing, feel, smell, taste, and visualize the score. She believes singing helps her to feel the melodies in her body. Professor Kirchhoff discussed wanting to feel the music within his body and how the breath is the key to everything. He believes the breath is a person's "connection to the universe" and if a conductor can connect their breath to the music, this will assist in the physical gesture being more organic. Professor Green, Professor Kirchhoff, and Dr. Thompson discussed how the internal image of the music must produce the physical gestures used to conduct the work. Professors Kirchhoff and Green both encouraged conductors to study the music to the point where their connection to the music felt visceral and the music "couldn't help but get out." Both conductors described this as the music coming from the "inside out," and this must be how physical gesture manifests.

Physically producing music on an instrument or through singing will assist the conductor in understanding the music from a kinesthetic standpoint, as well as force the conductor to express music in a different way. Conductors do not physically produce sound when conducting an ensemble and playing an instrument or singing will allow the conductor to experience the music in a more physical and tangible way. I highly recommend both singing and playing the music on the conductor's primary instrument as way to build a kinesthetic connection to the music. I recommend the primary instrument because less focus will need to be placed on the physical technique of playing the instrument. The conductor is playing the music to continue

creating a strong aural image of the piece, as well as feel the music in a physical manner, and if too much attention must be paid to solely playing the instrument, it is more difficult for the exercise to be effective in its original purpose. To supplement the playing of single lines of music, I recommend the conductor utilize a piano or keyboard to help themselves hear the harmonies and multiple lines that move simultaneously throughout the piece. If a conductor is not proficient at playing piano, they must work through this exercise slowly to ensure they are hearing the harmonies and motion of the lines accurately.

Furthermore, I recommend singing in addition to playing an instrument because singing is the most organic way for a person to produce sound and create music. Singing will also assist the conductor in connecting the breath to the music in a different way from playing an instrument. Singing places the conductor in a more vulnerable position because the music is coming directly from them. As discussed, conductors must strive to be vulnerable for the sake of allowing the emotional content of the music to speak, and practicing the act of being vulnerable while singing will aid the conductor in being more vulnerable with the ensemble when conducting.

*Sequence of Study*

All four interviewees described how conducting is a deeply personal art, and therefore each conductor will have to develop their score study process in a manner that best suits them in connecting to the music. Dr. Thompson described the two major areas of score study as the "emotional and cognitive," while Professor Kirchhoff described a three-part process that included studying the objective

elements, seeking an emotional understanding of the score, and internalizing the music. Both Dr. Thompson and Professor Kirchhoff described how these major categories of study happen concurrently for each of them. The recommendations presented to aid a conductor in studying the objective elements of the music, as well as discovering emotive content in the score do not need to be utilized in a strict order. Regardless of the order in which the process of discovery occurs for an individual conductor, none of the major areas of study—objective elements of the music, emotional content, constructing an interpretation, and internalizing the music—can be abandoned.

### ***Programming***

#### *Technical Considerations*

All four interviewees cited the art of programming throughout their interview. A conductor must consider various aspects of the music prior to rehearsing and conducting the music with an ensemble. Throughout the score study process, the conductor must consider the technical limitations of their ensemble. If the technical challenges of the music are too demanding for the players in the ensemble to master within the rehearsal timeframe, there is little chance the ensemble will have the mental space to connect with the music on an emotional level. The ensemble will be fixated on performing the technical aspects of the music and, as Professor Kirchhoff stated, "you can't be emotionally connected to the music if everyone is just trying to survive." Bringing forth the composer's intent must be the goal in rehearsing and performing the music. I recommend that prior to a conductor committing to the study,

rehearsal, and performance of a piece, they consider if their ensemble will be able to meet the technical demands of the music in a timely manner. I specify "in a timely manner" because the beginning of a rehearsal cycle may require more of the player's focus to be on technique, but there has to come a point where the players allow muscle memory to aid them in the technique. With adequate time before the performance, the players must be able to shift their primary mental focus to creating emotionally connected and compelling music, rather than solely on technique. I recommend reviewing the technical aspects of the music prior to beginning the recommended score study process—if the ensemble will never be able to fully grasp the technique, the piece should not be studied, rehearsed, and performed at that time with that particular ensemble.

*Conductor Connection*

In addition to technical considerations, the conductor must decide for themselves if they feel they have connected with the music on an emotional level. Professor Green discussed that time is limited and there is a vast amount of repertoire available for conductors to choose from. All four conductors acknowledged that if they cannot connect with a piece, unless specifically obligated to, they will not rehearse and perform the work with an ensemble. As discussed, discovering the emotive content within the score, and connecting with it, is key in providing a comprehensive experience with the music and bringing forth the composer's intent. If a conductor does not find connection to the music, I recommend that they reconsider programming the work.

Deciding not to perform a specific work does not imply that the conductor will *never* perform the work with an ensemble. Mr. Watkins described how he felt as though he could not understand and connect with the emotions Karel Husa portrayed in *Music for Prague 1968* when he initially studied it.[78] At first, he decided not to perform the work. After the passing of his parents, he returned to the work because he felt he understood the emotional content of the score, could empathize with Husa's message, and he could more successfully connect his personal feelings to the music. I recommend that conductors develop and continually update a list of works they would like to perform with an ensemble throughout their life. If a conductor does not uncover a connection with a piece, but still has interest in performing it, they keep this work somewhere on their list to consider returning to in the future. Life experiences may influence a conductor to where later in life they feel they can form a connection to a piece of music.

Similarly, I recommend conductors consider returning to a work they have performed in the past. Additional life experiences and growth of knowledge can change a conductor's interpretation of a work. Returning to a work later in life provides an opportunity for the conductor to experience the work in a new way. I recommend that conductors also include works on their list that they would like to return to in the future.

[78] Husa.

### *Manifesting Gesture*

Score study of the objective elements of the music is a process that requires conductors to draw upon all areas of their music education—music history, music theory, conducting, and rehearsal techniques. To be done thoroughly and artfully, the score study process must be a culmination of study of the objective elements of the score, consideration for the composer's intent, attaching to the emotions discovered based on personal life experience, and building a continually evolving relationship with a piece of music prior to considering physical gesture and rehearsing an ensemble.

#### *Beginning to Move to the Music*

All four conductors discussed that gesture manifests from a vivid aural image of the music. Dr. Thompson strongly recommended that conductors delay contemplating their gestures for a piece of music. She believes that conductors shift their focus away from studying and internalizing the music to that of making gestural decisions too early in the study process. Dr. Thompson discussed that when conductors begin prescribing specific gestures for the music too early, the interpretation can be "limited by the way that are our arms are comfortable moving."

Conductors must reach the point in their study process where they feel a deep, visceral connection to the music. The interpretation and internal image of the music must generate organic gestures and therefore, I recommend that conductors be more patient in moving their hands with the music. To generate more impactful, meaningful, and musically driven gestures, conductors must continue to study the

music until they feel as though the music can't help but get out of their body via gesture. Prior to moving to the music through conducting patterns, I recommend the conductor simply move their entire body to the music. This exercise should be done not with a recording of the work, but with the conductor singing or solely hearing it in their mind. A recording should not be utilized for this exercise because the conductor should be moving their body to their personal interpretation of the music, not someone else's.

*Growth Mindset*

As discussed, the manner in which a conductor approaches ensemble rehearsal can impact how the ensemble experiences the music and how the improve their skills over time. Dr. Thompson described that she finds joy in the challenge of not knowing how she will gesture a specific moment in the music. She recommends that when conductors are unsure of how they will utilize gesture, or do not receive the desired result of their gesture from the ensemble, as a "gift." She believes conductors must cultivate a growth mindset in their approach to score study and conducting. Viewing an obstacle in a positive manner will aid in the development of a growth mindset.

A growth mindset will aid a conductor in improving their score study habits, formulation of gesture, and rehearsal philosophies. To cultivate a growth mindset, I recommend reading any number of books that encourage and discuss how to develop a growth mindset, such as Dr. Carol Dweck's book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.[79] Conductors can begin the practice of shifting their thinking by adding the

[79] Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.

word “yet” to their sentences and thought processes. For example, “I don’t have a gesture for this moment of the music *yet*” or “I don’t know understand the composer’s intent in at this moment *yet*.” Allowing an obstacle to have a negative impact on the creative process can limit the conductor’s potential for development as a musician, teacher, and conductor, and, consequently, stunt the success of the ensemble as well.

*Expanding Gestural Vocabulary*

Although gesture should manifest organically from the conductor’s vivid aural image of the piece, expanding a conductor’s gestural vocabulary will provide more movement options, and, in turn, greater opportunity to specify the desired sound through gesture. Mr. Watkins and Professor Green both discussed observing and learning from master conductors in the field. Mr. Watkins likened this approach to an applied instrumental teacher asking a student to imitate their expressive musical decisions in their playing. He believes this practice provides an example to the student and allows them to experience it on their instrument for themselves. Professor Green and Mr. Watkins recommend that conductors utilize the same process. Professor Green suggested that conductors watch master conductors and attempt to imitate their gestures. This exercise should be treated solely as an exercise or form of practice—Professor Green firmly believes that conductors must find their own gestures and that this is only a tool to experiment with. Dr. Thompson discussed how she can aid a conducting student in “looking musical,” but that they have to build connection to the music on their own. Helping a student to “look musical” implies that she makes recommendations of how to utilize gesture, but she stated that students must seek connection to the music on their own and allow that connection to

influence their gesture. She expects her students to eventually work independently of her when discovering gesture. Mr. Watkins described the same process of imitation but in terms of interpretation, rather than physical gesture. He recommended listening to recordings of masters in the field to hear various interpretive decisions, but, like Professor Green's exercise, this should be used only as "a reference point" and not an opportunity to adopt someone else's ideas.

Based on the discussions and recommendations of the interviewees, I recommend a conductor study video on YouTube, on the Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall website, or seek out concerts that are live streamed to watch master conductors in the field. After observing how those conductors utilize gesture, the conductor should attempt to imitate or "try on" those gestures for themselves. I recommend doing this exercise in front of a mirror or the conductor video records themselves. Imitating and trying out gesture allows the conductor to experiment with movements they may not have considered in the past. This exploration should encourage the conductor to manipulate those movements into gesture that feels physically comfortable to the conductor, can be executed with proper timing, and is a movement now unique to them—the conductor is influenced by the gesture they witnessed rather than copying or imitating it. A similar exercise I recommend is for conductors to pretend to be a famous conductor with their gesture for one day or one rehearsal. I recommend choosing a master conductor to imitate who has a drastically different style from that of the conductor utilizing the exercise. This is an expanded and more intense version of the previous exercise but challenges the conductor to move out of their comfort zone and experiment with gesture while receiving feedback

from the ensemble in real time. As recommended in the last exercise, I encourage the conductor to video record the rehearsal(s) for which they employ this exercise so they may also view the results of their experimental gesture from an outside perspective. Lastly, I recommend conductors experiment with the eight efforts described in Laban's movement theories and discussed in direct relation to conducting in Lisa Billingham's book *The Complete Conductor's Guide to Laban Movement Theory*.[80] The eight efforts are draw from physical actions that people employ throughout everyday life. Experimenting with and manipulating the eight efforts could provide the conductor with more gestural options for their conducting.

*Body Awareness & Utilizing Space & Time*

Conducting gestures require that conductors have a strong sense of body awareness so that they may move more efficiently and effectively through space and time. Professor Green suggested that conductors must focus more of their energy on improving how they utilize space in their conducting. He discussed that although the ictus being placed at the appropriate time, place, and with correct style is highly important, the quality of motion between each ictus "determines the direction of the music." Conductors must learn to "control the space" so that there is more clarity and specificity in their physical gesture. Dr. Thompson recommended that conductors work to improve their quality of physical motion through physical activities outside of music throughout their long-term study of conducting. She believes this can lead to

[80] Billingham.

better body awareness and mindfulness of how to move evenly through space and time as a conductor.

I recommend participating in activities such as Tai Chi, yoga, and dance to aid a conductor in body awareness and control of movement through space and time. In addition to movement activities, I recommend reviewing the Malko Exercises demonstrated by Elizabeth Green.[81] I recommend attempting these exercises at varying tempos and using a metronome to improve evenness of movement through space and time. In addition to practicing the Malko exercises at varying speeds, the conductor can experiment with trying the exercises in differing styles. This exercise provides another opportunity for conductors to video record themselves so that they can watch their motion from an outside standpoint. Although the style and general speed may change, the quality and evenness of the motion between the beats must be clear and consistent.

In addition to becoming more sensitive to how a conductor utilizes space, the space must continue to maintain clear and even pulse. Professor Green discussed how the space between each ictus must have a sense of predictability to it, even if the tempo is changing. The players in the ensemble must be able to feel where the next pulse will be in order to maintain an organic flow of time. Professor Green reminds conductors that "you can't just hope for the best" when moving through a change in tempo or time—the conductor must track the subdivision of the pulse and ensure that it shifts in a predictable and organic way. He recommended conductors listen to world class instrumental performers and focus their attentions to how the performer shaped

[81] Elizabeth A. H. Green, "Malko Conducting Exercises," Joel Schut, February 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZYFi89Ph4g.

phrases. Professor Green believes this will aid conductors in improving their leadership of changes in the music and allow for more organic shaping of phrases.

I highly recommend listening to recordings of world class performers—both instrumental and vocal—to gain insight into how they move in and out of different time and tempo changes. I recommend listening to the recording and taking note of where the tempo seems to change, even if only slightly. Then I recommend listening to it again and this time tapping the subdivisions of the music with a finger on a table or desk. This will help you to hear and feel how the artist moves through tempo changes. This will help the conductor understand how to subdivide in internally and predictably through changes in pulse. Moving through time and tempo changes in a manner that the ensemble can easily understand and follow will allow more of the music to speak. If the ensemble is less concerned with the technique of moving through changes, their mental space is freed up to work on expressing the emotions even through a transition in the music.

***Rehearsal Process***

Professor Kirchhoff discussed that people typically remember how a musical experience felt more than what it sounded like. All four of the interviewees agreed that impactful musical experiences can occur in both rehearsals and performances. They discussed various ways to approach rehearsals in which the conductor is not only sharing their interpretation of the music with the ensemble but collaborating with the players to allow them the space to attach their own feelings to the music. Much of what each conductor discussed involved the players gaining understanding of various

aspects of the music in the rehearsal process in order to cultivate a more cohesive working environment, as well as build strong emotional connection to the music.

*Communicating the Conductor's Interpretation*

Each conductor discussed how the ensemble must understand the viewpoint and interpretation of the conductor. Professor Kirchhoff explained that the players are seeking musical guidance from the podium and therefore the conductor's viewpoint must be something that the players can grasp. Mr. Watkins described how this is possible even with young ensembles. The conductor must put their interpretation into terms that the ensemble can understand and relate to. For example, young students may not have any idea of how to relate to the emotions involved when a loved one passes away. Mr. Watkins described an example of how to put this into more concrete terms for young children to understand—grandmother passed away, child loved grandmother's cookies, child is told they will never taste or smell her cookies again, and then the child experiences sadness and loss on their emotional level.

Conductors must strive to help their ensemble members empathize with and connect to the emotions that the conductor wishes for the audience to experience from the work. I recommend providing the ensemble with multiple examples of life situations that are similar to or relate to that which the conductor believes to be the composer's intent. Just as each conductor approaches music with the weight and baggage of their own life experiences, so too do the members of the ensemble regardless of age. The younger the ensemble, the fewer life experiences those students may have had and I recommend describing experiences to young students

that are more concrete and universal so there is a higher probability of the ensemble members connecting on a personal level with the music.

*Utilizing Creative Language & Atmosphere*

The language used to communicate with an ensemble in rehearsal is vitally important in helping an ensemble understand the detailed and specific vision of the conductor and connecting to the music emotionally. Professor Kirchhoff recommended conductors utilize concise, imaginative, emotional language. Mr. Watkins believes the "energy" in which conductors speak to an ensemble influences how the emotional connection between the players and the music forms. Professor Kirchhoff discussed that ensemble members can "become so numb to the language" used in rehearsal, and if conductors strive to utilize a vocabulary of descriptive language, this will aid in the engagement of the players. Dr. Thompson discussed the importance of creating an atmosphere in rehearsal that reflects the music. She utilizes her speech and demeanor to emulate this.

I recommend that before rehearsing each piece of music that the conductor take a moment to center themselves and focus their attention to the atmosphere of the music. To assist in creating the atmosphere of the music, I recommend the conductor adjust their demeanor and energy of their speech to match the energy with which they believe the music portrays. This will aid the ensemble in immersing themselves in the spirit and energy of the music. Similar to the exercises recommended to expand vocabulary in the score study process, I recommend conductors strive to expand their vocabulary used in rehearsal as well. In guiding the ensemble to understand the

conductor's interpretation, performers will be more engaged if the language being utilized by the conductor is creative and illuminates the style of the music. I recommend audio recording rehearsals and when listening to the recording and planning for subsequent rehearsals, conductors should challenge themselves to develop three different ways to communicate the same musical idea to the ensemble. It is the conductor's responsibility to guide the ensemble in portraying the composer's message and intent through the music, and do to this, the conductor must engage the ensemble members in the creative music making process.

*Specificity of Vocabulary*

Players come to play their instruments and make music in an ensemble setting. They do not attend rehearsal for the sole purpose of listening to the conductor speak. Professor Green and Mr. Watkins explained the importance of specificity in word choice when a conductor speaks to an ensemble. Mr. Watkins discussed that musical terminology in the score is highly limited—there may be numerous times that the score shows the marking "forte." But how does both the conductor and ensemble differentiate between two different fortes that occur at two extremely different moments in the same piece of music? Professor Green referenced how many conductors discuss wanting their ensemble to sound "balanced" and "blended," but Professor Green questioned what those words actually mean. Dr. Thompson utilizes a slightly different approach as she prefers not to discuss her personal feelings with the ensemble. When it comes to vocabulary, she believes a well-placed adjective can be highly effective in helping the ensemble understand the atmosphere and character of

the music that she is striving to achieve. Dr. Thompson, like Professors Green and Kirchhoff, discussed brevity of their speech in rehearsal because the players want to play more than listen to a conductor speak.

The musical vocabulary available is narrow in scope and I recommend conductors strive to discover and use wording that is reflective of the particular sound they want from the ensemble. Instead of using generalized terms to explain to the ensemble the desired sound, I recommend conductors use more specific language to describe what they seek from the ensemble. I recommend that conductors bring attention to what they *do* want to hear and put it in clear terms so the ensemble can understand the reasoning for the changes to their sound. Focusing the rehearsal on what the conductor *does* want to hear versus what the conductor does *not* want to hear or has deemed a mistake, will allow the entire rehearsal environment to feel more positive and centered on creating great music.

*Rehearsal Approach*

Each of the interviewees discussed ways in which conductors can shift their mindset about the rehearsal process so that their ensembles are more invested in the creation of beautiful music. Professor Kirchhoff recommended that when conductors hear the ensemble perform something that does not match their aural image of the music, instead of approaching it as "fixing," the conductor should think about providing feedback to the ensemble as "removing distractions" from the desired interpretation. I recommend conductors utilize this approach in rehearsals so that the

players feel as though they are being guided to the music, rather than punished for making a mistake in rehearsal.

Professor Kirchhoff discussed that the intensity of a rehearsal must be high for the players to buy into reaching the musical goals set forth by the conductor. He believes that the players seek experiences that are extraordinary and if the conductor can cultivate an atmosphere of palpable energy, the players will be more engaged in the rehearsal process. Dr. Thompson, as well Professor Green, discussed how conductors must "show up" for their ensembles. She recommended that conductors contribute to creating more meaningful experiences for the ensemble by doing their job in preparing through score study. I recommend conductors thoroughly score study before attempting to rehearse an ensemble. To effectively guide the ensemble toward the musical goal of expressing the composer's intent, the conductor must bring all of the knowledge and music with them from the score study process.

*Building a Sense of Teamwork*

In addition to the conductor being prepared, Professors Kirchhoff and Green discussed how they encourage the ensemble to work toward a collective goal of creating music as a group. Professor Kirchhoff recommended conductors utilize the word "we" when addressing the ensemble. This signals to the players that the conductor and ensemble are on the same team and working together to meet their collective goals. Similarly, Professor Green recommended that, in their own words, conductors remind their ensembles that "we're in this together" throughout the rehearsal process. Dr. Thompson takes a comparable approach when her rehearsals

become more technique driven and focused on small details. She recommended that conductors remind the ensemble of the larger goal, how the tedious work being done in that moment will serve the greater good of creating music as an ensemble.

Based on the recommendations of the interviewees, I recommend that conductors discuss openly the musical goals, both long term as well as for each rehearsal, with the ensemble so that the players and working *with* the conductor to meet the goals rather than blinding moving through rehearsal. I recommend addressing the ensemble with the word "we" to build a sense of teamwork, as well as owning up to mistakes in rehearsal. If a conductor accidentally misses a time change or does something gesturally to disrupt the ensemble, I recommend the conductor own the mistake immediately and move on with the rehearsal. The ensemble will gain respect for a conductor who can admit their own faults, but this should not take ample amounts of time away from rehearsals.

*Ensemble Expectations*

All four conductors have high expectations for their ensembles in terms of technical abilities and in the creation of art. Mr. Watkins experiments in rehearsals with tempos to find the ensemble's technical threshold that still allows the musical ideas to speak. He applied this concept for both slow tempos – maintaining proper sound, as well as energy and pacing of long lines—and fast tempos—ensuring cleanliness and clarity of technique. I recommend approaching rehearsals with high, but also realistic, expectations for the players. To accomplish the common goal of creating great music, the ensemble and conductor must arrive to rehearsal prepared. I

recommend that conductors make their expectations clear to their ensemble from the beginning of their time together.

*Vulnerability*

Each of the interviewees discussed how a conductor must be vulnerable in order to share their musical image with the ensemble and work with them to make music. Green discussed how the conductor must remember to guide the ensemble to where the music should go, but, in reality, the creation of sound is completely in the hands of the performers in the ensemble. Professor Green believes conductors must be their most "authentic" selves for the ensemble to build a trusting relationship with the conductor and allow the conductor to guide them toward their musical goals. Professor Kirchhoff described vulnerability as a "conduit" for emotion and recommended that conductors must work to leave the conduit open to allow players to connect with them as a person, as well as their personal interpretation of the music.

The ensemble must feel as though they can trust the conductor in order to feel comfortable sharing something as personal and other worldly as creating music together. I recommend that conductors be themselves on the podium. Although I recommend creating an atmosphere for each piece, this does not mean that the conductor should act as a caricature of themselves. The conductor should continue to allow their personality to come through but in the context of the style of the music. I highly recommend the conductor share at minimum a small part of their personal feelings about the music with the ensemble or show them vividly through their

conducting. If the ensemble sees the conductor putting all of their energy into creating a specific musical environment, they will feel freer to play expressively.

*Releasing Control*

In their own way, each conductor described that when they feel connected to the music and have a musical experience, there is an ethereal quality to the experience—Professor Green used the term indescribable, Professor Kirchhoff and Mr. Watkins used intangible, and Dr. Thompson described how she felt she could live forever. Professor Green discussed how a conductor cannot force a musical experience to happen, but conductors must "let music happen." Dr. Thompson recommended that conductors should not try to control the music. She recommended that conductors prepare to the best of their ability through score study and plan tangible goals for each rehearsal, but when they are physically conducting the music, they must be mentally available to listen to what the ensemble is playing. She believes that when conductors attempt to control the music, this will create an obstacle for the conductor and ensemble in terms of creating music.

The conductor's role is to guide the ensemble, as well as react and adjust to what they hear the ensemble perform. I recommend that once the conductor has worked through a thorough score study process, that they form a rehearsal plan with tangible, attainable goals. Planning specific goals will keep the rehearsal focused and allows the conductor to concentrate on truly hearing and connecting with a smaller segment of music. There is less to think about when rehearsing to accomplish distinctive goals in the music and the conductor should be able to detach from the

technique and be freer to conduct. I recommend the conductor connect as best they can when they conduct the music because if the aural image in their mind is strong enough, they will be able to compare it to what they're hearing the ensemble perform rather quickly.

*Listening to the Ensemble*

Conductors have a myriad of things they must be aware of during a rehearsal. Dr. Thompson warned conductors that is "selfish" to focus on the emotional connection to the music 100% of the time, and Professor Green stated that conductors are "not in a good place" if they cannot be aware of their surroundings during rehearsal. Being an emotionally connected conductor is one of the many balancing acts a conductor must maintain throughout rehearsal and performance. The conductor must listen to the ensemble and, as Professor Green stated, be "outside of himself or herself" so they can not only evaluate what the ensemble is playing, but also understand if their gesture is aiding or disrupting the creation of the conductor's aural image. Professor Green highly recommended that conductors film themselves in rehearsal so they can literally step outside of themselves and see and hear how their conducting is impacting the playing of the ensemble. To assist conductors in developing their listening skills, Professor Kirchhoff recommended that conductors listen to pieces while following in the score and focus their ears on listening to one particular instrument line in a large ensemble performance.

It is vital that a conductor continually work to improve their listening skills. To work cohesively, the ensemble members must listen to each other, and the

conductor can set the example for the players by showing them they are constantly and intently listening to their playing. I recommend that the conductor utilize the exercise Professor Kirchhoff recommended—listening to a piece with the score and following one particular line. I also recommend that not only should conductors video record their rehearsals to see the impact of their conducting, but they should take audio recordings from rehearsal. When they're not on the podium, they'll be able to step back and hear more of what the ensemble is playing. I recommend using audio recordings to plan the subsequent rehearsals, as well as aid a conductor in directing their listening during a rehearsal. I recommend a conductor constantly listens to high quality performances, recordings or live, to continually develop their ear in preparation for rehearsals. If a conductor is not listening and connecting to the ensemble through the music, there will never be a cohesive and collaborative music-making environment.

*Internal Obstacles*

A great deal of a conductor's job involves internal processes—artistic score study, internalizing the music, analyzing the ensemble's playing in response to their conducting, comparing the ensemble's playing to their aural image of the piece—and therefore, internal obstacles can be detrimental to a conductor's success. Professor Kirchhoff discussed how conductors must be aware of when to shift their conducting to aid the ensemble in creating his aural image of the work and when they require help with a challenging technical moment in the music. He related this back to knowing the score thoroughly and that a conductor cannot effectively guide the

ensemble if their interpretation is not detailed and vivid in their mind. Another internal battle that conductors must fight is feeling the pressure of judgement from colleagues in the field. Professor Kirchhoff warned that feeling the internal pressure of judgement is an obstacle that conductors will need to work to overcome. He explained that it is easy for others to judge an ensemble because the music is only as good as what it sounds to the audience. The pressure can be immense, so Professor Kirchhoff encouraged conductors to continually focus their energies on creating music and allowing the space for a musical moment to happen. Dr. Thompson discussed that if a conductor is afraid of failure, in whatever sense that means to the individual conductor, that fear can serve as a major obstacle and distraction to true music-making.

I recommend that a conductor focus their energies on studying and internalizing the music to the best of their abilities, so they are fully prepared to guide the ensemble toward the composer's intent. I also recommend that conductors take a step back and look at the bigger picture. It is easy for a conductor to become fixated on the path or event immediately in front of them—the next rehearsal, the upcoming concert—but conductors must take time to reflect on the entire concert cycle rather than one rehearsal, the progress of their ensemble throughout the year or over many years. I recommend when critiquing recordings or reflecting on a rehearsal in preparation for the next that conductors take a moment to recognize three things that are positive—this could be anything from improvement of a technical aspect of the music, growth of overall musical and emotional understanding of the music, or observing a shift in the attitude of how the players are approaching rehearsals.

Acknowledging positive aspects of rehearsal and performance will aid the conductor in shifting their mindset and moving past internal obstacles so their focus can be placed on great music-making with their ensemble.

*Continual Self-Evaluation*

All of the interviewees discussed how conductors should continually question, think, and analyze themselves as a musician, conductor, and teacher. Professor Green discussed that conductors must perform a great deal of self-evaluation to understand themselves as a conductor and their reasoning behind the decisions they have made—whether interpretive, gestural, or rehearsal technique decisions. Professor Green and Dr. Thompson encouraged conductors to "show up" and "do their best" for their ensembles. Professor Kirchhoff reminded conductors that they must approach the music, as well as the rehearsal, with "pure motives" and intentions of "going after the music." Professor Green believes that a conductor's intent should be "the need to discover and to share discovery with as many souls."

I recommend that conductors constantly question themselves about how well they know the score, how their gesture is impacting the ensemble, what they are hearing from the ensemble in comparison to their personal interpretation, and how they can better serve the ensemble in experiencing the music. Throughout the process the conductor cannot lose sight of their authentic selves and their motives for studying, rehearsing, and performing the music. I recommend that conductors remind themselves on a regular basis what their *why* is—what their core motivation is for studying, teaching, and conducting music. Conductors must continually approach the

music with their *why* in mind, as well as a the mindset of fostering a meaningful experience for the ensemble members and, as Dr. Thompson discussed, sending "something of beauty into the world." I recommend conductors monitor their progress, both in a positive and critical way, as a musician, teacher, and conductor. Conductors must approach the study and performance of music with, as Professor Kirchhoff stated, an "irrational" love for music and for sharing music with people. In reviewing their progress as a conductor over time, I recommend conductors reflect upon their connection to the music and the ensemble before contemplating technical considerations—clarity of gesture, cleanliness of the ensemble technique, etc. As a conductor moves through their career, I highly recommend that they remind themselves consistently that:

1. there is a great deal of artistry and skill involved in the art of conducting that takes a great deal of time to improve,
2. that their love for the music and the ensemble members must drive their work,
3. and that if they have invested ample time in executing a holistic score study process with the goal of illuminating and communicating the composer's message, they were serving the composer, ensemble, and audience well.

# Chapter 5

## Summary of Findings

Score study is a highly personal process where conductors learn the objective elements of the music, discover the emotive content and composer's intent in a score, build a unique interpretation, and connect their personal feelings and experiences to the music. Conducting books utilized in many beginning conducting courses concentrate on the physical mechanics of conducting (e.g., beat patterns, cuing, dynamic changes), and there was little written information to aid conductors in the pursuit of uncovering emotive content and then allowing those discoveries to inform gesture. Seeking emotive content in the score as a part of the score study process is paramount in creating space in both rehearsal and performance for the conductor, ensemble, and audience to have a meaningful musical experience.

The four highly successful conductors interviewed for this study provided insight into how to seek emotive content in the score, how that material motivates gesture, how to draw the ensemble into the emotional space during rehearsal, and how it may affect the audience. Their insight, experience, and teaching practices cultivated in recommendations of promising practices for conductors of all skill levels to consider incorporating. Due to the nature of the art of conducting, the practices discussed may be more effective for some conductors than others. The interviewees all acknowledged that every conductor must be treated as an individual, therefore the recommendations and practices presented may be altered as they are not "one size fits all." Every conductor must find what works best for them in their pursuit of building a stronger emotional connection with music.

### *Score Study Process*

*Time*

Based on the commonalities within the responses from the interviewees, the promising practices presented can be summarized into several major themes that appeared. One idea that reoccurred throughout the interviews was the concept of taking time. Just as conductors expect the performers in their ensemble to improve their technique and musical expression over time, so too must a conductor. There is no substitute for time and experience in the field of conducting. Conductors must continually strive to build stronger relationships with music and monitor that their physical gesture is guiding the ensemble toward musical goals and not disrupting them from that journey. Conductors will not only gain more experience as a musician, conductor, and teacher over time, but they also acquire more life experience. Every conductor brings their own personal experiences to the score study process. Connecting to the emotive content in the music requires a conductor relate to the composer's emotional intent through their own experiences, which become more varied and numerous over time.

*Historical Background Information*

In addition to the objective elements presented in the score—melodic content, rhythmic content, dynamic markings, stylistic markings, harmonic language, etc.—the conductor must study the historical background surrounding both the piece and the composer. Performing music is a recreative art that requires conductor and ensemble to work together to bring forth the message of the composer. This mission

is vital for the conductor to bear in mind throughout the study, rehearsal, and performance processes, but also highlights the importance of understanding the background information about a piece of music. Acquiring historical knowledge of the piece and the composer aid in gaining insight into knowing the composer as a person and better understanding the emotive content within the score.

*Comprehensive Knowledgebase*

The process of studying the background information of a piece, as well as the objective elements of the music are more efficient and thorough when a conductor has a substantial knowledge base of music history and music theory. Conducting requires a person to utilize comprehensive information from all aspects of their music education—music theory, music history, applied lessons, music education courses, ensemble performance experience—to gain a detailed and holistic view of the music from which to make informed musical decisions and begin building their personal interpretation of the score. Returning to the notion of time, conductors should continually work to attain more knowledge in these areas and, over time, will become more efficient at calling upon this information during their score study process.

Conductors should allow sufficient time to study the background and objective elements of the music. The process of studying the objective elements of the score may include playing an instrument or singing the music. The conductor must strive to hear the music in their mind without the aid of an instrument or singing because their role is not to produce sound with the ensemble but to influence it

through gesture. The process of constructing an aural image in the mind takes ample time and practice.

*Seeking Emotive Content*

Throughout the process of studying the objective elements of the score, conductors should simultaneously seek the emotive content in the music. The markings provided by the composer are limited based on musical language, but the conductor must approach music with a sense of curiosity. It is helpful for conductors to view their score study process as though a relationship between themselves and the music is being built. The conductor should question the score and attempt to uncover what the composer's intent behind their musical decisions might be. While searching for the emotive content in the score, the conductor must aim to empathize with the composer's message by attaching their own feelings and experiences to the music. This relationship between the conductor and the music is key in creating an emotionally connected aural image of the music in their mind. Between the background information, objective elements of the music, discovery of emotive content, and personal connection with the music, the conductor should be able to construct an informed and vivid interpretation of the composer's message in their mind. If the conductor is unable to form an emotional connection to the music, and therefore a powerful aural image, the conductor should reconsider whether they should pursue performing the work with an ensemble. If the conductor is unable to build a relationship with the music, it is highly unlikely that they will be successful in

guiding the ensemble to create a relationship with the music and allow space for a meaningful musical experience to occur.

*From the Inside Out*

A major theme throughout this study was the concept of the music coming from the inside out. The interviewees discussed the importance of not only hearing but feeling the music so strongly in their body that, as Professor Kirchhoff stated, "it can't help but get out." The physical manifestation of the music getting out is the conductor's gesture. Although basic conducting technique is important in the ensemble comprehending the conductor's message, the gestures utilized must guide the ensemble in portraying the composer's intent. Realizing the composer's intent cannot be accomplished by solely employing clear technical skills with the baton. The gestures must have specificity to them that relays the composer's message. The conductor's gesture must manifest from the vivid image they have created of the music. Gesture can be visually appealing but typically will not create space for a meaningful musical experience if there is no musical and emotional intent influencing it. For the gesture to be manifested from the conductor's aural image of the piece, the conductor must study and strive to understand the emotional content of the music to the point where their relationship with the music becomes less intellectual and more kinesthetic. The interviewees described how they craved feeling the music in their body so strongly that there was no need to prescribe gesture because the gesture used was created directly from their vision for the music.

### *Rehearsal Process*

*Ensemble Technique*

Just as baton technique is vital for the conductor to successfully communicate with the ensemble, so too is the playing technique of the ensemble. The ensemble must gain a firm grasp of the technique required for the performance of the music. If the playing technique is not present in the performance of the music, the composer's message cannot speak. The dichotomy of technique and emotional connection must be viewed as a balancing act for a conductor as they lead rehearsals. There are moments where the focus of a rehearsal must be geared toward the improvement of the ensemble technique, but this cannot be maintained throughout the entire rehearsal process. It is the conductor's responsibility to help the ensemble understand that the development of the technique serves the greater good of creating art and allowing space for meaningful experiences with the music.

All of the interviewees discussed that a musical experience cannot be manufactured or prescribed. The conductor and ensemble must prepare the objective and technical aspects of the music to the best of their abilities for there to be space for the music to happen. Incorrect instrumental technique or a conductor who does not hold a clear and vivid aural image of the music in their mind can inhibit the music from speaking because, as Professor Green stated, "Art stands on the shoulders of technique. If you don't have good technique, you can't have good art. It's impossible."

*Emotional Connection*

Whilst developing the ensemble technique, conductors must not exclude emotional connection to the music throughout the rehearsal process. Conductors must seek opportunities to aid the ensemble in understanding their personal interpretation of the music and the emotional content within the score, while leaving space for the ensemble members to attach their own feelings and experiences to the music. The ensemble members must be allowed to build their own relationship with the music so that their performance is driven by the common goal of representing the composer's intent. Although each member of the ensemble and the conductor approach the music with their own set of feelings, experiences, and expectations, when all parties work together to realize the composer's message, a meaningful musical experience has opportunity to occur.

*Conductor-Ensemble Relationship*

In addition to the technique of the ensemble and conductor being in place, there needs to be a strong relationship between the conductor and ensemble that is built on trust. Although a recreative art, music is art, nonetheless. It takes courage and vulnerability to share such a personal experience such as making music with others. An ensemble conductor is in a leadership role that extends far beyond the physical conducting that they do in rehearsal and performance. To allow musicians in the ensemble to feel as though they have space to attach their own feelings to the music and connect with it, they must feel safe to do so in rehearsals and performances. A great deal of being a conductor is leading by example. The conductor can help

cultivate an environment and ensemble culture of trust and support by displaying that through their conducting, speech, and actions. If the conductor approaches the ensemble with a sense of trust and willingness to share their personal interpretation of the music, the ensemble will feel that they have permission to do the same.

*Authenticity*

To develop a trusting relationship between the conductor and ensemble, the conductor must be their authentic selves. The interviewees stressed in various ways that a conductor should not attempt to be someone or something that they are not. The ensemble will quickly ascertain if a conductor is not acting in a way that is genuine to their personality. Authenticity in interpretation, as well as gesture, is vital to creating an atmosphere and space where meaningful musical experiences can happen. It was recommended that conductors learn from observing and imitating how master conductors gesture, as well as listening to how certain conductors interpret music. These exercises encourage exploration and should invite the conductor to think creatively about how to expand their vocabulary of physical gesture and potentially spark new interpretive ideas. Ultimately, the conductor must determine how to use the information acquired in their own unique way so that the end result is an expansion of the conductor's own ideas and movement.

A conductor must approach music with, as Professor Kirchhoff stated, "motives [that] are pure" and, as Professor Green explained, "the need to discover and to share discovery with as many souls." A conductor is in a role of service – service to the composer to bring forth their ideas from the music, service to the

ensemble to guide them to collectively recreate the composer's intent and experience meaningful music making together, and service to the audience to communicate the composer's message and draw them into a collective music-making experience. The interviewees spoke of creating relationships with both people and the music, and relationships involve emotional connection in some form. Pursuing meaningful music-making experiences as a conductor is a highly personal, endless journey that takes a great deal of time, patience, and vulnerability. There is no definitive answer or exercise that will ensure a conductor connects on an emotional level with music, but the practices presented aim to aid conductors in discovering emotive content in the score, forming a vivid aural image, and sharing their interpretation through gesture with the ensemble, and, in turn, the audience. Professor Kirchhoff stated, "You have to love music. You have to love teaching. You have to love people," and Professor Green summed up that conductors must continue to "work hard and hope."

## Suggestions for Further Research

The philosophies, teachings, and recommendations of only four highly successful wind band conductors were explored throughout this study. There are numerous band directors around the country of varying ranges of experience and who work with differing levels of musicians—middle school, high school, and college—who could provide a broader perspective and additional suggestions of how conductors can be more connected to the music. In addition, conductors from various parts of the country, as well as diverse socio-economic environments, could provide more specific insight into how these practices can be implemented in disparate teaching climates. Beyond interviewing a more diverse population of wind band conductors, it would be fascinating to observe conductors implementing these suggested promising practices over time. Further study could include conducting interviews of the conductor and their ensemble at various points in time in an attempt to track the conductor's progress.

Another opportunity for expanded study could include interviewing professional orchestral or choral conductors regarding their emotional connection to the music they conduct. These interviews would bring a differing prospective as no full-time professional conductors were interviewed in the initial study, nor choral or orchestral conductors. Aside from professional orchestral and choral conductors, orchestral and choral conductors who work with middle school, high school, and/or collegiate ensembles would provide a wider cross section of perspective.

Professors Green and Kirchhoff, as well as Mr. Watkins, spoke directly to the importance of programming repertoire for an ensemble. The idea of programming

music for an ensemble with the goal of finding emotional connection to the music could be explored in greater detail.

In the interest of gathering a wider variety of perspective on how conductors can be more emotionally connected to the music, composers could be interviewed to provide advice and promising practices to conductors. Composers would provide a differing viewpoint of the music-making process. Another valuable perspective could be gathered from ensemble members. Interviewing ensemble members could shed light on how a conductor's physical gesture, rehearsal technique, and cultivation of atmosphere impact the ensemble's connection to music. Ensemble member interviews could be held once to provide a snapshot into this information, or they could reoccur over time as a conductor strives to implement the promising practices presented.

Further research could include creation of an undergraduate curriculum that is built around the formation of emotional connection to the music, rather than the physical gesture being the focal point. To continue and expand this research, the curriculum formed could be implemented in undergraduate conducting courses over a number of different semesters and/or at a variety of collegiate music programs. Additionally, students who were exposed to this curriculum and training could be interviewed over the course of their career in comparison to conductors who matriculated through a gesture focused conducting course. The results of the interviews could be supplemented by interviews of the performers in the ensembles to provide a more holistic view of how the differences in training impacted the conductor and ensemble.

Further research and implementation of the practices presented in this document could yield a shift in how conductors approach music. This change in thinking could provide more meaningful experiences for the conductor, ensemble, and audience; and therefore maintain, and potentially grow, the tradition of live musical performances.

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# Appendix A: Practical Application

A Summary of Promising Practices

1. **Time**
    a. There is no substitute for quality time studying
    b. Plan to spend a number of weeks studying a score prior to working with an ensemble
    c. Be patient

2. **Gathering Background Information**
    a. Goal: Strive to uncover the message and emotional content that the composer intended
    b. Seek information pertaining elements such as:
        i. The composer
        ii. Commission
            1. If the work was commission
            2. Who commissioned the work
            3. Who led the consortium
        iii. Original setting of the piece
            1. If not the original setting:
                a. Information about the arranger or transcriber
                b. Specific reason the piece was arranged or transcribed (e.g., a special event)
        iv. Historical Context
            1. Composition date
            2. Publication date
                a. If there is a large timespan between composition date and publication date, seek to understand why
            3. Time period of the composition
            4. Performance practices of the time
            5. World history during that time
            6. Music history during that time
            7. Significance of the piece within the repertoire
            8. Premiere information
                a. Ensemble that performed
                b. Conductor of the ensemble
                c. Location of the performance
                d. If the premiere was part of a specific event (e.g., music festival, memorial, dedication, etc.)
        v. Program notes
        vi. Dedication
            1. If the work was written in honor or memory of a person or event
        vii. Text, if present

1. Did the composer write the text for the music
    a. If not, what is the origin of the text
2. Meaning of the text
3. Significance to the piece

viii. Instrumentation
1. Make note of presence or absence of certain instruments or parts
2. Whether the instruments are historical or currently used to perform

c. Composer Investigation
i. Seek to understand the composer's message and intent in the music
1. If the composer is living, attempt to make contact
2. Contact people who knew the composer personally or professionally
3. Contact other conductors who have worked with the composer or their music

ii. Research their biographical information
1. Education
2. Musical training
3. Performance experience
4. Personal relationships

iii. Study their overall compositional output
1. Where the particular piece fits into their compositional timeline

iv. Study their compositional style
1. Track changes in the composer's writing over their career
2. Note specific compositional techniques that reappear

**3. Studying the Objective Elements of the Music**

a. Overview
i. Make note of information on the first page such as:
1. Transposed or concert pitch score
2. Initial markings:
    a. Tempo
    b. Time signature
    c. Key signature
    d. Dynamic
    e. Stylistic indication
    f. Orchestration

ii. Flip through the score to notice large changes that may indicate impactful or important moments in the music, such as:
1. Time signature
2. Tempo
3. Stylistic indication

4. Large orchestration shift

b. Detailed Study
    i. Seek out elements of the music, such as:
        1. Melodic content
        2. Motivic manipulation
        3. Harmonic structure
        4. Important intervals
        5. Reoccurring material or patterns
        6. Dynamic structure
        7. Textural shifts
        8. Timbral shifts
        9. Phrasing
        10. Stylistic markings
        11. Uncommon instrumental techniques
c. Structural Analysis
    i. Utilize the information discovered to determine the form of the piece
    ii. Using the macro-micro-macro approach to study can help conductors see form and structure in large and small scale
    iii. Understanding form helps the conductor know the projection of the piece and better guide the ensemble

**4. Study of Abstract Elements**

a. Questioning the Music
    i. Either during or after objective elements of the music are studied, begin questioning *why* the composer made compositional decisions throughout the piece
    ii. When studying, ask questions comparable to:
        1. Why did the composer shift the orchestration at this moment?
        2. Why did the composer choose to have this specific instrument resolve the suspension?
        3. Why did the composer begin and end the piece in this manner?
        4. What was the composer trying to accomplish by restructuring the accompaniment although the melody remains unchanged?
    iii. The objective elements of the music serve the greater purpose of relaying the message and emotional content of the music
    iv. Striving to understand the composer's motives for compositional decisions will guide the conductor toward understanding the emotional content and meaning of the music
    v. Questioning compositional choices should occur at both the macro and micro levels of study
b. Building a Personal Relationship with the Music
    i. Consider the composer's motives for making decisions

ii. Attempt to empathize with the emotions and motivations discovered
iii. This is a process that takes time
    1. Ruminate over personal life experiences
    2. Relate personal experiences and emotions to the composer's message to aid in feeling more emotionally and personally connected to the music
iv. To aid the process of connecting emotionally
    1. Create a narrative based on the emotional content
    2. This narrative is a tool for the conductor to build connection
        a. The narrative cannot replace the composer's intent
v. Expanding Imagination
    1. Seek out information about creative people
        a. Read books and articles
        b. Watch documentaries
        c. Interact with creative people
    2. Attempt to understand the thought processes and motivations of creative people
    3. Select an activity or subject of interest to explore
        a. This does not need to be music related
        b. Must be something the conductor is curious about
        c. Learning and experiencing new things can encourage conductors to:
            i. Think in new ways
            ii. Explore experiences and emotions that can be drawn upon in future score study
        d. Attempting an activity or area of research outside of the conductor's comfort zone may lead to:
            i. Overcoming a fear
            ii. Building self-confidence
            iii. A stronger desire to continue exploring
            iv. A new set of experiences to draw upon in future score study
        e. Do not attempt an activity that may cause serious physical or mental harm to any person
        f. Examples of activities to explore:
            i. Singing karaoke in a public establishment
            ii. Hiking
            iii. Painting
            iv. Meditation

c. Creating a More Expansive Musical Language

i. Locate the moments in the music where the emotional energy of the music changes throughout the score
ii. Write a minimum of three words that describe the emotional content of the music in each moment
    1. Words that describe the character or atmosphere of the music are useful to use as well
    2. When selecting words, attempt to vary the language and not return to the same words throughout the music
        a. Online resources to aid in varying vocabulary:
            i. Feeling wheel
            ii. Thesaurus
iii. After locating and labeling the changes throughout the music, map out the emotional energy of the entire piece in a document separate from the score
    1. This map may be computer generated or handwritten
    2. The horizontal axis represents the length of the piece segmented by emotional changes in chronological order
    3. The vertical axis represents the energy level of the music from lowest energy at the bottom to highest energy at the top
    4. This graph creates a visual representation of changes in emotional energy throughout the piece
    5. This visual tool:
        a. Aids in pacing the energy of conducting
        b. Provides a roadmap to better guide the ensemble through the changes in energy
        c. Assist the ensemble in better understanding the conductor's vision for the music if the conductor is comfortable sharing this map with the ensemble.

d. Internalizing the Music
    i. The goal of internalizing the music is to create a vivid aural image
    ii. Based on knowledge gathered from study of the objective elements of the music and the emotional aspects of the music, build a personal interpretation of the composer's intent
    iii. To aid in making specific and detailed musical decisions, as well as internalizing the music:
        1. Sing or play the individual lines of the score
        2. Play multiple lines at the same time at the piano or record playing or singing individual lines and layer the lines digitally
            a. Gaining better understanding of how the lines interact and building a stronger aural image of the harmonies will assist the conductor in creating a more vivid interpretation

iv. Internalization takes a great deal of time, and the conductor should be prepared to immerse themselves in the music prior to the first rehearsal with musicians

e. Creating Kinesthetic Connection to the Music
    i. Physically producing music aids a conductor in building a kinesthetic connection to the music
    ii. Playing through the lines of the score on the primary instrument will:
        1. Aid the conductor in *feeling* the lines of the music
        2. Remove focus from technique
            a. Strictly playing through instrumental lines of music on piano may hinder the conductor
                i. If not highly proficient at playing piano, the musical lines may be interrupted by mistakes in technique
                ii. Other instruments produce timbres that can be adjusted differently from piano
    iii. Singing through the lines of the music allows the conductor to:
        1. Produce sound in the most organic way
        2. Connect their breath to the music
        3. Be in a more vulnerable state while making music

**5. Sequence of Study**

a. Score study is a personal process that each conductor must proceed with in their own way
b. Some information may be discovered simultaneously
c. Regardless of order, none of the major steps in the process can be abandoned:
    i. Study of objective elements of the music
    ii. Study of emotional content of the music
    iii. Constructing a personal interpretation of the music
    iv. Internalizing the music

**6. Programming**

a. Technical Considerations
    i. Consider the technical limitations of their ensemble
        1. If the technique required to play the music cannot be mastered in a timely manner, the conductor must reconsider performing the piece
        2. This should be taken into account at the beginning of the programming process
b. Conductor Connection
    i. If connection to the music is not found, reconsider performing the music at that time
    ii. Consider returning to the music at another point in life

7. **Manifesting Gesture**
    a. Beginning to Move to the Music
        i. Patience
            1. Wait to begin conducting the music until they have a strong internal image and the connection to the music feels physical
            2. Conducting the music too early may limit the conductor's interpretation of the music based on how their hands move
        ii. Prior to utilizing conducting patterns and gestures, the conductor should generally move their body to the music
            1. Sing the music or hear it in their mind
            2. A recording should *not* be utilized
            3. The conductor is moving their body to their personal interpretation of the music
    b. Growth Mindset
        i. A growth mindset will aid a conductor in improving their score study habits, formulation of gesture, and rehearsal philosophies
        ii. To cultivate and improve growth mindset:
            1. Read books about growth mindset
                a. Example: *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck
            2. Add the "yet" to sentences and thought processes
                a. Examples:
                    i. I don't have a gesture for this moment of music *yet*
                    ii. I don't understand the composer's intent at this moment *yet*
            3. Strive to view obstacles as positive opportunities for growth, rather than a negative situation
    c. Expanding Gestural Vocabulary
        i. Study online videos of conductors from various sources:
            1. YouTube videos of master conductors
            2. Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall
            3. Live stream performances of master conductors
        ii. "Trying On" gestures
            1. Observe how master conductors utilize gesture
            2. Attempt to "try on" the gestures
            3. Experiment with adjusting and manipulating the gesture to make it their own and feel natural to their body
            4. Practice in front of a mirror or record a video to see how to gesture looks on their body
            5. Watch the recording and reflect on how the gesture looks and if used in rehearsal, consider how effective it was in achieving the desired sound
        iii. Conductor for a Day

1. Pretend to be a famous conductor for a day or for a rehearsal
2. This is an expanded version of "trying on" gestures
3. This exercise should aid the conductor in moving out of their conducting comfort zone and experimenting with movement
4. Record the rehearsal(s) for which this exercise was used to view the results
5. Watch the recording and reflect on the effectiveness of various gestures

iv. Eight Laban Efforts
1. The eight efforts are physical motions that people use in everyday life:
    a. Punch
    b. Slash
    c. Dab
    d. Flick
    e. Press
    f. Wring
    g. Glide
    h. Float
2. Experiment with using the eight efforts within conducting gesture
    a. Adjust various aspects of each movement including:
        i. Direction
        ii. Speed
        iii. Weight
3. Record the individual practice or rehearsal(s) for which these motions are incorporated
4. Watch the recording and reflect on whether the gesture was effective in achieving the desired sound

v. Building Body Awareness
1. Conductors must build body awareness so they may move their arms evenly through space and time
2. Some activities that aid in building body awareness and control:
    a. Tai Chi
    b. Yoga
    c. Dance

vi. Moving Evenly Through Space and Time
1. Review the Malko Exercises presented by Elizabeth Green on YouTube: https://youtu.be/oZYFi89Ph4g?t=1
2. Perform the exercises with a metronome on to practice moving evenly through space

3. Attempt the exercises at varying tempos and in different styles
4. Practice the exercises in front of a mirror or record a video
5. Reflect on quality of motion throughout the exercise

vii. Evenness Through Changes in Tempo
1. Select a specific recording of a world class performer
2. On the first listen, make note of where changes in tempo occur
3. During the second listen, tap with a finger or hand on a table or desk the subdivision of the beat through the tempo changes
4. Make note of the predictability of the beat throughout the change in time

**8. Rehearsal Process**

a. Communicating the Conductor's Interpretation
i. Throughout the rehearsal process, the conductor must strive to help the ensemble members empathize with the and connect to the emotions in the music
ii. Provide examples to the ensemble of life situations similar to or in relation to what the conductor believes the composer's intent is in the various sections of the music
iii. The conductor will need to adjust the complexity of the situations presented based on the age and maturity level of the ensemble
1. Younger ensembles may require more concrete examples as they have not had as many life experiences as older performers

b. Utilizing Creative Language and Atmosphere
i. Prior to rehearsing a piece of music, conductors should take a moment to center themselves and focus their attention to the atmosphere of the music
1. Adjust demeanor and energy of speech to reflect the atmosphere that the music should create
a. The conductor should attempt to embody the energy of the music
i. If the music is high-energy and fast-paced, the conductor should emulate that
ii. If the music is melancholy and slow, the conductor should emulate that
2. The conductor's shift in demeanor and speech should provide an example to the ensemble of the atmosphere that they need to contribute to as well

c. Expanding Rehearsal Vocabulary

i. More vivid language will engage performers and aid the conductor in guiding the ensemble toward their interpretation of the music
ii. Audio record rehearsals
iii. When planning for subsequent rehearsals, create three different ways to communicate the same musical idea to the ensemble
    1. Performers relate differently to varying ideas
    2. Providing more opportunities for performers to relate to the music will lead to more connection from the ensemble

d. Specificity of Vocabulary
    i. Musical vocabulary is limited, and conductors must strive to use more specific language
        1. Avoid generalized comments
        2. Attempt to describe the specific sound that the conductor desires, rather than taking rehearsal time to explain what is not preferred
        3. Focusing the rehearsal on the desired sounds rather than what is undesirable, or a mistake, will allow the entire environment to be more positive and centered on creating the music

e. Rehearsal Approach
    i. To create a more positive rehearsal environment and focus the energies of the group on making music, the conductor must shift their approach and mindset
        1. When the conductor hears something that does not match their interpretation of the music, instead of approaching the rehearsal as "fixing" a problem, the conductor's feedback to the ensemble should be centered on "removing distractions" from the conductor's interpretation
        2. This mindset helps the players feel as though they are being guided to the specific interpretation, rather than feeling like they are being punished for making a mistake
    ii. To cultivate a higher intensity level and a more engaging rehearsal environment, the conductor must be highly prepared
        1. Conductors must bring all of their knowledge and ideas to every rehearsal by preparing and studying well in advance
        2. Conductors must reflect upon the previous rehearsal mentally, through reading notes made during rehearsal, or by use of audio recording so prepare for the next rehearsal
            a. Rehearsals lose intensity when the conductor is unprepared

f. Building A Sense of Teamwork
    i. Openly discuss musical goals with the ensemble—both long term and for each rehearsal
        1. This puts everyone on the same page
    ii. When speaking, address the ensemble with the word "we"
        1. The conductor is a musician who is part of the ensemble
    iii. Take ownership of mistakes in rehearsal
        1. Ensembles lose respect for conductors who place blame on the performers when the issue was caused by the conductor
g. Ensemble Expectations
    i. Set high, but also realistic, expectations for the players
    ii. Openly discuss the expectations for the rehearsal cycle, as well as individual rehearsals so that the players understand from the beginning
    iii. Expectations can include but are not limited to:
        1. How to enter the rehearsal space
        2. When it is appropriate for the ensemble members to communicate with each other so as to not interrupt the rehearsal
        3. What the players are expected to prepare outside of rehearsal and to what extent
h. Vulnerability
    i. Conductors must be themselves
        1. In order for the ensemble to be able to trust the conductor, the conductor cannot attempt to be something or someone they are not
            a. With the caveat that if the conductor is utilizing the above mentioned "Conductor for a Day" exercise, they will be acting as someone else
            b. In the event the exercise is in use, it may be worth explaining the exercise to the ensemble, so they understand the change in conducting and rehearsal technique
            c. Explaining the exercise openly to the ensemble will prevent damage to the conductor/ensemble relationship
        2. Although an atmosphere for each piece must be created, this must be accomplished within the conductor's personality
    ii. Share personal feelings about the music
        1. This should be accomplished through conducting, but may be supplemented by discussion in rehearsal
    iii. The conductor must be the example for the ensemble in:
        1. Creating the musical atmosphere

2. Bringing forth the emotional content of the music
3. Preparedness for rehearsal

i. Releasing Control
    i. The conductor's role is to guide the ensemble, as well as react and adjust to the ensemble sounds in order to redirect as needed
        1. After thorough score study, a conductor must form a rehearsal plan
        2. The rehearsal plan should include tangible, attainable goals
        3. Specific goals will focus the rehearsal and focus the conductor's ears
        4. If the conductor narrows their focus, they should be able to detach from the technique and be freer to conduct the music

j. Listening to the ensemble
    i. Conductors must continually strive to improve their listening skills
        1. This will aid the conductor in hearing distractions to their aural image more quickly
        2. A conductor who is constantly listening to the ensemble will set the example to the players that they need to listen to each other and the ensemble sound
        3. Listening can be improved by aural skills training applications and listening to more high caliber performances
    ii. Audio recording rehearsals allow the conductor to hear the ensemble in a different way
        1. The conductor can listen from a third-party perspective without having to think about conducting
        2. The conductor can become aware of distractions to their interpretation that they may not have heard in live rehearsal

k. Internal Obstacles
    i. Conductors tend to place immense pressure on themselves internally
    ii. Pressure can come from places such as:
        1. Comparing their ensemble to others
        2. Comparing themselves to other conductors
        3. Worrying about judgement from colleagues or ensemble members
    iii. This tends to pull focus away from making-music with the ensemble
    iv. Conductors must make a conscience effort to focus their energies on studying and internalizing the music to the best of their abilities

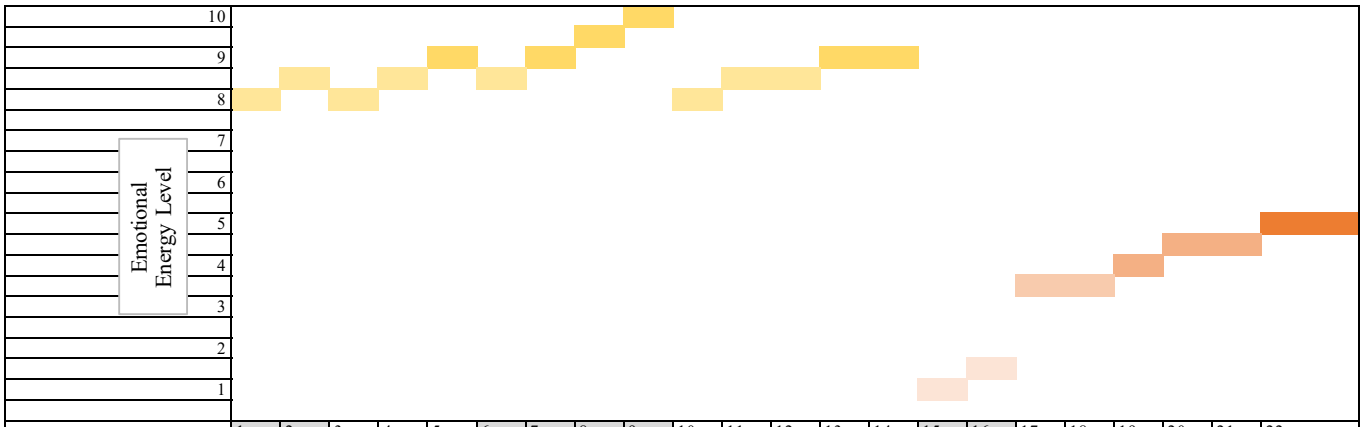
v. Looking at the big picture—whether their progress as a conductor or the ensemble's progress over time—can put things into perspective rather than focusing on the rehearsal immediately in front of them
vi. When taking time to prepare for an upcoming rehearsal, conductors should first recognize three things that went well for the ensemble in the previous rehearsal

l. Continual Self-Evaluation
    i. Although rehearsal is the time to focus on making music with the ensemble, conductors should consistently strive to improve their abilities
    ii. Conductors should consistently question themselves in various ways, such:
        1. How well they know the score
        2. How their gesture is impacting the ensemble
        3. What they are hearing from the ensemble in comparison to personal interpretation
        4. How they can better serve the ensemble in experiencing the music
        5. How well they are serving the composer's intent
    iii. Conductors cannot lose their own personality in the quest for improvement
        1. Continually revisit the *why*
            a. A conductor's *why* is their core motivation for studying, teaching, and conducting music
    iv. Monitor progress in both a positive and critical way
    v. Approach music with an "irrational" love for sharing music with other people
    vi. Conductors should consistently remind themselves:
        1. there is a great deal of artistry and skill involved in the art of conducting that takes a great deal of time to improve,
        2. that their love for the music and the ensemble members must drive their work,
        3. and that if they have invested ample time in executing a holistic score study process with the goal of illuminating and communicating the composer's message, they are serving the composer, ensemble, and audience well.

# Appendix B: Sample Energy Graph

*Symphonic Dance No. 3 – "Fiesta"*
by Clifton Williams

Digital Energy Graph – Measures 1-22



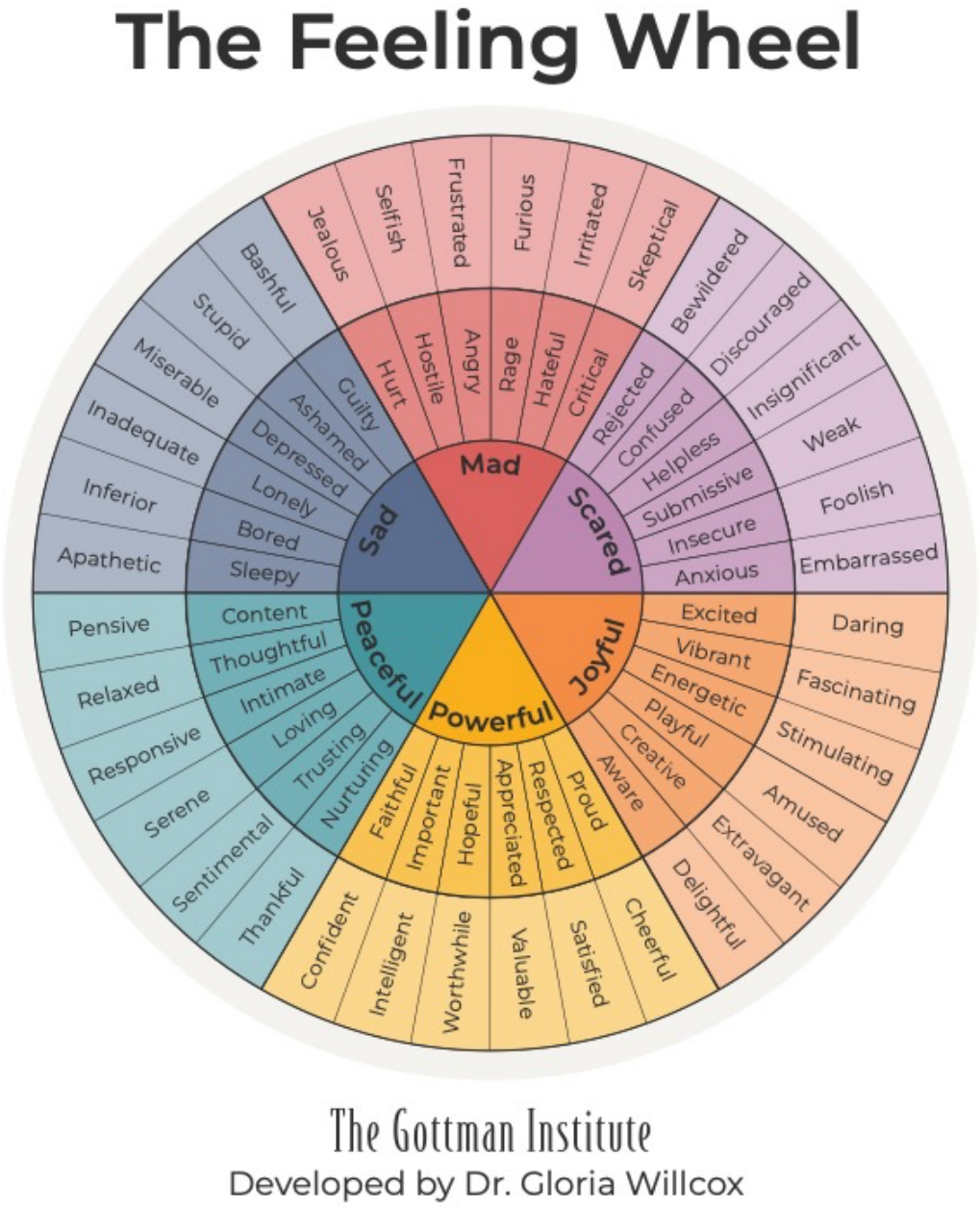

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rehearsal Mark | | | | Rehearsal A | Rehearsal B |
| Time/Tempo | 4/4 Quarter=60 | | | 5/4 Quarter=152 | |
| Dynamic Mark | Forte | | pp | p | |
| Stylistic/Expressive Marking | Drammatico | | | | |
| Adjectives/Emotional Content | Intense<br>Passionate<br>Powerful<br>Confident | Brooding<br>Darker<br>Sinister | Delightful<br>Lighthearted<br>Cheery<br>Delicate | Playful<br>Coy<br>Dance-like | |

**NOTES**
Colors correspond roughly with colors of the Feeling Wheel.
The scale of energy intensity is reflective of the specific segment of music - not the piece in its entirety.
Emotional changes are marked at major shifts.
More detailed and frequent changes in emotional energy could be dictated throughout.

## Appendix C: The Feeling Wheel

**Sample Downloadable Feeling Wheel from the Gottman Institute**

https://cdn.gottman.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Gottman-Institute_The-Feeling-Wheel_v2.pdf



# Appendix D: Institution Review Board Approval Letter

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01**

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**Date:** June 04, 2021 **IRB#:** 13179

**Principal Investigator:** Hannah L Rudy **Approval Date:** 06/04/2021

**Exempt Category:** 2

**Study Title:** Beyond Score Study: How Conductors Connect Emotionally with the Score

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.

Chair, Institutional Review Board

# Appendix E: Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear {NAME},

This email serves as your official invitation to participate in my research project titled "Artistic Score Study: Conductor's Approaches to Discovering and Communicating the Composer's Intent." As a doctoral conducting associate and newly appointed collegiate band director, I am interested in uncovering your professional experiences as related to artistic score study and practices to improve emotional connection to the music you conduct. The goal is to share promising practices with instrumental conductors of all levels to improve emotional connection to the music being conducted and in turn, to create a more meaningful musical experience for the ensemble and audience members. Per the attached consent form, your participation in this project is voluntary and you may choose to remove yourself from the research at any time.

Should you choose to participate, I will arrange a time for us to hold an individual interview that will last approximately 1 hour. In addition, I invite you provide any documents or artifacts that you feel are important in understanding your experiences. The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board has approved this research. If you wish to participate, please print, sign, date, scan, and return to me via email at the address listed below within one week from receipt of this message.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you may choose to withdraw at any time. If you have any questions pertaining to this research project, you may contact either me (phone number) or the OU-NC IRB (irb@ou.edu or 405-325-8110) at any time. Thank you in advance for your assistance!

Sincerely,

Hannah Rudy
Doctoral Conducting Associate
Graduate Teaching Assistant
University of Oklahoma
School of Music
500 West Boyd Street
Norman, OK 73019
(email address)

# Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

*(Prompts to be selected from below, based on the direction of each individual interview. Follow-up questions, based on participant responses, are expected.)*

**Personal Experience**

1. Walk me through your overall score study process from opening the score for the first time to conducting in rehearsal for the first time.

2. In your score preparation, what role does your emotional inference of the music play in the process? How do you look for and find musical meaning in a composition and then translate those emotions into gesture?

3. What do you do to expand and feed your imagination? Does vocabulary and imagination play a role in artistic expression?

4. In rehearsal and performance, what are some obstacles you have faced that have disconnected you from the music? What advice to you have on how to avoid those disconnections you have felt?

5. How do you know when you have completely connected with a piece? What has that felt like for you in the past?

6. In your experience, is it possible to actively seek meaningful music-making moments in both rehearsal and performance? What role does score preparation play in this?

**Sharing Emotion with the Ensemble & Audience**

1. What makes an experience musical?

2. How do you encourage ensemble members to develop their own feelings about a piece of music?

3. How do you use the emotional connection as a vehicle to improve the technique of the ensemble?

4. How does your emotional connection to a piece impact the ensemble and the audience?

**5.** Is it possible to be emotionally connected while conducting AND analyze at the same time? How do you manage that in a rehearsal setting? At what point in your life did you come to this conclusion?

**Teaching & Mentoring Conductors**

1. Please describe how you teach score study. Do you believe conducting technique can be taught through the lens of music-making?

2. How can conducting books and programs encourage and develop a conductor's ability to connect on an emotional level with the music they are studying and conducting?

3. To be connected to the music and then share that connection with the ensemble a conductor must be vulnerable. How would you go about guiding a student conductor to being more vulnerable and trusting of the ensemble in front of them?

4. What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges in transitioning from playing an instrument to conducting in terms of how one connects emotionally with a piece of music?

5. What specific exercises or activities, if any, do you have that you recommend to students to build a stronger connection to the score?

# Appendix G: Interview Transcripts

## Professor Gary Green

The following interview was conducted on Tuesday, July 13, 2021, via Zoom video conferencing.

**Hannah Rudy:** First off, would you walk me through your overall score study process from opening the score to conducting your first rehearsal?

**Gary Green**: It would depend on the piece. It would depend on whether it was a premiere, or whether it's a piece I've conducted many times. But regardless of any age difference in the piece that I'm going to conduct, they all require a process. The process does vary. If you're working with a composer for a premiere of a new piece, then you may not have the full score, you may have only a part of the score. But the good thing is you have the composer to help you. So, that kind of trumps everything if you have the composer there with you.

Let's say that it's a new score that I have never conducted before. First of all, I wouldn't accept anything to conduct that I didn't have an idea that I was either in love with that particular piece, or that particular composer. It wouldn't even be on my desk. It wouldn't be something that I would even tolerate. There's just not enough time to spend your time working on pieces that may not be what I would want to look at.

Now, there has to be some leeway there. It's possible that there could be something you need to give structure to, you need to give that possibility to that composer. It could be something but, generally speaking, I wouldn't look at a piece that I didn't either know something about or know about the composer.

I love Mahler. I mean, I *love* Mahler. I'm driven by it; I am obsessed with it. I wouldn't be able to talk to Mahler, not personally like you and I are talking. But I can study, I can read. I had volumes of books about Mahler, big books, small books, things that Mahler wrote in private. So, I do have those to kind of get to know his ideas. What kind of a person was he: Was he complicated? What was his attitude about life?

Percy Grainger: it's possible to know about him. It's possible to know about David Maslanka. It's possible to know about many, many, many composers, either by talking with them live now or by reading and ingesting as much information as possible. Then there is a history, a line of connection to past composers. For example, let's say that you are going to conduct or wanting or thinking about conducting a piece by Michael Colgrass. You're wanting to talk to Michael Colgrass, but you don't have access to him now. You do have access to people that knew him, that commissioned him, that worked with him. So, you do have a lineage, a history—a living history of people. You can go as far back as you want. It depends on you. It depends on how much you want to know about the person that you're going to conduct. But to know the person—well, composers are people, that's for sure, because they live and die, but there's a spirituality about them that transcends everyone else. I hope that makes some sense to you.

There's a spirit to composers that allows them to speak in poetic terms that others cannot do. It's important to know those things about those people, those artists that you're going to reorganize and reinvent, sort of. You have to do that first, before we even begin to sit down with a score. To not know the history of the composer or the history of why the piece exists at all, is a failed study to begin with. Because all you're left with is a time signature and a key signature and notes, and some mundane piano. I mean, what's piano? What's forte? What is that? And why is it? So, if that's all you have. If you're going to put math to it, and study with some sort of mathematical equation: then every "G" is the same. Every note, every second line "G" in treble clef is the second line "G." And that's all it is. It has no meaning beyond that unless you come to grips with why the person chose that particular note and in that particular place. Before I would start anything, I would want to know as much history, both actual and spiritual, as I could possibly find out before I began.

And having said all that, Hannah, I also would like for you to know that in our conversation, you will know a bit more about me. My feeling about music is one of an art. If music doesn't exist to speak to another human being in a way that somehow changes them, or affects them, then I don't understand why music exists at all. That's both a blessing and a curse.

Because, this will really kind of take you back I hope, technique trumps art. Art stands on the shoulders of technique. If you don't have good technique, you can't have good art. It's impossible. It is impossible. Without it, the idea of perfection is one that's human, and not for us to discuss in terms of possibility. There are very few perfect things in our lives. But I can think of a few things that are perfect, but those are really beyond the scope.

So, the idea to be perfect in order to do this is frailty of humans, the human mind. But to try to attain that is essential. You have to try. And so that's technique. It's either in tune or it's out of tune. How far out of tune can it be, and be okay? *You* have to answer that question, not me. But I need to have good technique, so that I can define what I believe is art. Or I can't do either. I can fool myself and say I can, but not really. So that's different than just "okay."

So, the score: I open it up and look at the time signatures. That's basically what I do. Then I follow that, of course, with an investigation of tempo, structure, and form. All those things I can find out. But you can get so hung up on these things, that you really lose it, you really lose track of where you are, relative to what you're trying to do. I mean, you can get so close to the trees that you can't any longer see the forest and it's just, it's impossible.

For example, in David Maslanka's *Third Symphony*, which I premiered years and years, over 30 years, almost 35 years ago, now. The third movement starts very, very fast in percussion, [imitating the percussion part] "bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter." I don't know if you know the piece or not, but it goes very fast, and percussion are going crazy.

So, why didn't he start that with low reeds going [imitates percussion rhythm]? Why didn't he? Why did he choose that to begin the movement? Well, I had the opportunity to talk to David a lot about that piece, as you might imagine. It turns out, David looked at me when I asked him that question, like, "child, what is wrong with you?" He said, "I was sitting at a basketball game with John Paynter, and the drums

in the background were going a little bit [imitates percussion]. And I thought, well, that might be pretty nice. So, I took that idea from that basketball team, that basketball game, wrote it out and used it in the third movement of *Child's Garden of Dreams* many, many years later, but that's where it came from."
I mean that movement is filled with, as you know, terror and fear. But you could get so hung up on the drums that you lose the idea of what he's trying to say. So, like anybody else, I look for time signatures. Years ago.... We may not get past this question, if you don't stop me…

**HR:** I do you want to hear this story, and then I'll ask you the next one.

**GG:** Years ago, my great colleague, Tom Sleeper, at the University of Miami, orchestra conductor, a great composer, a great human being suffering mightily in his late years now. He has ALS. His body has just kind of gone away, and it's heartbreaking. But he was so kind to me when we were together as colleagues. Many, many years ago, and after we'd been together at Miami for maybe seven years, he decided he's going to take a sabbatical leave. Smart man. So, he told me that the only way he could take a sabbatical leave was if I would do one of the concerts for him, and he could cover everything else. But I would have to do rehearsals and concert with the orchestra. And I said, "I'm not doing it. I can't, I just, I can't." And I felt disappointed in myself but I'm thinking, "I can't do that." He said, "Well, you got a couple of weeks. It'll help me a lot to do it."
I thought about it. Long story short, I said, "Sure. I'll do it." I was nervous about it. But I wanted to do Mahler. I wanted to do Mahler [*Symphony No.*] 1. And Mahler [*Symphony No.*] 1, if you know that score at all, starts with seven octaves of "A" very, very soft and at the top of it, the top of the page, he says, "as if the sound of nature." So, I'm thinking, "seven octaves of "A," how are you going to tune that? And what is the sound of nature that had nothing to do with Mahler's idea of what that music was supposed to be?" So, I knew in order to conduct Mahler, that I had to know Mahler better, or I couldn't do it.
You know what I ended up doing? *The Rite of Spring*. But I did Stravinsky, because I had done his *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and *Octet*, and all those things. Now all I had to do was learn that part of the score at the bottom, which was the strings. And that was difficult, but I did it. I did it. And I loved it. I had great time.
As just an aside, as a gift Tom bought for me the facsimile in Stravinsky's hand of the *Rite of Spring*.

**HR:** That's really, really cool. Oh my gosh.

**GG:** Yeah. Pretty amazing.

**HR:** Oh, yeah. I'm a big Stravinsky fan. That's so cool!

**GG:** Me too. It's pretty great. Know the composer, and love the music, and then go to work. Okay, that's kind of walking you through a lot of stuff. Maybe not what you wanted?

**HR:** That was great! In your score preparation, what role does your emotional inference of the music play in the process? And how do you look for that musical meaning in the score and translate those emotions to gesture?

**GG:** Without that hook, without that connection to the music, that's the total bargain. I mean, at that point, you're so vulnerable because it's possible for you to be let down and maybe the piece isn't what it's cracked up to be—especially if it's a new a new piece, then it's possible. But you buy into it, the emotional connection to something like that is greater than yourself. You give up totally. You become servant. Your idea is not you, you are a servant to that music. And it's your job to recreate, not create their vision, for sure. But the primary job is to recreate what somebody thought about. Now, the last part of your question perhaps does have meaning in terms of moving further in our conversation. Translate those emotions into gesture: What kind of gesture are you talking about?

**HR:** Anything you use in your conducting gesture, whether your hands or physical gesture.

**GG:** Well, there's no question in my mind, that physical gesture is important, there's no question about it. But the physical gesture that shows something that is without a direct connection to the heart, or to the part of your being that causes you to connect with this music, is a waste of time and an undesirable trait.

I've seen, and so have you, that you have to be careful when you go view of performance or rehearsal because most musicians are critical beyond description and without need. So, you may be influenced more by your own need to criticize and your own need to be impressed, not oppressed, to be somehow moved by musical expression.

A gesture can be beautiful without meaning, but if the music has meaning for you, then your gesture will follow—without question. Whether it'll look like anybody, I hope it does not, I hope it looks like you. That's what I would hope. And some people might think that [the gesture] was really, really good or not so good, but that doesn't really matter. What matters is that your musicians will know whether you connect or not. They'll know whether your gesture is fake or not. They'll know that.

There's some sort of intangible synapse of energy that happens from the instant that you stand on the podium and begin your gesture until the sound comes out. It's a true desire to have a meaningful relationship with the music and the people with which you are going to produce that. So, that deep seated feeling that you have inside of you will cause your gesture to be what it is, and they work together. One is not independent of the other. It's okay to study videos, films of conductors. It's okay to like something that somebody else does and to try to imitate that. But it is not okay to try to be someone else. That is not okay. It's the worst thing you could possibly do. So, the gesture is a result of all the things we talked about before.

**HR:** What do you do to expand and feed your imagination? And do you feel that vocabulary and imagination play a role in artistic expression?

**GG:** What do you mean by vocabulary?

**HR:** The words used in rehearsal. How you speak to your ensemble.

**GG:** Well, of course. Those are two different things.

**HR:** Agreed.

**GG:** Imagination is critical. Without imagination, then nothing else really matters. But the way that you go about using your imagination to define how you want something to either feel or sound is the key to what makes you work and what makes you different from another conductor, another teacher.
Okay, let's see if I can explain this: Balance. What is balance? And you don't have to answer that, I want you to think about it for a second, okay? And what is blend? We hear that all the time in band. We hear blend and balance all the time. Enough to make you want to throw up. But that's what we hear because if we have good blend and balance, then we're good. Whether or not we say anything with it is a whole different deal. But blend and balance are a kind of a catch-all for the way you want the ensemble to sound.
I was a high school band director for almost 20 years. My first job was first through sixth [grade] vocal music. I taught little, tiny kids choir, and I loved it. Then I went through many, many years of teaching in high school, and I really wasn't interested in college very much. But then I got to college, and I began to think about things differently. I'm the same guy that I was then, from the standpoint of who I am, morally, the way I feel about things, but I changed the way I think about them, which then affects the outcome.
I don't want you to believe that I don't like band because I do, I love band. I'm a band director. But somebody else could read this and say, "well I just grew out, I don't like band, or I don't like things like blend and balance."
I've been doing this long enough that it's how I feel now, but it's important for me not to be misinterpreted. You're living right now where I grew up. I grew up in Oklahoma, not very far from where you are now. So, I'm an Okie. I like country music, I like all that, I like barbecue, I like all that stuff. But the way I feel now at the ripe old age of 78 is totally different than it was when I was 25. I mean, I've changed a lot. So, it's important we understand that going in.
We were talking about how I want the ensemble to sound. We're talking about balance and blend, and there's this pyramid and all this stuff, and that's all really, really, really good. But it's numbing after a while when you do that. It sounds good for a while. But after a while there's nothing in there that really compels us to want to hear this music in another way.
Let me show you something I have. Because of COVID and because of my retirement, you may not know it, but I'm really into photography. Okay, we're talking about balance. We're talking about blend and about it numbing things. So, the idea in interpretation is to get the viewer to look at or listen to something that you want them

to hear. I've got a picture, a couple photographs, a couple of art things here. This one is [Claude] Monet. What do you see first?

**HR:** Probably the woman in the white dress on the right.

**GG:** What if that woman on the right in the white dress had on a blue dress? Then what would you see? What if her dress was dark?

**HR:** I might see the woman more in the foreground sitting because her dress is brighter.

**GG:** Music is just like that. Exactly like that. There's not a bit of difference. Why do you want to say this to me? Why is it that you want me to listen to you? Why is it that? Exactly how are you going to tell them what you want me to hear?
So, think about this: You can hear it in your mind's eye right now, you can hear a beautiful flute. And in your mind's eye, you can hear a beautiful oboe. But if you have an oboe and flute play together, now it's a "floboe," and there are millions of those combinations. Balance and blend are mind blowing. How can I possibly get the balance and blend to be correct? Just by simply saying tubas play louder and piccolos play softer? Well, what if I'm piccolo player and I've got the solo, now what? So, the idea of how you want your imagination to work depends on how you see this music. Your ear sees the music.
Do you read poetry?

**HR:** I do.

**GG:** Okay. Have you read Mary Oliver?

**HR:** I have at the suggestion of Dr. Hancock.

**GG:** Of course! It's great. The correct word in the correct place—there's just so much to trigger your thinking, so much to look at. So, then in rehearsal if the tempo isn't fast enough, it's ok to say I want it faster. Why? Why do you want it faster? What's the meaning of it?
I learned this lesson. I have always been into music. I grew up out of that Oklahoma/Texas kind of thing, you know, where things had to be in order. But I was still pretty much hooked to that. But I was a kind of a musical guy even then.
I knew I had met my match when we did the Dahl *Sinfonietta*. So, I went to [teach] college. And the reason I went to college is because I wanted to play music of David Maslanka. I could give you lots of reasons why that happened and how it happened, but not necessary. Well, it'd be fun, but not necessary now. Not for your paper.
So, I went to Connecticut, and I didn't know David Maslanka. I was there for seven years before we decided to do *Child's Garden of Dreams*. When we decided to do it, I went into my boss's office, her name was Dorothy Payne. She was one of the greatest people I've ever known in my life—wise and passionate and compassionate beyond reason. She said, as I was leaving her office that day, "What are you playing on your

next concert?" And I said, "*Child's Garden of Dreams*," and she said, "Who wrote it?" I said, "David Maslanka." She said, "How would you like to have him here for your rehearsals?" and I said, "How could that possibly be?" He was living in New York at the time. She told me her husband and he were roommates at Michigan State [University] when they were working on their doctorate. Life. I mean, what are you going to do?

So, David came. And we were working on third movement of *Child's Garden of Dreams*, and the tempo is, as you know, is like 160 or 180, something like that. We were going diddle diddle diddle diddle [sings third movement percussion rhythm at 120BPM].

David stopped me in front of my ensemble, stopped me cold. Nobody'd ever done that before. He was with me looking at the ensemble, like I'm looking at you, and he said, "It's too slow. It's about 120." I looked at him and I said, "It's exactly 120 because we can play all the notes." And he said, "Well it has to go faster," and I said, "If it goes faster, we're going to miss a bunch of notes." He said, "So be it. We'll sweep them up after the concert," and I said, "You better bring a bushel basket, because we are going to miss a bunch of them." You can imagine the shock that my ensemble felt and my heart pounding, and then he said this to me: "Don't impose your restrictions on my music." That was the end of it for me. That was like a lightning bolt struck in the middle of time. And so, from that point on, nothing was the same. So, why do I want it to go faster? There's a reason. I told you that I'm a Mahler fan...it's just unreasonable how much I love Mahler. Tom Sleeper has a score, facsimile to Mahler [*Symphony No.*] 2 and he gave it to me to look at. If you know Mahler [*Symphony No.*] 2, even casually, you know the choir sits there for about an hour before they sing one note. On the printed score that you get, it says pianississimo. But in Mahler's score, it's like he took his pencil, and he wrote "P." You could just feel the heat and the strength of his hand to last one, "p" - four of them. What'd he want? He wanted it to be soft. Faster, softer. Why? But those questions are honest questions, and they have to be answered.

It is not okay to stop and just always talk about, "hey, that's sharp." That's okay if you need to help somebody be better in tune. That's okay, needs to be done, but they need to understand it's part of the deal going in. If they don't abide by the structure of the limitations of human beings, they have to struggle to try to be in tune with each other. That's not your job or their job, it's everybody's job. That's part of the deal. It is not okay to just take a tuner and play F around the room for an hour and a half. That's not okay. I can't think of anything, that would be more numbing in spirit. I just can't. I mean, I know guys that do that. They have phenomenal bands. I love them. I love those people. And that's their decision—fine and dandy. I'm not criticizing. I couldn't do that. I couldn't because it's not possible. But I would want it to be in tune the same as they would. Either it's in tune or it's not.

**HR:** In terms of teaching music, but also in terms of how you teach conducting, do you feel like technique can be taught through the lens of music? Because you're saying the technique has to be there, which I agree, and you're saying, "don't just say faster or louder?" Do you believe these things can be taught through the lens of the music, of the art?

**GG:** What's your instrument?

**HR:** I'm a flute player.

**GG:** Do you love that instrument?

**HR:** I do.

**GG:** That flute will teach you more about conducting than I ever could. If you love that instrument, and if you're willing to put the hours in to feel the way a phrase should work, "How soft is soft enough? What is it that I'm trying to elicit here?" Have you been to recitals where all the notes were there, and it was nice, but you couldn't wait to get out? Then you've been to those that were just filled with some kind of energy that you just could not explain. I don't know what that is. You can help a person in terms of being a conductor, but they have to bring to the table the willingness to sacrifice everything in order to find the way to do it. They've got to bring that to the table, you cannot give it to them. They have to bring it with them. You know, of course, who Carlos Kleiber is? Well, a woman wanted to study conducting with Carlos Kleiber. He would not take anybody as a student. He wrote her back, and he said, "I cannot take you as a student. I wouldn't know what to do." But he said, "All you need to do to learn how to be a conductor is go watch bad ones. And then don't do that."

There's something that you will bring to the music, to the score, to your students that will cause you to want them to know it so bad, you will find a way to connect.

Have you ever seen the Elizabeth Green conducting videos? They're terrific. They're just great, and she was a phenomenal teacher. They [the exercises in the videos] are all good things. They help with arm independence and all those kinds of things. But you can't conduct like her, and you wouldn't want to. But you can conduct like you, and you can be convincing.

You can want to have your story told through your ensemble. A teacher can help you, look at you, and then you can discuss with that person how you feel at that moment. There will be lots of deep times of self-evaluation: "Did I really do this? What was my logic for doing it? Why did I do it? What was I trying to do?" A good teacher, I think, will help you with that more than the actual technique. You should bring with you all the music. If you're a good musician, you will be a good conductor. And there are a lot of good players. But I'm talking about the kind of a passion that you bring to the music that you were playing. And your flute will help you more than anything else. I used to have the guys [graduate conducting students] bring their horns to rehearsal, to my lessons. Because they would try to tell me something they couldn't do. I'd say, "play it for me and let's just talk about it."

And we sang everything. Everything. We'd sing bass drum. We'd sing piccolo. We'd sing triangle. We'd sing everything. So that's that. That's the only way I know to get the inside out. That's the only way I know. That inside out is important. What was it Aristotle said? "The significance of art is what's going on from the inside out, not the outside in." It's what's inside.

**HR:** Speaking of the inside out, what does it feel like to you when you've completely connected with a piece? What has that felt like for you in the past when you feel truly connected with the music?

**GG:** I've got to tell you, Hannah, this may not be what you want to hear, but I am the kind of guy that has self-doubt. I had to work really hard on it, because it's just who I am. I have feelings of, "should I do this? Or should I do that?" And that idea of completely connecting? I'm not sure that I've ever felt completely connected. Not sure.

I know how I feel about the music. And I know how I feel about the people that are producing it. And I know that rehearsals and concerts are the same process. The only difference is in the concert, there are people there that have the opportunity to be affected by what's already happened, or what's happening at the moment. There's a connection between me and the spirituality or the humanity of the person that I'm trying to conduct. And there are moments when I'm conducting the music, where the page transcends the moment, the music just happens.

Mary Oliver said when she's trying to find a word and she couldn't find a word that her idea of concentration is three levels. The kind where you concentrate on the door, somebody knocks on the door, and you answered. The second one is, the level you go down further, somebody knocks on your door, and you're not aware of it, but you are aware of external sounds. And the third level is where you go down like a kid playing—they don't hear anything. Nothing. She says that she was looking for a word in her work that would be the right word for what she wanted to say at the moment. She said, "I have wrestled with the angel, and I have been stained by the light and I am not ashamed." That is a pretty profound idea.

So, there are moments when that can happen in rehearsal. But there's always the idea of making sure that your ensemble's with you, making sure that you're communicating correctly. The connection—I'm not sure that I fully understand what it means to be completely connected. But I'm completely connected to a piece once I begin to work on it. I mean, that starts from that moment, not just a concert, not just rehearsal.

When I was teaching at UM, and I was blessed to have wonderful faculty to work with and, great, great students. I mean, I had great students. Just look at Michael [Hancock]! I mean, I had guys like that, that just would walk in the door, and they'd bring the world with them. And if you didn't step up, you're in trouble. I had had people like that in the ensemble. I would get sick before rehearsals. I would work and work on a score. Why was I doing it? I would ask questions like, "what was the piece about? Am I trying to find something in myself, rather than something in this music? Why am I doing all this?" And I would get sick.

Once we started rehearsal, things were fine. But it was tough. So, the connection is always there. But there's always that humanity, human condition in me that's goin' like, "can you do that?"

I had students that could play anywhere, in anybody's orchestra anywhere. I was not going be the guy that was going to waste their time with some piece of music that was garbage. I just wasn't going to do it. Their time was too valuable, and their lives are

too valuable. The reason that they're there is too critical. So, I cannot be a band director that just wants to somehow show the world how fast you can play or what gliss you can offer. There's more to it than that. There's a lot more to it than that. So, yeah, it was tough. As far as being connected with a piece, I think that was not day one. Before day one.

**HR:** In your experience, is it possible to actively seek meaningful music-making moments in both rehearsal and performance? And what role does score preparation play in that?

**GG:** All of it. You're going to leave some of your best moments of music in the rehearsal hall. It's just going to happen. I don't know why that happens, it's a mystery. Everything is a mystery to me. I don't understand why good things happen. I don't understand why bad things happen in our lives. But I do know that meaningful music can happen at any time. You never know. It's always nice when it can happen in performance, because you have so many more people there, but I'll take it wherever it happens. I live for those moments, I live for that opportunity, and the possibility that it could happen.
The idea of making-music is a little bit foreign to me. I don't think you can make music. I think that you work so hard to understand little things—like the idea of balance and blend that we talked about, and how many levels of that there is to understand, and how long you put into that. Once you've done all that, once you have begun to explore with your musicians …
Hannah, I don't think you can make music. I think you have to let music happen. Get out of the way and work and work and just let your whole being be free to flow in the moment. Music-making implies to me that you take a hammer and nail to fix something, which is a good thing. I think that's all good. But that's not the way. A great carpenter could do that too. I mean, a great carpenter looks at that piece of wood and they see stuff in wood that I'd never seen. I love that whole possibility. But anyway, the idea is to pay attention. Robert Shaw said, "If you pay attention to the details of the music and the just so tone color, you are in a position to step effortlessly into the realm of the spirit." And that's what it's about. You already paid the dues. Your ticket's bought. Time to go.

**HR:** What makes it an experience musical? How do you define that?

**GG:** Wow.
There was a trumpet teacher who taught at Miami. I knew him for a while. He was there for maybe 10 of my 22 years, and then he passed, but he was the principal trumpet for Philadelphia Orchestra. This guy was a *great* trumpet player. I asked, his name was Gil Johnson, I asked Gil, "if you could teach a trumpet player to be musical." He said, "No, I can't. I can show them how they can sound musical, but I can't teach them to *be* musical." He said, "I can show them when to slow up a phrase and speed up the notes or get softer or get louder and it will appear that it is musical." When this interview is over and you have time, I want you to find the recording somewhere of the *Pines of Rome* by the Philadelphia Orchestra with Ormandy

conducting, and the trumpet player will be Gil Johnson. Or you could just Google Gil Johnson "*Pines of Rome* trumpet solo." Listen to that. There will not be an inflection in it that you will not be completely engrossed in. It will seem natural to you, it'll seem as if it's the wind blowing, it will seem like the sun coming up in the morning, and there'll be something about it that transcends the ability to capture.
Why? It just is. And those things happen. It's harder with an ensemble, because there are so many that have to conform to a tempo. But it's still possible to do. It's the intent. Human contact. It's the need to discover and to share discovery with as many souls as you can. You'll feel it.  I can find a good resource, but I just don't think I can answer that question.

**HR:** That's ok. Some of these questions are meant to see what you have to say, but also how you think about these things.

**GG:** I can listen to it, and I know it.
Frank Ticheli went to hear *Angels in the Architecture* in Texas, was at TMEA. He said it was a high school band that was playing his piece. He said it was perfect. No mistakes in it at all. But he couldn't find any trace of humanity anywhere in the performance. What if there would have been? Then what would it be? You can't even imagine how you would have felt.
I asked Frank once what he looked for in a conductor. He looked at me and without hesitation he said, “I look for a conductor to find something in my music that I didn't know was there.” Boy, you talk about discussion that went on and on and on. I think Michael [Hancock] might have been in that meeting.
But these things depend on the vibration of a human. One human soul to vibrate in harmony with another. You could talk about some of these things with somebody that didn't care, and it wouldn't resonate at all. Wouldn't have any meaning. If you wrote it down on a piece of paper, and put “this is what musicality is,” then somebody would find that, read it, and think: “so what's the big deal?” But there are a lot of things. Just listen to that solo, and you'll hear one, okay?

**HR:** Yeah, I'm excited to!
How do you encourage your ensemble members to develop their own feelings about a piece of music?

**GG:** I've been a band director for a long time, worked with a lot of kids over a lot of years. Some ensembles have played much better than others. But I've never, that I know of, have conducted an ensemble where nobody wanted to be as good as they could be. I think people do. You'll find the recalcitrance in people occasionally, but people want to play well. They want to do good things. But then with the guys I had at UM, we just understood that we were in this together and I was going to show them as much as I could - where I thought this music needed to go but it was totally in their hands to make sure that that happened.
You take a baton and wave it around as much as you want to. There's not one single note that'll come out. But if you put one flute player with your baton, and then you're in sync together, then the magic starts to happen. When we go to rehearsal, it was not

them and me, it was us. The respect that I had for those that I have continued with remains to this exact moment. Sometimes they would encourage me rather than I would encourage them. They would bring something to the table that I hadn't thought about. Then I'd have to really think about it. It was great. I loved it. I loved it. I miss it. But it wasn't so, "this music has to …" It's so intuitive inside of people that it has to come out. It's just the way it happened. It wasn't like, "come on, come on, come on." It was just like, "let's do this," and honestly, it's a different level of possibility. But to do this with say the Texas All-State band, same thing. Same thing.

**HR:** I'd love to talk to you about how you create that environment of "we're in this together," because I'm sure you've walked into rehearsal halls where it doesn't feel that way.

**GG:** You have to be you. Number one: have to be you. And you have to be ready. In one of the questions later, you talk about being vulnerable. They [the ensemble] want it and you're going to get hit and get hit hard. But it's okay. Nothing changes. It's still always going to be okay, so we'll go ahead.
Just remember that their technique has to be considered first. If you're doing a piece and you're doing it because you love the piece, you have to find ways to understand why you want a piece to go the way it is. Technique—if they're not together, if they can't subdivide, you're history. It doesn't make any difference.

**HR:** And then that dives into programming appropriately.

**GG:** Well, programming, in my mind, Hannah, that's a whole different thing.

**HR:** Oh yeah.

**GG:** That would be different than score studying. Programming is a true art. The idea that we talked about subdivision—think about if you have a metronome playing "one and two and three and four," and you want this basic subdivision, but with rubato. If you want it to slow down, it's "one and two and three and four and resolution [spoke the subdivision evenly slowing to the resolution]," but you still have the subdivision. You can't just hope for the best.
I thought about this a lot. It just flashed in my mind: I remember when I was a kid, studying conducting. I remember that they would teach me about the ictus. The ictus being the point where everybody's together. But I think and I believe strongly that it's the movement of the baton or how you use space to get to the ictus that determines the direction of the music. Whether or not the ictus is together or not, it's not the ictus. It's the way you control space. The same thing is true in terms of subdivision. Do you know the singer Sofie Von Otter?

**HR:** I do.

**GG:** Listen to anything, anything with her. If you really want a treat listen to her *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Just listen to those songs of her singing and listen to *Urlicht*.

Just listen. Nothing more than *Urlicht*. Listen to that with her singing. And holy cow, just, wow.
You'll learn about technique, you'll learn about holding on to a phrase, but you will also know that the space is predictable. That seems odd, but it is. It's an illusion, but just listen. I can hear it. Phenomenal. Phenomenal.

**HR:** How does your emotional connection to the piece impact the ensemble and the audience?

**GG:** Well, you never know. Some kids will go to your concert because they have to get a grade in their music appreciation class. They're not going to be moved by anything, except getting a beer after the concert's over. But then there will be people that will be ready for that.
John Corigliano, the great John Corigliano, is arguably the finest composer alive today. We did *Circus Maximus* with him here [University of Miami]. He came, and he did a composer's workshop and a kid, an undergraduate kid, asked him a question: if it was fun to compose. John hesitated for what seemed to me like half an hour. It wasn't, of course, but about five seconds. But he hesitated. He said, "no, it is not fun to compose." He said, "it's fun to finish. First, you have to hope that you can write one thing that will have any meaning for any human being on the earth other than you." And that's John Corigliano talkin. I mean, that's... Wow. I just didn't even know what to do. I didn't know how to react and what to do. So, as far as impact on an ensemble or an audience, you just have to work hard and hope. There are no guarantees. But it obviously does work.
We had a flute teacher named Christine Neild. And Christine was a *great* flute player. When she'd walk into rehearsal with the Wind Ensemble, the whole ensemble changed because they knew how much she cared. She was just that great. We did the Maslanka *Flute Concerto*. We got the piece ready. We've done it all. She had a first rehearsal with David [Maslanka]. She couldn't even play the opening phrase; she couldn't even get the instrument to speak. She was so into wanting it to be good. She was just nervous about that. There were health issues that she was going through at the time that I didn't know about, and I fully understand it. But once she understood and once, she rested into the idea, into the flow, and into the moment with Maslanka, it was unbelievable. It was just like, "this can't possibly happen this way." Thank God I have a really good recording of that. I don't listen to it often, but I do listen to it because I want to hear her play. When you first heard her with him you think, "well, maybe she's just nervous, she didn't care." Quite the opposite.
Just remember when you're with your ensemble and stuff is going on, and things don't seem to be going well, they may be going better than you think. The person that looks at you, and you think, "well, they don't care for me at all." Maybe the person cares more about what you're trying to teach them than any other kid. Just remember that. Don't judge your stuff beyond just that moment.
Connection is hard to understand. You know, there are going to be people in your life that are going to say, "You're really good." And there are going to be people in your life your life who say, "you're not very good." But both of those are imposters. The only person that makes a difference is you. You decide. You have to be strong, strong

willed. It's a tough game. Because it's art. Because it's not controlled by the mind, it's controlled by a larger spirit. And it's all good, it's all good. I taught for 15 some years [in public schools]. I look at kids who are just starting to teach, and I'd give anything to be able to do that again. It was so fun. It was hard, but enjoy the ride. Don't worry about it. Just work hard. That's all. Okay.

**HR:** Is it possible to feel emotionally connected while you're conducting, and analyze at the same time? And if so, how do you manage that?

**GG:** Well, Gunter Schuller… did you ever read his book on conducting?

**HR:** I've not read the entire book. I've read excerpts.

**GG:** You should read the beginning of it because he talks about this.
I forget the name of the book, it's maybe just *On Conducting*, I'm not sure. But it's a huge book. He deals with how to conduct Beethoven [*Symphony No.*] *9*. Don't read all that. The first chapter is all you need. He talks about how the conductor has to get outside of himself or herself, and look at their conducting, look at the way they feel about the music, what's going on in the room, what the music sounds like. You have to be able to simultaneously evaluate all those things while you're doing your thing. It's possible to do. I wouldn't get too hung up on it. If you're so emotionally connected to it that you can't really understand what's really going on, you're probably not in a very good place. So, it is good to tape yourself, record yourself. It's disappointing, but hey, life's full of disappointment. It is possible to do that. I do think it is. When a guy like Gunther Schuller, thinks it's possible, then a guy like me can too.

**HR:** At what point in your career do you feel like you had a solid handle on being emotionally invested versus being analytical?

**GG:** The only analysis that I would do at rehearsal was if I heard you guys playing out of tune, or things weren't lining up the way they should. Those are analytical kinds of things. But that's my job. That comes with the technique. It just can't be art if it's not together. You have to have those things in place to help you stay emotionally connected. It doesn't change your emotion. It seems like it does because you're not really dealing with what you want. You won't get past it or move on. But you have to deal with it. And if you don't deal with it can't be art. Can be something else, but it can't be art.

**HR:** Can you talk a little bit about how you how you teach score study? And do you believe conducting technique can that be taught through the lens of music?

**GG:** Did you ever take lessons with Mike [Michael Hancock]?

**HR:** Yes.

**GG:** He took things that I did, and he expanded on them, he made them even more than what I would have thought. His ability to analyze a score through phrasal analysis is as good as any I've ever seen anywhere. I mean, it's *really* good.
I'm sure he would talk to you about singing. None of my students were able to do anything until they could sing or play everything on the score. They had to. That's just the way it was. We often would not get through a measure, without talking about "what are you doing there? Why are you conducting that way?" And if they didn't tell me what they were feeling, if what they were telling me didn't match what they did, we were stuck for a long time.
What's inside has to swing to the outside. Everything that we would do in conducting, from a physical point of view, has to talk to me internally, not externally. Then all my students conduct differently. Some of them are prettier than others, but they all had to have a reason for it to be the way that it was. I think we've talked about the technique is driven by something greater that has brought you to the point where the technique matters. Vision.
I'm not an orchestral conductor. By the way, I did conduct Mahler [*Symphony No.*] *1* the next time. But I wasn't an orchestral conductor, top band. But I would go to Cabrillo [Festival of Contemporary Music]. You know what Cabrillo is? I go every summer. And the reason I go is because of all of the composers, everybody was there. That's where I met Paul Dooley. He was in the young composers thing, and they played *Point Blank* with the orchestra. And I thought, "Wow, that's pretty cool." I didn't know Paul Dooley from anybody. And I said, "your voice is amazing. I'd love to work with you." He was a student of Michael Daugherty, who's a close, close, close friend of mine. I had to be connected to it. And to Paul. Once that happened, then I'd do anything to get the conducting to make sure that the piece worked the way it should for him, primarily, but for everybody. But yeah, in music the art comes first. But then the technique to be able to do it. Oh man, if you don't know the technique, it won't work. You don't really love it. Not you specifically. It'd be tireless to try and find a way to get it to happen correctly.

**HR:** How can conducting books and programs encourage and develop a conductor's ability to connect on an emotional level with music they're studying and conducting?

**GG:** It depends on the book. It depends on the reason for reading the book. If you're a flute player, and you want to get better, you just play these etudes because they're there. Because you're supposed to. Then those etudes will help you be a better technician, but they will not help you be a better musician.
The best example of this I can give you: have you heard Yo-Yo Ma play the Bach *Cello Sonatas*?

**HR:** Yes.

**GG:** Have you seen the music while he's playing?

**HR:** *While* he's playing? No, I don't think so. I've seen the scores though.

**GG:** Get the music.
Get the music. And then there's not one thing [marking] on the music, other than the notes that he's playing.
I had a guy who's auditioning for the Coast Guard band, saxophone player. One of the things that they had to play was all of the Hindemith *Symphony* [*in Bb*] solos. Then there was a Bach *Cello Sonata* on there.
He played it for me, and it was strict. I mean, it was perfect. I said "I don't think so. I think they want to find out whether you're a musician or not." And he said, "What if I do that, and I don't win the audition?" I said, "then, so be it." If you know anybody that's on that committee, you might give them a call and see if you can get anything out of them. But I'll bet you they want to know more than whether or not you can play those notes. They know you can play the notes. Now, what can you bring to the table? He got a hold of the guy and he said, "that's exactly right. What can you bring?"
So, to read a book about conducting, no, unless there's a specific reason that you read the book, and it means something new in terms of your overall development, then it's possible. But I don't think it's possible just to read a book and learn to do it. I don't think so. You'd have to have some guidance, some help. Maybe I'm wrong about that. I don't know. It would be difficult. I've read enough conducting books, and I would always be really disappointed in some of the basic conducting books I used at the University. I added examples. They [the books] ask for specific things, which is good, but they never talk about music. To connect with a book would be difficult. But have you ever read *Of Music and Music Making*?

**HR:** Yes.

**GG:** That's a book that can help you. There are several books. *Courage to Create* is one. There's another: *What to Listen for in the World*. Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. Look at those books if you're into this, then they can help you. They can help you be a better musician.

**HR:** If you were, right now, going to teach an undergraduate conducting class, how would you go about encouraging students to be more connected to music rather than focusing solely on the technique?

**GG:** That's a hard question. Difficult for me to teach a beginning conducting class because it would drive me crazy. Because, first of all, you're talking to me through the lens of a guy who's done this for over 50 years. So, if I was starting, you bet. I mean, I've learned how to teach those kids how to do it. But at this point in time, not knowing whether or not they truly loved music and whether they would be ready to sacrifice their lives to do it—I don't know if I could. But trying to get back, go backwards 50 years, I think I'd find a way.
When I look at my early days of learning how to conduct in college, I had good teachers, and they taught me really well. Then I conducted the band. I did *Elsa's* [*Procession to the Cathedral*]. After the concert one of the teachers was over and he looked happy, and he said, "was a wonderful job conducting. I hope someday you will grow up to understand the power of this conducting." He was so happy with the

way it was sounding that he knew, at my young age, I could not begin to understand the importance of it.
After looking at it all these years later, I kinda get what he was talking about. He knew I was an okay conductor. But he knew that I had a larger responsibility, a larger calling. So yeah, do the best you can with those kids, they need you. And sometimes those kids just take it [conducting class] because it satisfies a curriculum responsibility, and that drives me nuts.

**HR:** To be connected to music, and then share that connection with an ensemble as the conductor, the conductor must be vulnerable. How would you go about guiding student conductors to being more vulnerable and trusting of the ensemble in front of them?

**GG:** While ability will not give you a better ensemble, it just will not, vulnerability may make it worse. But I know for sure that if you're not vulnerable, and if you're not in it, because you have to be, that there's no chance for you to ever express yourself in an artful way to people who are in your ensemble. That very vulnerability is also the thing that will cause you a lot of real pain. It will. It's something you're going to have to discover on your own, and so will whoever comes after you. It will happen in different ways.
You have, I've said it before I'll say it again, you have to be you. You have to be who you are and what you want to be. It's your life. You will not be judged by the way you live your life in one day, but you will be evaluated by yourself and by people, by the charges that matter over a long arc of time. What do you care for? What do you stand for? Who are you? That's important. That vulnerability comes with it. But just remember also, that it's not the people telling you that you're good or bad who are the important ones. The only one that's important is you. You just have to move, move forward. It's hard. It's hard. And nobody may be saying anything to you at all. But there's that question in your mind of, "could I have done that better?" Yeah, I could have. I could have done this, could have done that. Just work hard. Do the best you can.
Someone asked me once in a graduate conducting symposium what I defined as my greatest success. I couldn't answer the question. I had no answer whatsoever. So, about a month or two after this session was over, he wrote me an email. He said, "I've been thinking about that a lot. Could it be that you measure your success by the way you went after something, by the way you tried at that moment? In other words, did you give everything you had at that moment in time?" That was the best answer he could come up with. So, there's not a moment, it's a lot of moments. You just have to do the best you can all the time. David Maslanka would say, "just show up. Just show up." Yeah.

**HR:** What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges in transitioning from playing an instrument to conducting in terms of how one connects emotionally with music?

**GG:** I mentioned to you before your flute is your best teacher. You'll do things just because it's the way it feels. Pay attention to that because that's the inside of you saying, “This is how I feel.” Then the idea is to get an ensemble to come along with you in the way you feel about an interpretation. The critical thing is the ensemble has to be together. They must feel this movement with one another. That's difficult to get that many people to do one thing. But you just have to train yourself and steal yourself to the idea, “this is where I want to go.” It can change—it could change at the concert. It could change rehearsal to rehearsal. The way you feel, the way you want things to feel, and the light that shines. When you see the vision of the person that wrote the music come into focus in your mind as you're conducting, nothing greater, there's just nothing greater. The memories of how those people would talk to you and what they would teach you and how they would help you, though all those things are possible for you now, you just got to reach out to get them. You got a ways to go before you get to my age, but you will... they're there. They're there now. Okay?

**HR:** What specific exercises or activities, if any, do you have that you recommend to students to build stronger connection to the score?

**GG:** Specific exercises, activities? I mean, how many emails can you write? How many phone calls can you make? How many people can you talk to? This idea of a link to the past is real. Find all these people and question them and try to find out what they knew. I won't call that an activity. I call that a responsibility. All the things that we've talked about in our in our talk today.

**HR:** I love that: responsibilities. That's great.

**GG:** I hear people talk about, speaking of activity, I hear people talk about band in school, like they talk about marching band being an activity or band is our activity. Well, it certainly is not an activity, it's an academic class. It is a responsibility to teach students about the beauty of things that are, to them, supernatural or extraordinary. Not every day. Did you ever read *Letters to a Young Poet*?

**HR:** No.

**GG:** Rilke—poet. *Letters to a Young Poet*. Just Google it. You'll find that you can probably pick up a lot of stuff online for free. Rilke: *Letters to a Young Poet*. Get that. That'll help you, too. It definitely will.

**HR:** Will do. Unfortunately, we’re out of time. Thank you so much, Professor Green.

## Professor Craig Kirchhoff

The following interview was conducted on Monday, June 14, 2021, in-person at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

**Hannah Rudy:** First off, would you walk me through your overall score study process, from opening the score for the first time to conducting in your first rehearsal?

**Craig Kirchhoff:** For me, the score study process in general is almost in three parts, and they don't happen necessarily in any order. They could be happening simultaneously, and that's usually the way that it works. But first, is what I call the intellectual understanding of the score. That's the process that probably all of us are most familiar with because what we're trying to do is get down to the real DNA of the piece—how does the piece work? How is it constructed? In a sense, there's a whole list of things that one has to go through, like a checklist, but it's just gathering information and based upon that information, you make certain kinds of decisions, etc.

Now, of course, the intellectual understanding of the score is a prerequisite to really knowing and understanding the composer. If you're doing *Octet* of Stravinsky, you know where that piece comes in the chronology of Stravinsky's work.

The other thing is trying to find out as much information about whether there was a relationship with the composer and another person that created this work. What was their emotional involvement in that? What was the kind of relationship? So again, that's just research—trying to discover as much as I can about the composer. And what was the purpose of the inspiration behind the work?

The second part, and admittedly this was a part of score study that I probably ignored for a long time, is the emotional understanding of the score. I naively assumed when I was a younger conductor that if I rehearsed well, and everything was working, and everything was in tune, lined up, and blah, blah, blah, that the emotional picture would immediately come to the fore, which of course, was not true at all. So, this has become a big part of my score study.

It's one thing, if you're conducting, oh, let's just say *Rest* of Frank Ticheli, which obviously has a program behind it. If you're conducting *Octandre* of Varese, for me, I have to use my imagination in the *Octandre* to create that emotional connection. This is not so much for the players, but for me, so that I can have a point of view. Because really, the reason that I think that we study scores is to have a point of view about the piece.

In fact, this is very interesting, this is a somewhat of a sidelight story: I was at Tanglewood [Music Center] with Carl St. Clair, who was a conducting fellow there, and I was watching a rehearsal with the Boston Symphony with a conductor who shall remain anonymous. It was Shostakovich [*Symphony No.*] *10*, which starts out with this brooding dark cello/bass line. Rehearsal started and about 20 seconds later, Carl leans over and says, “he's lost them. Already. He's lost them.” In other words, there wasn't anything that this conductor was revealing about his specific point of view of the music that the players could really grab onto. I believe that every time

those players, be it professional players or high school or college players, I believe that *their* belief is that every time they come to rehearsal, they want to experience that same kind of experience—when they had that seminal moment where music changed for them. They're looking for that. If the guidance from the podium isn't providing that point of view or that special insight, then it becomes quite pedestrian. The orchestra sounds great, of course, but it's like the lower brainstem takes over and the orchestra survives, but what they're looking for is really something special. So, there's that emotional understanding.

The third part, for me, in terms of the three-part outline, is internalizing the score and trying to get the music on the inside, wherever that resides for us. The reason that I say that, in some respects may be very obvious why that's important, but I also believe that the more we internalize this music, and the closer it is to us and the inside, and, in a sense, how it responds or interacts with all of our life, all the things that we've experienced, when it's on the inside, it becomes very, very powerful. This is one of the reasons I don't feel badly that I don't have the piano skills to play. Georg Solti actually warns against using the piano for score study because he feels that the palate of the piano is, I would use the word monolithic. I think it's the more the music resides inside of you, the more vivid it becomes, the more real it becomes. And it can be very powerful. I've often said that if I had a choice of losing my vision or my ears, I'd rather lose my ears. Because I can still hear music and music can become so vivid for me. In fact, sometimes it's just difficult to get rid of it. It's there all the time, those earbuds. It's very powerful. I think the power of that part of the score study process is, again, getting the music on the inside.

And of course, then in rehearsal what's happening is you're not really thinking, you're reacting, you're just reacting. You're not waiting for the next mistake. Going back to speak to the heart piece, there are two things that are important to me: number one is I try to make a decision, doesn't necessarily have to be each phrase, but I have to make a decision for me, what I believe the emotional environment of the music is. In any given phrase, what do I believe that the composer is trying to impart to the audience? Everyone may come up with a different emotional word for that. But for me, I have to do that. So, I have something to hang my hat on. But also, that can change. But I have to do that.

That's one of the things I asked graduate students to do. Some of them had real problems with that. It's kind of like drop the finger in the score, “go to any page in score and tell me about the emotional projection for this part of the music.” They could tell me exactly what was going on harmonically, structurally, rhythmically, etc., but they just had trouble talking about the emotional projection of the music because that's not something they’re used to. There's nothing really in our training that prepares us for that, and I think that's what it's all about.

Of course, it's going to change from composer to composer, but knowing the emotional projection is the other thing. This is where imagination comes in, and, in a sense, actually creating a story and narrative, and again, that's for me. Sometimes I may share that with the ensemble, but very rarely. But if you came to one of my rehearsals, you would hear me say, “you know, this next phrase is a different story, it has to say something different.” So, it's not just about notes and rhythms, but it's a different story. This is where the imagination and I think creativity come in.

Where the vulnerability is, is that people may not like it. That's where the risk is. But if I've done my homework, and I'm convinced in the moment about all of those things, and I've done the research, and the intellectual study, the emotional study of the score, and, of course, internalizing, I just have to believe that in this moment, this is exactly how this piece goes. I can't doubt it has to go this way. I may change all of that in a year.

I listened to some old recordings that I felt I was completely convinced about—this is the way to do the second movement of *Lincolnshire Posy*. I listen and say, "what was I thinking?" That's because we all change and viewpoints change. So, in a sense, that's kind of the general approach to score study. And again, all three of those things go on simultaneously. I list this on the board and looks like you do this first, this second, this third, but it happens all the time.

**HR:** You mentioned both an emotional understanding and connection to the music, and then also an internalization of the music. Can you talk a little bit more about how you view the differences in those two things?

**CK:** I can study scores any place because of what I'm trying to do in terms of internalization. I can study scores in faculty meetings because I'm hearing the first movement of the Dahl *Sinfonietta*. I'm hearing it. This takes time on task. It just takes a lot of time. But when you're internalizing the scores, and it's clearly on the inside, part of it is you're also exercising what I call the "timbre muscle" in your brain. This is why if I conduct something, and somebody else stands in front of my group, and without rehearsing it and they conduct the same piece, it's probably going to sound different because my concept of timbre is probably going to be different from the other person or vice versa. So, the more you internalize that music, the more vivid it becomes. Then, when you're on the podium, you hear, "that's the wrong balance. Oh, no, wrong color." It just doesn't match [what you have in your mind] and so you continually rehearse to remove the distractions to what you believe is the essence of the music. The other question was about emotional connection?

**HR:** Yes. How do you define emotional connection?

**CK:** That's a difficult question to answer. These are things that are almost difficult to talk about. Let me give you an example: Let's just say something as straightforward as the last movement of the Holst [*First Suite for Band*], which is a piece I just never ever get tired of conducting. Other pieces I get tired of conducting, but not that piece. It's strange. It's the physicality of the music inside of you that I'm responding to.

Let me give you an example: Sometimes when I'm out for a walk with my wife, she'll take her elbow and hit me in the arm. She'll say, "stop studying your scores," because what she could tell is my breathing changes. Outside is quiet, but it manifests itself inside. When you're studying music internally, if you have your hands in your lap where you can't move externally, the only way you can externalize the music is through the breath. And the breath is the key to everything. I like to think of the breath as your connection to the universe. Think about that one. But that was a lot of Eastern philosophies. You see that all the time. But when I'm internalizing that music,

for me, I'm thinking about the emotional parts of the music. It's very kinesthetic for me. I can feel it. Again, it's difficult to describe, I can feel it. And then you can feel the strength of the emotion or you evoke a sense of intent, which is everything.

**HR:** This emotional connection that you feel to the music: Do you feel like you're responding to what you're hearing? Or are you responding to your story that you envision?

**CK:** Yeah, another great question. Let me start with a general statement that I believe: What's interesting is that a lot of professional players oftentimes express the fact that their greatest emotional connection to music is at the first reading. Then the rehearsal process starts. Rather than rehearsing for the kind of emotional connection between them and the music, and the players themselves, they [conductors] start working on perfection. Ultimately, that's a complex thing because it drives that connection away.

Somehow, I think rehearsal is to continually maintain focus on the emotional connection and the meaning of the music. You do that in rehearsal by removing the distractions. Bad intonation is a distraction. Bad rhythm is a distraction. Out of tune chords are a distraction. But you're not rehearsing for perfection.

The problem is, there is a moment in rehearsal when what I feel in terms of the physical conducting is right in sync with my emotional connection, but I have to shift on a dime because I can't just conduct my image. If I looked like the music all the time, then I'm probably not getting the sounds that I want. So, I'm continually shifting.

It's a complex business because conducting is not really a movement art, it's a listening art. You're continually adjusting. It's like a stimulus response. You hear the stimulus of the group playing, and you react to that. Then you immediately have to make changes with the physicality to get that back on track to what you need to be and then you can shift more and go.

There are those rehearsals I'd always tell my students, "okay, tomorrow we're going to do a full woodwind sectional and we're going in." Then they know, "okay." Select the "Turandot" movement of *Symphonic Metamorphosis*. The woodwinds just need time to slow everything down so they can hear what in the world is going on. When the students see a stool on my podium, they know what's going to happen. I'm going in, right? And I tell them that.

But I also believe that the dream is that in every rehearsal, you can remain as emotionally connected as you possibly can. That's the goal. Because it's something that both the players and myself, as a conductor, I just can't turn on or off. I can't do that. I'm either in or out, one of the two. Now if I'm in [the music] and then there's an issue, then I have to address that issue. Then the emotional connection goes a little bit to the wayside. But the idea is to come to that. You're shifting all the time. My worst rehearsals are those rehearsals where I'm just consumed with repairing technique. They're the worst. And it's bad for me, it's bad for them. It's bad for everybody. So, that comes to another one of your questions—one of the things that gets in the way of emotional connection is playing music that's too difficult. That's a big issue.

**HR:** So, programming plays a big part?

**CK:** Huge part. You can't be emotionally connected to the music if everyone is just trying to survive. You just can't. I think that there's an epidemic of over programming in our country at every level. When I used to do a lot more All-State conducting, I would rather have stretched them musically than technically. That was always the goal. But when you have to focus so much on technique and all those objective things just to get the piece so you can play it through, that's where the emotional connection goes through the window. It's not the other part of course. There are some works where emotional connection is impossible.

**HR:** Can you talk a little bit about that? Or give me an example?

**CK:** Well, there's just nothing there in the music that creates the opportunity to connect to it emotionally because it's devoid of deep meaning.

**HR:** Not to ask too much of a leading question, but are you getting at quality of literature?

**CK:** Yeah. And not every piece has to be a, you know, a *Music for Prague* or something as deep as that. It's just that there has to be something there that you can grab onto. There are a lot of pieces that, I know this because I'm a part of the publishing industry, are just devoid of any real meaning—they're very surface level. Not irrelevant, but meaningless.
So how do you develop emotional connection with a piece? That's very difficult to do. And some pieces are much easier to facilitate that.

**HR:** You mentioned putting a story to the music. Do you as the conductor, see yourself as a storyteller in some respects? Or how do you view that story? How do you view your role as the conductor when you come up with these stories?

**CK:** Yeah, I think that the story is probably primarily for myself. Or what it could be is that I'm sharing my own emotional [connection].
As a father, I can't imagine losing a child. Just can't. Now, does that mean that I can't conduct a piece because I haven't lost a child? Because it's about the loss of a child? Of course not, but I have to have tremendous empathy. I have to use my imagination over this field. In rehearsal I may explain, "this is the dilemma I'm having with this," but in no way would I expect them [the ensemble] to buy into my story.
The whole goal is for them to create their own images. I believe that's essential. They have all of those experiences in their lives. Maybe they've lost a grandfather, maybe they've lost a cat. But my role is not to heap upon them my own story, but my role in rehearsal is to be as transparent as I can be with my own feelings. I believe that that allows them to create their own images. It gives them the permission. I always say, "I feel useless when I try and work with conductors. If I feel, they [the ensemble] will feel. If I don't, it's almost like you're taking that permission away." Again, it's that vulnerability.

I want to say something about vulnerability. I don't think vulnerability is an emotion Vulnerability is one of those loaded words. “You need to be more vulnerable.” But it's a gate, or it's a conduit to one's deeper emotions.
To be vulnerable means you can't hide anything. To be vulnerable, it means to be who you are, rather than trying to be perfect. That's hard. That's really hard. And, frankly, being old enough, it's easier for me. But when I was younger, it was hard for me. I didn't want anybody looking at my soul. Go away, go away. So, I just focused on all the other things. It's wrong.
I saw your teacher on several occasions. She was so good. She was so intuitive that sometimes she really didn't know what she was doing. Sometimes. But I couldn't get her to kind of break through with that emotional component. But then when she did it, it was unbelievable. Then she went back right away, she disappeared. I said, “where did, what happened?” And she said, “I was scared to death.”
So, that's what it is. It's just being out there. I still don't know how to teach that. It's a process. People have to feel safe to do that. That's why if you're going to run a rehearsal, and create fear and apprehension and mistrust in people, there will be no emotional connection because people aren't going to risk that. It has to be a safe place.

**HR:** That makes complete sense.

**CK:** I'll give you another example of this: When my father passed away in 2004, he had a quadruple bypass valve replacement, and he never regained consciousness from the operation. He lasted another two days, and the only thing that got me through that was, I listened over and over and over again, to *O'Magnum Mysterium*. Because that gave me some kind of comfort in that emotional connection to that beautiful music and then with my father. So, I could create a whole narrative, I could create a whole story for the students, but I just told them what I told you. This is what helped me for two days in the hospital. It's all I had to tell them. And I said, “this is how I dealt with loss.” The goal is now that we'll get there. What is it in their lives that they could relate to? And what does it mean? I think that the less you say is better, but sometimes sharing very specific kinds of things, can provide them some insight. Because the younger the students, the less experience they're going to have with those tragedies in life.

**HR:** In your preparation process, how does emotional inference of the music play into the process and how do you look for and find that emotional meaning in a composition and then translate that to gesture?

**CK:** That is a process for me. And here, I will say that it's almost like I can't separate emotional understanding from internalization. For me, it's a discovery process. In that, when I'm internalizing the music, suddenly, it feels different to me. And again, remember what I said before, for me it's not an intellectual process. It's a kinesthetic process. Through the internalization process, and really being much less hypersensitive to the emotional connection, I'm aware of that. I'm also aware of how that changes. It manifests itself in very strong internal feelings. Now, if I make a

decision about what I believe the music of this point represents emotionally and that's almost more of an intellectual kind of evaluation of that. But again, for me, the essence of really getting into "how this feels" is that internalization process, because then it can't help but get out.
What's your instrument, Hannah? Flute player? So am I. When you think about really important, seminal musical experiences in your life, you probably remember how those experiences felt. Most people don't remember how it sounded. But the feeling of that is what is so powerful in the memory. And that's what people remember. We give our players the permission to feel because they see us being vulnerable and open, and that translates to the audience who then create their own images. Then, that's that cathartic moment. That's why people go to the concert hall, rather than listen to a CD. Bud Beyer always said that to move people emotionally, you have to move them physically. There has to be some physical response to a stimulus—be it you see something beautiful and that intake of breath. There's the stimulus and then the response. That's exactly what I think happens when there's a strong emotional connection.
I heard Yo-Yo Ma say something the other day on YouTube, and it was quite good. He said, "music is a mode of transportation because it moves people from one place to another emotional place to another emotional place." I've never heard anyone say that before. It's true though, it's a mode of transportation.
But if you're rehearsing for perfection, devoid of any real emotional connection, it's just dead on arrival. It's nice sounds. And there's nothing wrong with nice sounds. But it's not going to have the same transcendental, transformational sense about it.

**HR:** It's that intangible, it's hard to put into words.

**CK:** Yeah! This is a sidelight to what we're talking about that has some relevance: I love all my friends in the Minnesota Orchestra. They would hate it when I would ask this question because they knew it was coming. I'd always ask them "who was your favorite guest conductor?" I was talking to John Tartaglia, who was then principal violist. Right out of his mouth came Klaus Tennstedt, and I said, "so tell me about this." He said, "Well, every moment in rehearsal with Tennstedt was like a life and death experience with this music. It was so gripping. We would say, "this is what it's all about, it's kinesthetic. It was the tension, and I don't mean bad tension, but the intensity of these rehearsals was so palpable." And like he said, "it was like a life and death struggle with this music."
I saw a video of him [Tennstedt] conducting *Resurrection Symphony*, Mahler. It takes them almost a minute and a half at the end of one of the movements where he finally comes to and kind of rejoins the real world. But there was something about that intensity, that manifested itself physically. And John said, "Yeah, all of us in the first row would be drenched with sweat." But that's what it was. They loved it because it wasn't ordinary. It was extraordinary.
Here's another answer to your other question: Warren Benson once said that, "There are no rehearsals. There are only concerts." I really believe that every rehearsal, I don't achieve this everywhere, should have three things: a moment of revelation where people go, "holy cow;" a moment of duty; and a moment of fun, which is

usually at my expense. A moment of revelation, moment of duty, and that's what they were experiencing with Tennstadt in rehearsal.
This is so important for public school conductors and all of us teaching at the college level because we give concerts because we rehearse. Professional orchestras rehearse because they have to give concerts.
So, I don't believe anymore in delayed gratification. At my age now, that's why am I going to wake up every day and in rehearsal those kinds of things should happen. Every day in rehearsal, hopefully they leave having felt something.
You don't achieve it all the time. And some rehearsals are not meant to do that. Some rehearsals are just down and dirty. Because you have to. If you're going to do *Winds of Nagual* by Michael Colgrass you just have to figure out how all the neighborhoods work, and how in the world do I rehearse that? So, there's that stuff. But of course, the emotional content in that music is unbelievable. But there are no rehearsals, there are only concerts. And that's what we loved about Tennstadt. Because every moment with him was this, this unbelievable, transformational experience. The other thing he said in rehearsal is "we must do this" never said "you" or "I." It was "we." It was always this sense of collaboration.

**HR:** What are some obstacles in both rehearsal and performance that you've faced that have disconnected you from the music? What advice do you have on how to avoid disconnecting from the music?

**CK:** We're all human. We're going to get distracted by certain things. One of the things that we as conductors, and as musicians need to do, is to live in the moment. Of course, that goes for real life, too. That was a big issue for me because I was always thinking, "I need to do this, I need to do this." But in a sense, we live in this world of anticipation, of what's to come. There's this anticipation and expectation. Then the moment comes, and then we're evaluating that. In the meantime, the next twenty measures of the music have gone by with no input from us because we're reflecting. Or the twenty measures before the difficult transition, because we're thinking, "shoot, here it comes. How's this gonna go?" So, living in the moment is something that we can learn to do better. That's actually a discipline. You have to discipline yourself to do that. At least I do. I can only speak for myself.

**HR:** How do you do that? Talk to me about how you live in the moment and think ahead?

**CK:** Yeah, well, with some pieces of music it's easier said than done. If you're conducting the Stravinsky *Piano Concerto* and Janice is in the cadenza in the first movement and then, you've got to come out of that cadenza with a bang—yeah, you have to think about that, and the fact that the next twenty bars are the most treacherous bars in the first movement. You can think, "Man, I did it. I made it." And the whole train can get derailed the next twenty bars because you're reflecting.
So, our friend Bob Reynolds says, "conductors aren't supposed to think." Well, of course we have to think. Of course, we think. But this is why score study is so important. I really do score study. If you really wanted to tie me down on this, I

would say, I do it for a point of view. And a point of view which includes all these things and emotional connection. I developed this image of how I believe this music should sound and that's hard work. It's grudge work. I am not one of these people that is in love with score study. I do it because I have to, and it's hard work. Really hard work. You know, some people love it a lot more than I do, and that's great, but I have to do it because these are things that I have to know. These are the things that I believe I have to know to stand in front of an ensemble and communicate the essence and meaning of music. But yes, to answer your question, there are pieces of music where it's more difficult to stay in the present because you have to be. I have this little marking I use in my score, "nota bene – n.b." When I write that in the score, I know if I don't give this cue, the ship is going down. No matter how many times you've done that, it's one of those moments when they just need help. And that's just the reality. That's just the reality of conducting.

**HR:** Would you say that, in some respects, moving between being in the moment and thinking ahead is a pendulum? It's shifting—something you mentioned earlier.

**CK:** Yeah, we're talking about priorities. We're also talking about being a facilitator. We're also talking about how I desperately want my students to succeed. So, I have to be a facilitator, in some instances, to help them navigate this music. I'm not going to take the stand at all, "I'm going to remain emotionally connected here, and they're on their own." Can't do that. But you're constantly shifting, and you're caught. But again, that whole shifting process is based upon your knowledge of the score and the music. What's interesting, too, a lot of people really know the score. But I'm not convinced they know the music.

**HR:** You mentioned that people can conduct the music, but not really know the music, not be invested. Can you talk about how that's possible?

**CK:** I think it's possible because I think that shows the lack of preparation. I'm not trying to be pejorative here, but I believe that: a lack of preparation. You've either cheated the emotional piece or you've cheated the internalization piece.
The easy piece to do is the intellectual part. That's the easy part. We're all different. There are some people that conduct and exude really heartfelt music-making, and there are other people that don't. It's just who they are. They may be great technicians and all of that, but that's just who they are. I hate that expression. You can't escape who you are. Frightens man to death.
I think a lot of people know the *Symphony of Wind Instruments*. They know the pitch class sets, if there are any—I'm just being hypothetical. They know all that, and they can show me things in the score that I go, "holy cow! I didn't know that. How did you figure that out?" But they don't really know the music. They just don't know that. That's it. Because they live in that world. And then there are the conductors who slobber all over the music and really don't understand it, you know?

**HR:** I know exactly what you mean. And I think it's interesting that you said either they've cheated the emotional or the internalization process. That's where I feel like

we just don't have a lot of knowledge of how to teach that or we don't try to teach that, especially to younger conductors.
Dr. Simon told me the story as well where she would get in touch with the music, and then she'd retract because it scared her. So, you have these moments of being more connected, versus not being connected—whether you're scared or something distracted you—how can you minimize those distractions? How can you invest yourself? Or what do you recommend people do to invest themselves? Does that still go back to more preparation?

**CK:** Yeah, it goes back to that. Also, not every time on the podium is going to be this revelatory emotional experience. But what's important is for people to remember how that felt. Not because it was scary or frightening because you're just out there. "How did that feel?" And most people say, "I want that again." It's almost like a strange kind of drug. You're afraid of it because it has consequences, actually very difficult consequences. You're putting yourself in a place of great risk. Did I read the Martha Graham quote to you in Wind Symphony? The Martha Graham quote goes something like this, and I'm paraphrasing: Each of us have an energy, a quickening. And if we don't get what we have out, the universe will not have it. It'll be lost forever. And then she says, and I'm paraphrasing: It's not your business to judge how it compares to other expressions.
That's a tough one. It's your business to keep the channel open. And keeping the channel open is what Shanti [Simon] was feeling in those moments.

**HR:** How do you do that? How you get better at that?

**CK:** You hopefully, go to a good graduate school with a teacher who makes you feel safe, and where you feel you can allow the kind of vulnerability. I'm not being facetious, but you have to keep going after it. And you know what? The older you get, the easier some of these things become.

**HR:** There's no replacement for time. It takes time.

**CK:** It does, and it also takes a special kind of humility. That's a big word.
Humility is, to me, really understanding, coming to grips with who you are. All the good and all the bad. I've realized as a conductor, that there are some people who can do things that I can't do. And I think, "shoot." Doesn't mean I stop trying. But then I know there are things that I can do that other people can't do.
Humility allows us to experience what we're talking about because if there's no humility there, then you're cut off. The conduit is closed. It's things like worrying about what other people are thinking, or wondering, "am I good enough to do this?" That also shuts off that conduit. All you have to do is go to the Midwest Clinic and there aren't a lot of humble people there. I'm just kind of being facetious. But humility is a characteristic, I believe, of the true artist.
My dream for my graduate students has always been that you remain humble for the rest of your career, because I think that allows for more growth. I think it allows for the exploration of oneself. But I don't know how to teach that emotional connection.

The only thing I can do is guide people. And then, once they experience it, then I can figure out with them how they can do that again. And not be afraid of it. Because if I knew how to teach it, I could make a lot of money. “Here's my gold dust” doesn't work. But it's an experiential thing. I think the older you get, the easier it is—you’ve experienced more.

**HR:** What do you feel makes an experience musical? And how do you know when you've completely connected to a piece? What has that felt like for you?

**CK:** I think a musical event or a musical experience is, again, going back to Yo-Yo Ma: it just takes you to another place. You're overwhelmed by it. I'm driving in my car down I-35 from the cabin on Easter Sunday, listening to the *Resurrection Symphony* of Mahler and I just drove along. It's like nothing else matters. And you're drawn into it.

Bud Beyer said that the notes that are left behind by the composer, in a sense, are the footsteps to their soul. And you have to walk in those footsteps. In some respects, I think that also, a musical experience that is transformational is… you just can't find the right words to describe it. We're really inadequate vessels.

For me, when I feel *that* connected to a piece of music when I'm conducting, especially if things are going well, it just feels like I'm riding this energy that I actually feel. This sounds so trite to say this, but I almost feel like I'm one with that energy and the ensemble is one with that energy. It's almost like there's no effort. It's very seductive to feel that because you want to keep recreating that experience, and it doesn't happen all the time. But man, when it happens once in a while, it's unbelievable. There's that sense of …  I'm trying to find the right words. It almost feels like you just kind of get lost in it. It's effortless. And the wonderful thing is usually, when that happens for me, the ensemble has taken this special initiative. It's not me always rigidly guiding this process. It’s me riding on that energy. That's amazing to me. That's an amazing experience.

**HR:** That definitely leads us to my next question: How do you encourage your ensemble to develop their own feelings about a piece? How do you encourage that in your rehearsal process?

**CK:** I think that a lot of that has to do with the kind of language you use. I think that in rehearsals, oftentimes, students have become so numb to the language, which for the most part is devoid of any kind of imagination or creativity: “You're dragging, you're rushing, softer, louder.”

There was an article, I can't remember the gentleman's name, he was the oboist in the Met Orchestra writing about his experiences playing for Carlos Kleiber in the pit. One of the things he mentioned is that Kleiber never, ever spoke or used a technical language, which we know that when we're teaching, sometimes we have to do that, because that's what we have to do. But he often spoke of images and that would create images within the players.

I remember him rehearsing *Der Freischutz*. It was in German, so I couldn't understand it completely. But he was making a metaphor of a man smoking a

cigarette on the street corner, he's kind of talking about the casualness. And you think, "Well, what does that translate to?" But again, it creates images. I think in rehearsal we just have to find a better language sometimes. I think that there are times when we need to live in a world of metaphors, short stories. And I'm talking about very short stories, very short metaphors, because nobody wants to hear us talk. Something can be said very quickly that translates. I'm at a loss for thinking right now of some things, but those are important because, again, I think they create images.

**HR:** How do you use that emotional connection and those images as a vehicle to improve the technique?

**CK:** One of the things that I've started too late in my musical life is to ask a lot of questions in rehearsal. Honest questions: "tell me about how letter B to C feels." What's interesting, students almost always have answers, and oftentimes the right answers. I'm asking them to invest. Maybe their emotional take on this, and then "what do we need to create this?"

**HR:** And you feel like when they've invested emotionally, they improve the technique on their own?

**CK:** It gets better, a lot more quickly. And that's a process. In a rehearsal, you have to be very judicious in how you do those things because players come to play. But sometimes I think we miss opportunities to use creative language that could create images.

**HR:** We talked about how to stay connected while analyzing and how you manage that. You talked about how you have to shift, that you can't always be connected. At what point in your career or life do you feel like you came to that conclusion or became very aware of having to shift between being more connected and analyzing?

**CK:** I would say that it happened later than it should have happened.
I went to Ohio State, it was crazy. I went to Ohio State as Director of Bands when I was 30 years old. I survived. I think it was in those late 30s where I began to understand this. There was a moment for me that was an important moment. Bob Reynolds, one of my closest, dearest friends, in so many ways was a metric to me, a great metric. We were both conducting at that the Tri-State Festival in Tallahassee for Jim Croft and we were walking on the sidewalk. Bob looks at me and he says, "you know, you're conducting very differently. In watching you previously, I always knew what you wanted. Now I know what you're feeling." I almost screamed "Eureka!" Took a while to get to that point. Some people just do it more naturally earlier and it just took me longer.
Also, it was the pressure. There's an enemy. We have an enemy. The enemy is the reality that no music is better than what it sounds. So, if it's bad Holst, it's bad Holst. If it's bad Husa, it's bad Husa. It's easy to get sucked in at the college level by the pressure of having to create these unbelievable ensembles. Everybody's judging. I

used to drive to work thinking, “there has to be an easier way to make a living” because it was always the high wire act in trying to keep all of that in balance.
So, as long as your motives are pure, that you're really going after the music, you're going after emotional connection, and you're going after an experience, hopefully an experience that the students will feel and be able to communicate to the audience, you're going to be okay. It's a balancing act. It's a tough one.
Just think of your life as a grad student: When you stand for one of the groups, whether we like it or not, everybody's comparing. I used to read that Martha Graham quote every day because it gave me courage.

**HR:** You've already mentioned you don't feel like you can teach emotional connection. It's helping your students find it and get back to it.

**CK:** I can guide it.

**HR:** Guide it, yes.

**CK:** There are some teachers that can't do that because they haven't had that experience themselves. So, I know I can guide it. I can smell it. I could smell it when it's there. And I can tell when it's not there. But I can't just say, “Okay, do this, do this and do this, and voila!” It's a process.
With undergraduate students it's more difficult just because they're younger. But I did the same thing with the undergraduate students from the standpoint that in conducting class I reduced the number of excerpts that they would actually conduct, because I wanted to be more thorough.
One of the excerpts was *Ave Verum Corpus*. They would have to do the same thing that I would work with my graduate students on—they’d have to make a decision about “what *is* this phrase” and communicate emotionally. Then they would have to write into their score what objective items of music-making—altered dynamics, crescendos, diminuendos—were they going to utilize to communicate those emotional ideas or that emotional projection.
They weren’t just conducting 4/4 time, they had a conductor point of view. Some students were more successful than others, obviously. Some students were just knock-out dead, great. Part of that is just the personalities or greater comfort level, with conducting, but they could do it. They understood when it happened. Everybody in class could get it. Everybody understood.

**HR:** Do you feel like when teaching conducting students, whether undergrad or graduate level, that you can teach technique through this lens of music-making?

**CK:** Yeah. It was a semester long course. I didn't talk about patterns until we finally got into 5/4, and we had to talk about asymmetrical patterns. Just didn't do it. So oftentimes, the teaching pedagogy was, “What was less successful? What didn't work? What did you have trouble with?” Sometimes it was starting the piece, sometimes it was getting the ensemble to breathe in a certain place. Then we would

talk about, in a sense, how to repair the technique to get the musical result that they wanted.
By the way, before every student could use their batons, or their hands, they had to start the ensemble with their breath, and had to give three specific preparations of a different style, or dynamic. So again, that whole concept of conducting from the inside out, and the importance of the breath.
And they could all do it. Some of them better than others, but they could do it. What it made them aware of was how important the breath was to everything for the conductor. So, that's how I approach that.
If someone was having trouble with preparations for that, we talked more specifically about it. And fermatas: I was very proud of them because I did not do fermata lectures. What a waste of time. We all practice fermatas, like group practice. And then, they just have to practice by doing. They have to practice by doing.

**HR:** Do you feel like, generally, conducting books and programs can encourage and develop this emotional connection? Do you feel like things that you're doing can be encouraged everywhere?

**CK:** I don't see why not. I mean, why did we all get into the business form?
All of us had a seminal moment, where music all of a sudden became different for us. And the problem? I think the problem with conducting courses is we make it too difficult. We just make it too difficult. It's not difficult. Conducting 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 is not difficult. My granddaughters can do that, right?

**HR:** Did you feel like people just put way too much pressure and emphasis on the technique?

**CK:** Yeah [nodding vigorously]

**HR:** You've talked a lot about being vulnerable and making sure you create a safe space. How would you go about guiding student conductors to be more vulnerable and trusting of the ensemble? Can you provide some examples of how you created that environment for them?

**CK:** I was very fortunate. We had two sections of beginning conducting, and Betsy McCann, who's the marching band director at [University of] Minnesota, taught one section, and I taught the other. She's just a great teacher. Oftentimes, we would teach together, and the graduate students were great. But we worked really hard on trying to create a safe environment for working with people. We gave them lots of opportunities.
The class was essentially 16-17 people. Almost every day, they were conducting. We divided the 17 people into two ensembles, so everybody had a chance to conduct. The approach was never “What's wrong? What's not working,” but rather, “What's not working for you” or “How can you make this better?”
So, you're not approaching it from a right or wrong perspective. You're just working on the pedagogical issue to find a better solution to do it. And, of course, that drives

students nuts because there's never any one answer for an issue and they want the answer. But that really helped. The other thing that helped was that every student in the class was expected to give feedback to others. So, there was a real sense of, I think, community.

**HR:** Did they give feedback verbally in class or written feedback?

**CK:** Both. And I divided the class on the second day of class, or maybe in the first day of class. I told them they had to find a partner who they could trust implicitly. A partner who would be completely honest with them. So, they created this relationship with this other person. There were really pretty explicit instructions about how they were going to debrief and so the students were very helpful to each other.

**HR:** What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges in transitioning from playing an instrument to conducting, in terms of how people connect emotionally to music?

**CK:** Another one of those hard questions. First of all, their experience as soon as they get on the podium, if you would ask them, "Well, what did you hear from the ensemble," their response usually was, "I didn't hear anything." Because they're just overwhelmed by what's going on. I'm not sure that I can give specific examples of things to do. But my belief is that nothing is an applied art. So, if they're up in front of one ensemble every day, they automatically get better at this. They start hearing better. They're so used to their perspective and now they have to listen in a completely different way.

Sometimes I would give them an assignment to do. Maybe listening to an early Mozart Symphony, early Haydn Symphony, nothing too complex. And say, "Listen to the second movement, and only listen to the viola part." They'd have to shut out everything else, and really try and focus on the viola part. It would be interesting to do some research on that.

I don't have any empirical evidence how successful that was, but it at least made them think that to listen to some people, you have to ignore others rather than hearing everything. I'd have them listen to the second violin part, listen to the second flute part, and they had to do that with the score. They were actually looking at the music and could focus just on those parts. And that, again, is a discipline that you gain over time.

In my own rehearsals I could be rehearsing or mentioning some issues in maybe clarinets, and one of the trumpet players would say, "Well, we had the same passage, what about us?" And I'd have to say, "Sorry, guys, I wasn't even hearing you," because I'm just putting all of the focus on those voices. But that, again, takes courage and it takes trust. Just the fear, of course, is that it's easy for players to think, "Well, it isn't here."

**HR:** Do you have any other specific exercises or activities you recommend to students to build a stronger connection to the score?

**CK:** Well, I think that the easy answer is that they have to study more. The more practical answer is they just have to listen to a lot of music, and a lot of great music. I think music students today really don't listen to enough music on a wide palate of styles. I just think they don't. I can be proven dead wrong on that, but I'm going to put it out there. I'm not sure I know why that is, but I think they come to the game as music majors with less of that. I think one of the ways to develop emotional connections to music is to be surrounded by great music. If you're in Durant, Oklahoma, you may not be able to always go to concerts, because you're far away. But there's the internet.

With the Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall, you can watch what I think is the world's great orchestra playing unbelievable repertoire with great conductors. The other thing, about the Berlin Philharmonic, you can really sense the emotional connection. There's a reason why it's difficult to get a ticket for the Berlin Philharmonic, because that's [the emotional connection] transferred right to the audience. So, I think students just need to be inundated, surrounded, drowned in great music.

I mean, just the choral music of Morten Lauridsen. My God. If that's not going to transport you someplace, you better get a new soul.

I think that's going to rehearsals, watching great conductors. Of course, that's more difficult in some places than others. But…

**HR:** There's a lot online now.

**CK:** Yeah, there is. I think being surrounded by great music.

You have to love music. You have to love teaching. You have to love people. And you just have to love music. And irrationally. Nobody loves anything rationally, I hope. But it's got to be a real love affair with music because it takes you someplace. It's that mode of transportation.

## Dr. Mallory Thompson

The following interview was conducted on Friday, July 9, 2021, via Zoom video conferencing.

**Hannah Rudy**: First, if you could walk me through your overall score study process from opening the score to the first time you conduct in a rehearsal.

**Mallory Thompson:** Well, even before opening a score, I try to have a context in my mind in which the piece lives. That would be knowing something about the composer, a composer's life, the timeframe. It's really important to me to always begin with a frame of reference, so I'm not just trying to learn a piece cold. I go to it with a set of expectations, even looking at it the first time, so I'm comparing it against everything else that I know and placing it. I'm able to draw conclusions and comparisons: what does it remind me of? What am I expecting it to be? How does it agree with those expectations? How does it deny those expectations? What are some surprises? What does it remind me of? All of this is just very fluid for me. I don't have a real checklist, I'm not that kind of a structured person—I just sort of go with the flow.

I generally start big. I go through the whole piece. Just generally noticing things, not really marking anything or writing anything down, just noticing things. Then I'll go back and start looking for structure like structural points, significant changes in texture, obvious melodic sections, dramatic orchestration changes, key changes, changes in rhythmic activity, so on. Then I'll start going smaller, like if I'm curious in one of the larger pass throughs about the harmony. I just marked an "x" at the top of the score, I mark an "x" with a stem, an "x" like a notehead with a stem. Then [I mark] a line for the measures that I want to double check harmony and see what's going on. That's just my own shorthand. Then I'll go back and do that [harmonic analysis] sometime when I'm like watching the news or something on TV. Harmonic analysis doesn't take my major brain power time. If I'm curious I don't usually follow through then, I'll do it later when I'm doing something else at the same time. I like to hear the melodies. I'll sing the melodies. I'll play the melodies at the piano. I'll take note of important intervals. I want to get as quickly as I can to what it sounds like. So, when I'm working on that, it's not like the homework steps. Then I move on.

I really want to tap into what it sounds like, the heart—what are the expressive elements that are carrying the piece forward? Is it melody? Is it harmony? Is it rhythm? Is it atmosphere as it might be created by orchestration or special colors? I'm interested in as quickly as possible understanding how does it go? What makes it tick? Then I fill in some of the more specific details as I'm thinking, "What? What's happening here? This is providing a different sort of energy. How did we get here? How are we getting out of it? Harmonically, what do these non-chord tones provide? Are they providing dissonance? Or are they providing kind of like an elastic band of flexibility and expression?"

So really, I think it's all framed, as quickly as I can hear it, from a standpoint of what is the element that is the emotional carrier, the expressive carrier, and knowing that those elements change over the course of a piece. Over time, I'm looking at it, not from the standpoint of doing harmonic analysis to have it or doing phrasal analysis to

have it, though it's good to have because then that's information that I can use in helping the group to hear the piece the way that I hear it, but it's really more so I can understand the tools that are being used to put forth the most important elements of the music, which is to think, "what does it say, and how is it being expressive?"
Next are just layers and layers and layers of questions. I've become a lot more patient with building my relationship with the piece, and letting the process flow in an organic way, as opposed to just trying to get to the answers or trying to get to labels that will enable me to explain the piece. I want to sing it, I want to feel it, I want to smell it, taste it, visualize it. As I'm doing all of that, it's reminding me of other pieces and other places that I've seen. It's very unusual that you are going to see something that's completely new. I mean completely new phrasing and completely new rhythm, completely new harmony, completely new colors—not so much. So, I'm just intuitively, sort of seeing what I remember both in my mind, in my ear and in my body. "What is this? What is this reminding me of?"
I stubbornly resist making decisions about how I'm going to move until the last possible moment. That could be like the day before the first rehearsal. I'll be like, "come on, look, you gotta, you got to go in: Is this going to be in three or is it going to be in one? You've got to nail this down."
I think I'm just incredibly mindful about not putting my hands in front of the music that I'm making. By that, I mean I think we, as conductors, can miss really important things if we start to move too soon. Because then our interpretation will be limited by the way that our arms are comfortable moving. I really want to get attached in my mind and in my body to how I want it to feel and how I want it to flow. So that's the thing that motivates the way that I move my arms.
I remember for some reason when I was doing Jonathan Newman's *Symphony* the first time: That piece really comes to my mind that I resisted a lot of decision making until the day of the first rehearsal. And just because I thought that there were so many things that were really fresh about the piece that I really enjoyed discovering. I just wanted to sit with it as long as possible. When I was younger, and I think this is something that's true of most younger conductors, people just want to know "how am I going to do this?" to alleviate anxiety. "Okay, here's this ritard. Here's this tempo change. Here's this metric modulation. Here's this awkward little moment. How am I going to do it?" Then you figure out what works for your hands. That's how you do it, instead of figuring out what the music is trying to tell you. I love it when I'm like, "I don't have a gesture for this. I don't in my body right now. I don't have a gesture for this." That's really exciting for me.
That's really, in a fairly brief fashion, how I tried to become acquainted with a piece before the first rehearsal. I will say that no matter how well prepared I am, I always feel going in that I'm not going to be prepared enough. And I always come out thinking, "Oh, man, you are so over-prepared. You are really, really over-prepared." But I'm always afraid I'm not going to be prepared enough. So that's kind of a motivator for me to really, really do the work, and make sure that I have something really valuable and performance ready to bring to the first reading of a piece.

**HR:** That's fantastic. A great overview. I have a couple of follow up questions.

You mentioned as you're studying, you try to relate a piece to other pieces. Do you find yourself always relating a piece to other music? Or do you ever relate pieces as you're studying to people, places, things, experiences in life as well.

**MT:** I don't even know how to break it down to be honest with you, because it's just a very organic process. I think it's feelings. I think it could be memories. I think it should be anything, and if it lives in my experience, it's fair game. Or whatever the music is trying to cut.

**HR:** You mentioned that occasionally you find yourself not having a gesture. How do you end up finding that? Do you find it in the moment? Do you sometimes, if you're not getting the response you want from the ensemble, have to play around with it? Can you talk about that a little bit?

**MT:** I know before the rehearsal that I don't have a gesture for it. As I'm audiating and going through and imagining and feeling the energy of the piece in my body, as I'm looking at the score, I don't conduct through the score before the rehearsal. But as I'm feeling it, I know if I'm not hearing something, and I know if there's some sort of incongruity between the way I'm feeling the music and the way I'm imagining the gesture. I can feel like, “Oh, I don't know how to do that.” So, I'll play around with that.
Other physical gestures that I like: I always take time with entering sound and entering silence. Those are gestures that I always want to really be mindful of because you're establishing an atmosphere and being in touch with that can either set something up for success or you can just be chasing after it, trying to reclaim it. I have a good idea when I go into rehearsal what I want to do, of course, I'm always listening and willing to try something else, to see if it's better or worse or indifferent, and to just be improvisatory in the moment. So that that might come out of rehearsing something. If I ask them to do something more “fill in the blank way,” then when we get there, I do that in more “fill in the blank,” whatever it was way, and then see what we get. If I like it, maybe I'll keep it. But yeah, it's very, very interactive. I think conductors, younger conductors, would really benefit from looking at things that don't work physically as a gift, and not as a failure. Because if you do something, and it doesn't work, if you can think, "huh, I wonder what happened there," if you can do that, then you've got the makings of a really great growth process, as opposed to looking at it as a negative. We're trying things: “I wonder what would happen if I did this,” okay, well, that was worse. Well, try something else.

**HR:** In your score preparation, what role does your emotional inference of the music play in the process? And then how do you look for and find musical meaning within a composition and translate that to gesture? How do you find the emotional content?

**MT:** Let me start with that. I don't know how you cannot have that [emotional content] play a part. I think that it's a matter of the emotional and cognitive coexisting. I think the emotional is not a substitute for the cognitive. I would never suggest that you just feel everything, and not try to really understand what the

composer's saying. But it's equally ludicrous to say that you're going to analyze the daylights out of something and think that's going to tell you everything you need to know about the piece. I think those are equally ludicrous comments. So, I don't think it's like, "I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that." It's not separate lanes. I think it's just part of the conversation that you have in allowing the piece to speak to you. What was the second part of the question?

**HR:** How do you look for and find those musical and emotional meanings within a composition?

**MT:** I don't really look. I'm not trying to manufacture something. You know what I mean? I'm not trying to work out my psychological issues by doing a piece. I'm not trying to project my inner demons. I'm not trying to work through issues in a relationship. I'm not trying to superimpose something that isn't there.
I think it's simple. I think simplest is best. And it just talks to me. I ask questions, and I hear it, and things come up. My feelings aren't more important than the composer's feelings, certainly. I'm trying to grasp it in the same way as if someone is speaking to me. I don't know how they feel, I can only interpret what they're saying through my own experience. But I'm trying to understand what they mean even though I don't know what it is to be them. I can't help but view what they're telling me through the lens of my own experience. I'm going to be part of that interpretation. And I think it's a very similar thing. I think that music-making is a relationship with a piece.

**HR:** You discussed imposing your feelings and working through things with a piece of music. I feel like there are a lot of people out there that do that. My personal opinion here: I feel like this ends up pulling away from the intent of the composer because you've potentially changed the intent of the piece.

**MT:** Sometimes, if there's too much of you, there's not enough room for the players to put themselves into it. Because it's not just me. What a bore that would be if it was just what I brought emotionally to the piece. There has to be a place for them to contribute something that's going to make the piece magical.

**HR:** That's fantastic! What do you do to expand and feed your imagination? And what role do you feel vocabulary and imagination play in artistic expression?

**MT:** Imagination is absolutely key. I think everyone can grow their imagination. I think some people by nature are more inquisitive about detail, analytical detail. Some people by nature are more creative, more imaginative. One isn't better than the other. But everyone can learn to be better at whatever isn't their strong suit.
I've just always, from the time I was a very small child, had a very active imagination. It's just in my nature. I'm very curious. I observe things. I find things. I observe things in life and in people. I know when I said, "observe things in life," that's so general, but it's just too broad to elaborate on. But I'm curious. I think curiosity is key to imagination. I'm playful.

I don't know exactly how to help someone else become more imaginative or creative. I can suggest things. But I think people have to unlock that on their own. Maybe find one thing that they're curious about, and pursue it, whether it could be food, it could be art, it could be being in nature. I think then, once you find one thing, that the key to using creativity productively and effectively in music-making is when what is in your imagination becomes visceral.
An emotion becomes a feeling, and that's something that you experience in your body in a natural way. It's not just a memory, but it affects you—it affects your face, it affects your atmosphere, it affects the way you move. If you find delight in something, delight feels a certain way. So much music is so delightful. That does something to your eyes, it does something to the center of gravity in your body. Then it's a matter of not only having an imagination, but I think for conductors, making that leap from just being creative to having a sensation somewhere in your body that connects to that element of creativity is key.

**HR:** In rehearsal and performance, what are some obstacles that you have faced that have disconnected you from the music? And then what advice would you give to avoid those obstacles?

**MT:** I don't think you should avoid anything. I think avoidance is too much energy. I think avoidance, like trying to avoid obstacles, is like trying to drive and not be in an accident. You just got to be like, “I'm going here” and “I'm gonna be a safe driver, but I'm not going to be afraid. I'm just going to go.” I think avoiding obstacles, frankly, is a terrible idea. If you get an obstacle, get around it. Navigate. I think a performance without distractions is fool's gold. I'd say bring it on.
I think the best thing I can do is show up. Whether it's for a rehearsal or a performance, I just need to show up and not try to control anything. That's different than having goals, right? In rehearsal: my plan for today is that I really want to dig into this section of this piece. There's my plan. And my plan for the performance is to completely let everything go. Let it go. Make my mind as blank as possible, trust the work and listen to what the music wants to be in this moment on this day. So, I guess the obstacles might be trying to control and not showing up.

**HR:** So, when say you let your mind go blank and you're in the moment, in the music—what do you do if something distracts you or breaks that connection? Is there anything in particular you do to pull yourself back to that place of being in the music?

**MT:** If there's a distraction, and you notice, then you're still in the music. It's not about some esoteric experience. It’s not about “I've got to cry to feel something.” It's really so much simpler than that. I just think it's showing up. Just being there, feeling it, being with the people that are making the sound, and enjoying it, and doing everything you can to allow them to do their best and allow the music to speak in a natural way.
I think that if you're too self-aware, if you're not prepared enough, that can be a bad distraction. I think if you feel the need to impress somebody, that could be a

distraction. I think if you're afraid of failure, whatever that might mean to any individual, that could be a distraction. Those could be really bad distractions.

**HR:** How do you know when you've completely connected to a piece? And what has that felt like for you in the past?

**MT:** I don't know about absolutes. I would be reluctant to have an ego to say that I've ever completely connected to a piece. I think that's too much about me. Like, do you still have things that you learn about your husband?

**HR:** Yes, that's a great analogy.

**MT:** I think it speaks to the relationship again. I think that I love when I feel really close to a piece. I feel like I cease to exist. If I've done a good job with preparing my group, they feel that way too. That it's just very free and spontaneous, that there is no technique, there is no thought, or very little thought. There can be places where you just need to count, right? That's not bad. That's responsible. When I feel like that, I feel like I'm going to live forever. That's how it feels.

**HR:** In your experience, is it possible to actively seek meaningful music-making moments in both rehearsal and performance?

**MT:** Sure! I expect something really meaningful every single day. Absolutely. I think that should be a goal. And I think that should be a goal at all levels, not just for me with my fancy group. I think it's even more so because little kids don't know that they're moments. How wonderful to be the first person to create a moment or create an atmosphere where they can create a moment and let them know it was a moment. I think it's really important to point that out when those special things happen.

**HR:** What role do you feel preparation has in finding these meaningful experiences?

**MT:** Everything. I think doing the work and really caring about your group. I think that's a relationship with your ensemble—that you want to empower them, you want to care for them. You want to be respectful of their talent and their intellect and their ability, you want to nurture that in them. You want to help them to be independent of you. I think those things are really key.
I am guilty. I'm very guilty with my group of not acknowledging the magic every day. And that, I'm not proud of, but it's because I'm so fixed on getting the last 3% out of them. Then I'll listen to a rehearsal recording and go, "Crap! You know, that is so good." Or, "Oh my God! How is it possible that I had no idea it was that good? How is it possible?" That happens all the time. And then I'll tell them.
You don't say, "Okay, everybody saddle-up for an experience." It just happens organically because of your love, commitment, and enthusiasm for the music you're doing. You want them to be able to hear and feel what you feel. That enthusiasm and that commitment to the music and that commitment to them is the thing that drives toward the experience.

**HR:** For my own curiosity, do you record every rehearsal?

**MT:** No, I record many times that we're on stage. But no, I don't record every rehearsal. I don't record until I feel like a lot of the work is done. When I feel like we're there. I'll record and make those recordings available to the students, so they can listen and do some of their own work.

**HR:** What makes an experience musical?

**MT:** Well, let's just assume that you're well prepared. Okay, so I'll take that off the table, given that everyone is well prepared, and that the music is at an appropriate level, right for the group, which in many occasions is not a prerequisite that we can take for granted. But for sake of my answer, I'm going to assume that. I think playing with freedom, spontaneity, energy, commitment, generosity of spirit. It should be informed from the study and preparation.
I love performances. And I really strive to give performances where you have the courage to do more than play well. You know that you want to send something of beauty into the world. Then people listening will do with it what they will, we have no control over that. But we do have control over our own artistic intent. And I think vulnerability, if I didn't mention that. I think those are important elements.

**HR:** How do you encourage your ensemble members to develop their own feelings about a piece of music?

**MT:** Well, I don't really talk about it that much. I know that there are people that like to talk about feelings a lot. I don't. I'm not one of those people. I'm more private. And it just creeps me out a little bit. Though, good for them if that seems natural to them. I'm more of a doer than a talker. I think rehearsing the music, in the character of the music, and maybe throwing out a well-placed adjective are effective.
We did a piece a few years ago when I had the 50th anniversary of SWE [Symphonic Wind Ensemble]. The last piece on this four-hour concert was the Prokofiev *Ode to the End of the War*. At the end of the piece, there's this incessant trumpet fanfare that just keeps coming. They played it well, but I said, "you need to play it like it's a warning. This isn't a celebration. This is a warning that the war may be over, technically, but you have to play this with urgency, like it's a warning." Then it never sounded the same again. These three professional trumpet players from Boston and New York just hammered this thing.
I don't want to talk about the whole, "and this makes me feel this and this makes me feel bad, and let's share." I don't want to share. I don't want to talk about sharing. I just want to play. I might say a few words about an atmosphere, or "can you hear how these bowed suspended cymbals sound like shivers, like a chill up your spine? Can you imagine that atmosphere? Can you picture this happening in candlelight?"
About as far as I'll go is some nostalgic music makes me miss my mother: "This makes me think of a happy memory from childhood. Can you picture this? Can we do it again? Can you play this like you're 75 years old? Can you imagine what it would

be to play this at that point in your life?" Just something like that. I guess I'm trying to grow their imagination, too. But I'm not a big "let's talk and share" person. I'm just not. But I do feel like I need to be the lead blocker emotionally. I will be absolutely committed to what I'm doing. I will be vulnerable. I hope I will be believable, but I'm not going to talk about it. I'm going to do it.

**HR:** You lead by example.

**MT:** Right. And by doing that, I hope I encourage them to come into that sacred space and do the same thing.

**HR:** How do you use that emotional connection as a vehicle to improve the technique?

**MT:** Some people do. Well, I think that sometimes you just have to work on technique. I'm all for that. You can't sound like a sunrise if it's out of tune and not together. The point is not that you're trying to get rid of things that are wrong. You must make it clear to them [the ensemble], "we need to work on this, so we can do this." The point of doing it [rehearsing technique] is to free up this creative, expressive potential, and to enable it and expose it. So that's the carrot. You're trying to get to the goodie. "We have to work on this, and then it's gonna sound like … or you're not gonna believe how great this is going to be once we get this! You're just not going to believe how good this is going to be in 10 minutes."

**HR:** Yeah, I think that's a missing element. So many times we focus on the technique, but we don't put it in the context of the bigger picture of making-music and that's what it's all about.

**MT:** Then rehearsing becomes like whack a mole, right? "This is bad. This is bad. This is bad." You know, it's not bad. I call them tuning opportunities: "Let's just get in there. This isn't brain surgery; we can do this! It's not a character flaw that we're out of tune, let's just fix it."

**HR:** How do you feel your emotional connection to the music impacts the ensemble and the audience?

**MT:** I don't know. And I never will. And no one will. I have an idea. I have an idea of how it affects my students from what they tell me. I have an idea of how it affects audience members from how some of them express that to me. But that's the lonely life—that you don't know. You have to keep giving no matter what. You give with a pure heart and with a great deal of vulnerability. You give it away and you never know for sure what kind of impact it has. You don't give a gift to get something, you give it because you think it's valuable and it makes you feel good to do it. It's a valuable thing. Yet, I hope you like it. I hope it touches you in some way. Five different people might respond in five different ways. But you give the gift and then you move on.

**HR:** Is it possible to be emotionally connected while conducting and analyze at the same time? Do you feel fully invested emotionally while analyzing?

**MT:** Analyzing? No. Being aware, yes. I think you have to be aware in performance. If you're not aware, if it's just about the feelings or your feelings, it's a little selfish. You need to be sensitive to and aware of what's going on in the room. I think that's possible, and I think it's imperative. I think, analyzing no. I don't think so.
And I think that's why in rehearsal I miss so many things that are so good, because I'm still busy. I'm being really mindful of trying to get that last bit out of out of them. One of the things that I feel very strongly about is when I record, I don't judge every take I do. I think, "this is it, this is the one, this is going to be the one," and I completely relinquish all power to the producer. Because I cannot produce and perform at the same time. Every take has to be a full-on committed performance. Maybe someone else does, but I don't have the ability to fully perform and evaluate, judge what I'm doing at the same time.

**HR:** A follow up to that: You mentioned in rehearsal, you feel like you are so focused that you may miss things. Do you ever feel like that can potentially take away from the rehearsal or from it being a musical experience? What are your thoughts on that?

**MT:** I think that it can take away from the students feeling as much of a sense of accomplishment as they deserve. And that's something I'm really mindful of, but I can live with it because I balance it out with them in so many other ways. I think it's okay. I think that my students don't need a lot of compliments. I think that when I give one, it needs to be really meaningful. They have learned, and I keep reminding them that the highest compliment I can give them is to continue to push them. So, it works with them. I don't think it would work with everybody. But that's the understanding that we have. I will say to them, "if I believe you can do this thing, I'm not gonna leave anything on the table that I think we can get. And I know it can be irritating." I even say to myself, "Mallory, it's so good. Just leave them alone." But I can't do it. If I feel like we can get this thing. I can't leave it. And I hope they know that this is the highest compliment I can give them. And I think they do.

**HR:** In teaching conducting, whether it be the undergraduate or graduate level, do you feel like conducting technique can be taught through the lens of music?

**MT:** Well, yeah. It's like trumpet. You have to learn some fingerings, right? There are some fundamental things, but you can use music as the thing that you learn these techniques for. So yes, I think music can and should be used as the thing that helps you find a purpose for your technique.

**HR:** Many conducting books seem to divorce the technique from the music. How can conducting books and programs encourage students to find a more organic and

emotional connection to the music? Would you have any activities or things you tell your students or recommendations of any kind?

**MT:** I deal with each person in a very individual way, in a very personal way. There's a fundamental question: what makes somebody a technician or an artist? I think that this is where the student's work really exists. They ultimately have to build their own relationship with music. I can make almost anyone look musical. I can't make them feel music. I can help them learn about score study, and I can raise questions and give them examples of ways that they could try to build their relationship with music, and have that sort of visceral, very personal connection. But ultimately, it's like a Rubik's Cube, each person is a Rubik's Cube, and they have to figure out their own sequencing. I'll throw lots and lots of ideas their way, but they have to unlock it.

One of the things that helped me is, my first relationship to music was through dance, through ballet. I started to feel it at a very, very young age. I've told people they should try dance. I've told people they should try, Tai Chi. But it's really complicated. There is no prescription that works for everyone. I think the primary attribute is that you value having that kind of relationship; that you seek it, that you crave it, that you will do what it takes to find it. But that's the trickiest part. As tricky as physical technique, audiation, score study, rehearsal techniques, performance practice, as tricky as all of that is, this other thing is so personal. And it's a lifelong pursuit, I think, that hopefully would be influenced by any number of experiences that a person has in their life. Positive and negative. That's the great thing about music, right? You can take everything and make it positive, because you can make something beautiful and meaningful out of it.

## Mr. Alfred Watkins

The following interview was conducted on Saturday, June 26, 2021, in-person at the Mr. Watkins' home in Kennesaw, Georgia.

**Hannah Rudy:** First I'd like you to walk me through your overall score study process from the first time you open a score to conducting it with an ensemble.

**Alfred Watkins:** The overall process takes a long time for me. First of all, I love scores. I trained myself to hear the score when I see it. When I first get a score, I likely will have some kind of an idea about the composer or the work before I just grab a score. If it's a new commission, or something that I don't know anything about, I will at least have read about the composer and know something about that person. So, I'll just open it up and see how large the print is and whether the engraving is good or not, or what kind of voicing they are using, I'll just comb through: "Okay, woodwind choir, transparency here, large brass statement at fortissimo." I'm not singing anything, I'm just kind of getting a feel for it.

Then I'm starting to look for repeat material, either melodically or rhythmically. Typically, I'm looking for large moments that the composer is leading me through, how long those moments last. But I'll just feel it and see if it looks like it's a good work of art and the care has been taken for that.

If I don't see a lot of expression markings, either the composer leaves it up to the conductor, which they seldom do nowadays, or the person didn't know or didn't care. If they don't care about helping me to interpret their music, I tend not to care much about that music. Sometimes they are modest in the knowledge. I don't mean you have to overmark the score, but if you want me to do a piu mosso, I can understand that. But if you want it to be a poco piu mosso, as opposed to more, then tell me that and I'll know how to recreate it. That's the first step that I'll do.

Then I'll go back through it a second time and look for the organization of the score. Oftentimes, just like anything else, just like a book or a movie or any other large production, it will start off in a place of thought—with an initial thought that is going to be a germ for the rest of the piece, whether it's a rhythmic motif, or whether it's a harmonic palate.

If you're looking at Copland, I'm looking for fourths and fifths in Copland's work. Or most often it's melodic material. So, I'll look for how the composer shaped the earliest parts of the piece. Then I'll just comb through it to find out how that composer has treated that music. I'm a big fan of Beethoven and Beethoven's thematic development. I think it's one of the cornerstones of symphonic repertoire. You don't have to look very far. You have a few cornerstone composers that they [composers] all studied from. You've got Bach, you've got Mozart, you've got Beethoven and you've got the middle and late romanticism that everyone pretty much studied from in Western music.

Once I can use my background in my study to see where the composer is coming from, then I'll know what they're doing. That's how I'm looking at that voicing and how they're using the instruments to speak. I look for melodic material, repeated melodic material, whether it is inverted, or whether it is elongated or whether it's

diminished, whether it's fragmented too soon, or whether their development section is here. How does this person develop these ideas? And then it depends on the length of the movement or the length of the piece. So that's the first couple steps that I'll do. Then I'll study in depth, if I'm interested in piece, the composer themselves. I'll find out where they're from. What year they composed the piece. What was happening in their life at the time, whether they were early, mid, or late career because you get three different pieces typically, that's historically what you get. I'll study where they were in their life. Whether they just lost a child or just lost a parent, or there was a World War, or if there was a conflict that happened in New York City, around September 11. This person lived in New Jersey, or from studying Vincent Persichetti. Persichetti worked at the Juilliard School. So, what was his morning like, as he walked from his apartment to Juilliard—whether the cab was slushing dirt and grime in the snow on his trousers as he walked to Juilliard? What was his early morning writing like? He wrote early in the morning. Well, he's probably not very kind, he probably was a little frustrated, because he had to put up with that. And so, he called his music gritty or graceful. Why did you choose the word gritty? Well, that was his big city living, New York and Philadelphia, he felt that there was a part of him. Once I studied that, that kind of general idea of the composer, and what they're all about, now I'll look for it again in their score.

The next thing I'll do—I'll listen to as many recordings as I can find, just to get familiar with where the parts are in it, kind of a Reader's Digest version. I listen to it for half a day. I listen to just get familiar with the ideas. This is the first section, this is second section, this is the third section. I do it that way to throw the academics out. Sometimes the notation and the academics get in the way of hearing music. I have to remind myself that music is an aural art form, and we must hear it.

We get so stuck into 12 notes. You can move in two ways: step or skip. They only have six markings of volume: we have three softs and three louds. We have six or seven expression markings: the accent, staccato, legato, etc. We don't have much in our notation to follow. If you get paralyzed by looking at the score, you'd shut your other part of the brain off, which is the artistic part. So, I go to my artistic brain, I listen to it for half of a day. That gives me things to think about for the next day or two, particularly when I'm in my private time: 10-11 o'clock at night, midnight, one o'clock in the morning. I'm singing, I'm thinking, and then I made the decision by that time whether I want to play the piece or if it's not the right time to play it.

*Music for Prague 1968* was like that, for me. It didn't come to me very easily. I didn't understand Husa. I didn't understand his *why*. I didn't understand what he was trying to say. So, I was told over and over that I should play Husa and *Music for Prague*. But it just didn't speak to me where I was in my life, until one of my parents died and I understood the angst. I understood, complete and total despair, and I understood pain. And when I went back to it after one of my parents passed away, it was a much easier and free aesthetic.

That's the once over. Once I've lived with it for about a day, then I go back to the score, and I begin my markings. I keep highlighters, pencils with me all the time. They're everywhere. I never write on notation, only write around the music. I will start to identify melodic material in red. Then I'll just follow it throughout the entire piece.

Oh, I forgot to mention that form is very important to me. If the piece is structured well and the form makes good logical sense, it is not only easy for me to follow and to study, it's easy for the audience to go through this story. If the form jumps around, and it's not easy to digest, then the audience probably won't be able to digest it either. One of the problems we have in classical music is that if we can't convince classically trained musicians it's a good piece of music, you can forget it for the audience. If you can't convince us, as interpreters, or the performers that play single line instruments that, "This is worthy of more study," then the audience is done. Then you've lost the whole essence of what we're trying to do in terms of communication through performance.

Then I spend my middle trimester in the woods with harmonic palate.

I go to form first. I want to find out where's the ‘A’ section? Where the ‘B’ section is. Does the ‘A’ section repeat? Is there an ‘A’ prime? Is it a different voicing? Does he or she go to a ‘C’ section? What the form is, or whether it's sonata form or theme and variation or whatever the form may happen to be, I can digest. It's not going to go too far away from what we've already gotten, because we all studied the same material.
I spend a lot of time in the woods with markings. I study my scores in colors. My yellows are my crescendi, my blue color, light blue highlighters are my descrescendi, all my melodies are in red, my countermelody one is always in light blue, that's with a pencil, rhythmic components are in green. The end of a large section I'll put a solid line from the top of the page, not the top of the score, top of the page all the way to the bottom of the page. It tells me to change chapters. So, when I finished this section, the new section is going to start here. Then the piece is more in chapters, much like a book would be as opposed to trying to digest this whole big thing.
I will not go back to recordings at all anymore. If they're noted conductors, I may dictate the tempo markings they do of the various sections, just so I can know what someone else has done to interpret it.
Early in my career, I didn't do that. Early in my career, if Fred [Frederick] Fennell had done something, I’m going to copy it. If [William] Revelli had done something, or Dr. [Harry] Begian had done something, I was just going to copy it. I figured they knew more than I did. Then by copying that, I didn't feel bad about it because when we take applied instruction, we pretty much copy the sounds of our teachers. We say that we want to have independence, but when you learn to play in college, for example, that's not what you do. Your teacher will coach you through the crescendo, decrescendo, the high point, look at this, slow down here. If a teacher does all that, they give us tools. So as a conductor, we have to have the same tools. Sometimes studying from masters will be a good reference point. Then I'll go for weeks and not listen to another recording at all.
Then I want to digest a piece as the composer has intended first, I don't add my interpretation on it at all at that time. I think that my job as an interpreter is to recreate the magic that the composer intended at first. Once I've gone several weeks trying to interpret the score, as best I know how, then I become familiar with the voicings, the colors, the form, treatment of melodies, treatment of rhythms, sequences … once I have the pieces, I have ownership of it.

At that time, I'll sleep on it for three or four days. I'll find out how high the high point should be, or how soft and gentle the soft moments should be. Then I can interpret what I think the composer is trying to say to us. How gentle is the piano? Is it a mezzo and the composer just didn't care? Or does the composer really want it to be how they wrote it? If I'm lucky, I'll call the composer, and I'll have a conversation. This is the third trimester-ish. I'll call the composer and ask them how they hear certain sections. And without fail they will always mark something a different way than they wrote it. Almost without fail. They'll say, "I like to take this section fast. I know I wrote a 144 but I like 152." So, what they won't tell you is, "I just missed it on that one" or "I'd like this section to be much larger than a regular fortissimo. I like it to be really big here. And don't miss the timpani part here." I'd look down in the score in the middle of the fortissimo section and see timpani's forte. And I'd say something like, "do you want a triple F on the timpani?" And they would say, "Yes, yes, that's what the timpani part should be." So, you give the composer an out to tell you how that piece should be when they get it with live musicians. That's essentially the process.

Once I have spoken to the composer or someone who knew the composer … I played a lot of [Percy] Grainger when I had school band, but Dr. Begian knew Grainger well and Dr. Fennell knew Grainger well and John Paynter knew Grainger well. So, I would call him [Harry Begian] up. And I would find out what was Grainger like, or how did he interpret his music? Not necessarily this piece. I learned and discovered that Grainger wrote his parts out first because he was always late. He was always late with everything. So, he would go to premiere only with parts. He put his music in condensed scores a lot because he just didn't want to do it at all. He would send you a condensed score, but it didn't actually have what he had notated on the parts, and they knew that. So, I knew that there was some latitude, and voicing, and a lot of ideas for Grainger's music because they knew him.

He [Percy Grainger] was colorblind. He was very tall, had fire red hair, kind of a misfit, kind of a comedian. His colors didn't match, but he was always smartly dressed. Begian said he just didn't care about that—he was trying to get to another place. But he was kind of persnickety in some things. I realized, "okay, that's what this is"—when you play "Lord Melbourne" from *Lincolnshire Posey* you have latitude to be Grainger-esque. But it's all within the context of his formal structure. You just can't do it as you choose to.

That's the overall process. But I tried to become like a character actor, tried to become the spirit of that composer in the classroom. Whichever band I'm working with, I will talk to them about the composer and where that composer was in that time of their life. The more information that I have, the more I can relay to the band. There are only so many ways you can say "grave." "Grave" is just an expression. It doesn't mean grave—what is more mournful? If you can know where the composer was, then you can best allow the music to come to life. You don't have to give them a personal story, but you can get the performers an inference as to what the composer was, and they can create their own stories.

There's joy in life, there's fear in life, there's a fear of doing something for the first time. I try to become the embodiment of whatever the work is that I'm doing, and it gives me latitude to play anything that I choose to. It requires me to do a lot of study.

I just don't have certain composers that I go to because I know those composers, I can go to anyone. I'm now studying women's compositions and the impact that the women's suffrage movement prior to 1920 had on those women, particularly Black women. The women's suffrage movement didn't impact them because they were Black, so they still can't vote. So yeah, so that has an impact on their soul, their personality, how they see life, how they see America, how they see music, what comes out in their music. You can transfer that kind of small data to your performance and not fully be aware of whatever it is you're working through, but it's not their responsibility.

**HR:** Within this process, what role does emotional inference of the music play in the process? How do you look for and find musical meaning in the composition and then translate those emotions to gesture?

**AW:** First of all, the conductor has to know the subtleties of the music, so that their face and their bodies, not just their arms, can tell that message. For me, I go to the orchestral conductors. Those are the ones that conduct for a living. Their jobs are to do what we're talking about doing now. The educators are somewhat different because educators work in institutions, and they are literally there. Their job is to teach others a range of thoughts. But if you watch an orchestral conductor do something that's mournful for Mahler, their bodies will say, "this is very mournful." I try to convey some of those to the to the ensemble. I'm not very good at that because I've worked in an institution with amateur musicians for most of my career. I wasn't able to develop the facial gestures. I'll give you an example: suppose you're playing a Disney medley, and it's got all the Disney characters and the happy tunes, not the villains, but all the happy tunes in there. Do you end up smiling and giggling for ten minutes? Or eight minutes? Or six minutes? Well, you can, but you look silly to your performers. There's a way. Or if you're playing a requiem, do you look like you're at a funeral the whole time? So, you have to look in and find the gleefulness in a requiem. Or the thoughts of Dylan Thomas', *Do not go gentle into that good night*—it's fight and the rage of the night. There's a lot of fight in a requiem: the fight to live, to reflect.

The conductor must know all of those ingredients that surround those types of situations. And for me, I'm not embarrassed to make sure that the ensemble knows what I'm thinking so that they can create their own world. You can gesture it, but as Dale Clevenger, principal horn with Chicago Symphony, once told me, "Alfred, all I want a conductor to do is to tell me whether to play louder, softer, shorter, or longer. That's all I need." In other words, he has enough life experiences to put into the music because he was senior at the time. So, he could interpret life, and he probably knew the pieces well enough, or the composer well enough, to know what they were trying to say. He had already done that work.

Well, with what we do for a living, our students are in the process of discovering that, and for us to think that we can gesture them through life—we can't. To talk to a person about death, when they've never experienced death in their eyes, except when the puppy dies. Or when grandma dies, and she was a great baker. All the child knows is: does she take her recipes with her? No, you won't have that anymore. Then

sadness comes over because and I know I won't taste that flavor anymore. It's all we can teach. We can coach our ensembles through what they should think based on their experiences. We assume that the younger they are, the less experiences they have, or that they haven't been magnified, but they're there. The human experience is there. So, I would just say, tell conductors to save small moments and make sure that the ensemble knows how small and gentle they are. And when something is big, make sure they know how big it is. Those are the Dale Clevenger—how loud, how soft.

**HR:** When you're studying a piece, how do you go about finding the emotional content? How do you find those emotions in the score and connect to them for yourself?

**AW:** If you know the intent of the piece of music, and you know where the composer was during that time and in their life, it becomes a lot easier when you pull back the layers, when you go to your experiences and put your experiences in it. It's going to be there through the expressive markings—whether they're accents, legatos, or staccatos, or the crescendi, or the accelerandos, ritardandos that go to a plaintive place. It's all there in the score, but we don't have enough markings.

Remember, we just don't have enough markings in our notation for us to be able to grasp. All fortes are not created alike. We just don't have enough markings. It's the conductor's responsibility to have a full handle on what the composer is trying to say and get that message to the performers. If conducting an ensemble was so important, then they wouldn't stop with professional orchestras in rehearsal. The skill level is high enough that it would not be necessary to stop other than to line a few things up. It's all kind of technical stuff, that's not really artistic stuff. They just make sure that there's some clarity to the sounds that you're hearing.

So, I think it's incumbent upon conductors to think artistically and not always think analytically because it's an aural art form. It's not always bad to write down a range of emotions that you want to feel, and that you want to convey to your ensemble.

I'll give you an example: Mark Camphouse. I like Mark, and one of my favorite pieces from Mark is a piece that's close to my heart called *A Movement for Rosa*. He has this piece in four different stages of Mrs. Parks' life: church years when she met her husband, she got involved in the civil rights movement, the turbulence of the civil rights movement, the military coming in (which was found in the brass and percussion). There's a jazz dance in five/four which indicated that she wasn't just a little seamstress who refused to give up her seat on a bus—she had a life, that she perhaps listened to jazz music in the house with her husband, Raymond.

You pull up more layers, you think, "Oh, she was a 16-year-old. What do 16-year-olds do? Well, they dance. They dance and they sing, and they emulate popular culture around them." So, when I'm interpreting that, then I can go through her life, as if I'm Rosa Parks, and try to understand what Rosa Parks was going through. Sometimes it's similar to my life, or could be my parents' life, or my grandparents' life. In every encounter that we have, as to our personality, our soul, every kind of heady encounter, I hate to use that word heady, every intelligent encounter, every thought-provoking encounter, there's life.

**HR:** What do you do to expand and feed your imagination? Does vocabulary and imagination play a role in the artistic expression?

**AW:** Well, yes, very much so. Imagination is a part of the fine arts. It's a major part of the fine arts. It's a part of dance, and it's a part of sculpture, it's a part of painting. If you consider how a choreographer begins, either a ballet or a hip-hop dance, they start from a still position. They begin to imagine their body moving partly in time. So, it's just all creating and imagining. It's a part of all of the fine arts. We learn to do that. We take it for granted as a child. We learn through blocks. When parents give us blocks, and they put them on the floor, and you use your imagination to build something. Or Play-Doh that they had back in the day—you put your thumb in it, or you do this, and it looks like a couple of eyes, and one thing leads to another. And so, thinking and dreaming and reading about the lives of great creators and people that had imagination are good grounding sources.

I love going to Disney because he built an empire based on the life and times of a rodent. Real life and times of a rodent. He gave us a world of Tomorrowland, which is to imagine the time "tomorrow" never comes. He gives us a community based on a fantasy land, a world that does not exist, except in our minds. He even called one part of his parks "Imagination" for all of us to spur on imagination.

So, when you look at a brilliant person, like Walt Disney, who was the same as a jazz pianist who imagines a scherzo in the middle of *My Favorite Things*—that person's playing a piece, a lovely piece of Rodgers and Hammerstein when all of a sudden the scherzando comes in the middle of it. Where does that scherzando come from? Well, it comes from no holds barred, being imaginative and how to create a contrasting idea.

It's no different than when we get dressed every day. We choose our wardrobe based on our imagination. People say it's based on mood, but it's also imagination. We have to put combinations together based on how we feel and how we choose to be perceived, and we're using imagination. I'm not comfortable wearing shoes. I'm comfortable wearing nothing but slippers. So, I have to imagine myself wearing shoes. I have to think through wearing shoes.

You can feed your imagination any way that great thinkers spread their imagination. I'm studying, it's gonna sound real corny, I'm studying Greek philosophers now. I'm learning how Socrates became Socrates. He was a person who questioned everything. Not necessarily to get answers, but to question, to create another level of thought, and that requires imagination. Socratic method … Have you studied that by the way, the Socratic method?

**HR:** Only a little bit. I'd like to learn more about it.

**AW:** It's a test question. It's a test question is sociology class. That's all it is. When you've studied it and you've heard of it, you found out that there was this, that, and the other and we answered the question that we put in a short-term memory.

So, I was learning in the short term. I've heard of the Socratic method and didn't pay much attention to it because I didn't need to. I put it in short-term memory so I could answer for examination, I left the class, and then I was done with it. Now I need the

Socratic method. So, I am 67 years old, finally studying what I was asked to learn earlier, but I was asked to memorize it earlier.
Yeah, so that just requires imagination. Just to make sure that your performers understand that memorizing something in our educational system for a test is vastly different than acquiring the information and using it. We're more interested in using vocabulary than we are intelligent thought. And our whole system is based that way. So, it's based a lot on the analytical side of the brain.

**HR:** So, with what you just said, how do you encourage your ensemble members to think more creatively and attach their own feelings to the music?

**AW:** That's great. One, is that we must give them a vocabulary in order to learn the language. We learn the language in our society as a spoken language first, and you emulate the spoken language. Then we attach to very simple words, what we've already said: dog, cat, and what have you. Then we teach the young ones what is different to help them with their reasoning and deductive reasoning. There are pictures of six items. Five of them are in the plant kingdom, and then there's a mouse in there. Which one is different? We were helping them with deductive reasoning. When you begin in English classes or mathematics class as a child, we give you step by step by step and you graduate from one to another, to the next to the next. Then all of a sudden, you have subjects and verbs, and sentences, and sentences build paragraphs, and paragraphs build a lot longer story, then you can write an essay. It's arithmetic first, and then you get into other forms and higher levels. They call them mathematics. Everything that we study is that way except music.
So, our musicians don't have a vocabulary as to how to create expression. They have these expressive ideas inside of their minds and bodies, but they don't automatically relate to it as musicians. That's one of the reasons that jazz singers and popular singers or sometimes in the church, the singers sing extremely well in tune, extremely well in tone, have a tremendous sense of drama, and may not have been able to read a note.
Sir Paul McCartney cannot read notation. So, we put Sir Paul McCartney in the Songwriters Hall of Fame, but he can't read notation. Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles couldn't read notation that they apply. Yet they're in the Songwriters Hall of Fame in our society.
So, there's an artistic side. The short answer is, I think we must teach our younger ensembles in particular how musical lines are developed, how a melody is constructed. Then you can find the long note of a phrase, short notes tend to lead to long notes, long notes tend to get more sound than short notes do throughout all of our history—whether it's piano repertoire or for the strings. Long notes tend to get more sound, higher notes tend to come from lower notes.
We can teach them to play a unison phrase up and crest it out on the a-flat here, and then what goes up must come down, no different than a hill, you teach them to take the decrescendo down. Then you have them do it the opposite way. Start it loud, and then when you get to the top of the hill, you're playing soft, and you go back to loud as it gets lower, so that they understand, “I have choices here,” which is what we get in applied studies.

You have to teach them that rubato is no different than walking to a chair and sitting down. The pace of the walk is slow when you first get up, there's a brevity to the walk, when you're about to sit down, we slow down. But we get from here to the chair. We can do it in the same amount of time. Let's say it's 10 seconds. We can do it with a brisk walk and all of a sudden slow down on the back end. Or we can start off very slowly, and then speed our walk up, and that's rubato. So classically trained musicians should stop trying to make our art form sound more complicated than it is.

**HR:** So, connecting with something in everyday life, or to what they see or observe or experience, to the music would make it more organic?

**AW:** Yeah! But someone has to interpret the lines. So, the musicians and ensembles don't interpret the lines. We argue, "well, we want them to be creative. What should we do?" Just like all the first violin strings go together, and all of the strings play on the exact same part of the string all the time. Well, why do they do that? They're trying to create the perfect ensemble. Trying to create the same sectional sound.
We have these things that we talk about in wind band: we want everyone to learn to be expressive. That's true. When they're playing solos, or in smaller groups. They can come up with a group interpretation for the first flutes. That's fine, too. But how do you get 40 violins to play with the same sound? Well, you write the bowings in. Have we muted the musicianship of all 40 players in that? If they're playing in a great symphony orchestra, my argument is no. Do they have any freedom of expression? It's no different than a drumline trying to get stick height the same. Same exact thing. We call them more machine-like in that setting, but yet, we see the Chicago Symphony bows are moving exactly the same. That's part of the arrogance that we get with our art form.

**HR:** How do you determine when you have completely connected with a piece of music? What has that felt like for you in the past?

**AW:** That's good question. I know early on. If I don't connect with a piece of music, I won't play it because I don't believe in it. It's mostly intrinsic feeling. I understand that some pieces are experimental works from a composer. Haydn wrote over 100 symphonies, and I can't sing the exposition of the first movements of all of them, no one can. So, he wrote temporary music. That was for the court and for the church and for a temporary audience. It was incidental music at a time.
When we get to literature in wind band, some of it is experimental. Sometimes a composer is just trying to stretch their boundaries, and it doesn't always connect. In that case, it shouldn't be played. We've got enough music in the wind band repertoire. Rather than playing music that's not very good, and we've all played them, no, that's not true—we've all been around them.

**HR:** So, programming has a huge impact on our emotional connection?

**AW:** It has a huge impact on the maintenance of the art form. If you can't maintain the art form, then you won't have an audience. Can you sell the audience a bill of

goods they didn't buy? So, when an audience will prefer to go listen to Megan the Stallion, and not what we have to offer in the classical community, we've lost our audience.

**HR:** Is it possible to actively seek meaningful music-making moments in both rehearsal and performance?

**AW:** Oh, absolutely. In performance, you must leave a little space for enthusiasm, for excitement, for God to speak. But that also means that performers are at their keenness level of concentration at the point of performance. Our job, as rehearsal technicians and conductors, is to get the group to emit as much as you can in rehearsal, so that the performance level in rehearsal is as high as we can create it. Then the performance may take it over the edge.
My finest rehearsals were always better than my performances. Always. They think it's not true when I tell school band directors that my best performances were in the rehearsal room, likely a day or two before a major performance. With the adult band, they would peak out on stage, because they had fewer distractions.

**HR:** Can you talk a little bit more about leaving space for excitement? What do you mean by that? How do you leave space?

**AW:** Good questions. If you peak your top tempo, at a certain point, you must understand that the group has the potential to play at five clicks faster without it becoming so flawed that it's not pleasant to listen to—it sounds like the band is frantic and out of control. If you peak your upper volume levels at the peak volume that most of the performers can play, when you get into performance they're going to take it about five cents over that. Then you'll get performances that are emotionally convincing to the people on stage, but the audience may not necessarily sense that. So, you must peak it out at the 97$^{th}$-98$^{th}$ percentile of speed, either fast or slow. And how do you do that? You do that by testing the waters in rehearsal. If you're doing a Largo and the tempo is marked 43, can you play it at 43 one day? Then 45-46 the next day? You test the waters at 40 or 38 the next day, and the ensemble doesn't have control of the instruments to play it at 40. They can only play it between 43 and 45. Then on the concert, the conductor can't go down to 40 or 38. It will lag. And the opposite is true.
Quick little story: one of my favorite performances was with my 1996 Midwest band. We played a circus march at the end of the performance. It was 25 years ago. Finished with *Triumphal March* and it was written for a circus band. You could play it as fast as you could play, and it was part of the tradition of the circus.
I had it locked in at about 180 in cut time. Just before the Thanksgiving break, I took it on a concert at about 192-196, and it was problematic for everyone. When we were on the stage at Midwest, and the concert had gone beautifully, one of those really mature concerts, and the band was very well prepared, there was no space there. It was the finale of the concert, and I went to the band, and they'll all tell you that to this day, I went to the band after our guest conductors, and I told the youngsters to hang on to your seat. And they knew the fast tempo was coming. I took it at 200.

I knew they could play it at 192 with some flaws at Thanksgiving. Then a month later they could play at 200. And it was electric on stage. It was electric. And it was enthusiastic. And was it a little more flawed? Yeah, but it was what Bernstein was saying in "The Joy of Music" about if the intent of the composition was for the piece to be frenetic, then on his concert, he blew the tempo up so that his toes in his shoes would curl up a bit because he thought the Philharmonic was going to fall apart. But the performance would become electric to the audience. He said he knew that the New York Times critics were going to massacre him in the newspaper the next day because of the flawed technique of this particular movement. He said, "but the audience was cheering," and he went to the audience's cheer as opposed to what the critics were saying at the end of the 20th century. He was correct. We passed on his contribution to our art form, and not what we remember the critics names to be.

**HR:** How do you define a musical experience? What makes an experience musical?

**AW:** It's hard to identify. What's musical to the conductor may not be musical to the performer or to the audience.

**HR:** So, let's back up, how do you define it for you, personally? What's a musical experience for you?

**AW:** The response from the performers and the response from the audience.

**HR:** And then how do you draw your ensemble into that experience with you?

**AW:** I think you oftentimes can tell whether there's a nuance and an electricity during the performance that's extraordinary, that was not there during rehearsal ever. I think everyone in the community will know it at that time. Whether it is the leader or the performers or the audience, they'll know something unusual is happening. It's like watching Simone Biles in the Olympic Games when she does her first tumbling act in sequence, and she nails the ending. The audience gasps and so do you. She does another tumbling act, she does a somersault, and she lands on a button. You don't really need to know much about gymnastics to know that this is extraordinary.
It can be a comparison to the other performers that you've seen, but the electricity involved in that is available in all of humankind. I don't care if it's a dog catching a frisbee at a basketball arena. If the dog jumps and catches a frisbee and jumps and catches a frisbee, and all of a sudden the Frisbee goes another three feet in the air, and you know that a basketball player couldn't catch the frisbee, but the dog does. So, I believe in the simplicity of life. We try to make our art form so complicated. The simplicity of life happens, gives us great results. It's when preparation meets thought-provoking ideas, meets appropriate skills, and understanding for great performances can come. But it has to be a combination of things that all line themselves up, most of which are the conductor's responsibility.

**HR:** So, the ensemble and the audience aren't going to have that experience if it doesn't come from the conductor?

**AW:** Oh, it's impossible.
They can perform well. They can make it technically proficient. But there's an indescribable part of life, that even the very best scientists, when you read and study them, they will agree—there are intangibles that cannot be defined. When we try to define them, we oftentimes fail. We just use a bunch of words that are unimportant and makes us sound a little more intelligent.
I'll give you a couple of examples. There's a young baby that was born last night somewhere that had a weakened heart. The parents and grandparents and family members are in the waiting room. The doctor comes out and says, "she's struggling, and we hope she can make it through the night." She makes it through the night, and the doctor comes out the next day and says, “this one's got a lot of fight.” Well, how does the doctor know that? The baby is 24 hours old. Or an elderly person that won't go fighting into the night, and the family says, “Well, your grandpa's got a lot of fight.” And you're thinking, "but he's in a coma. He hasn't spoken in six months. What does that mean?"
Why are the Olympic records for athletes broken only at the Olympic Games? Not the week before when they have the same fine-tuned athlete? Or more importantly, why not the week after the games? What is that intangible in there? We have the same intangible in us. Through our energy and conversation, we must draw those emotions out of our performers. You can't conduct them out. You can try. But then the performers will see a different person in performance than they see in rehearsal. We're trained as conductors to leave the stage and think, "well that felt great to me! We nailed it.” No, you felt great because you were sandbagging it in rehearsal. It's exhausting. To give the best of you whenever you stand on the podium. It’s very exhausting.

**HR:** Do you feel like you can use that emotional connection to the piece as a vehicle to improve technique when you're teaching?

**AW:** Yes and no. It improves motivation for a person's interest in the piece. We've all done it. We're preparing our parts for concerts, and we tend to like some pieces better than others. We tend to get more enthusiastic when the conductor says, “pull out this piece.” The younger ones will tell you, the older ones will say, “you know, I like this one. This is a good. I like this one.”
So, I think that it's important that we give them a firm understanding of situations such as note grouping. How are the phrases grouped? Where does the space occur? Where does the breath occur? Or is it just a run-on sentence? And then you have them engaged intellectually in their individual parts as opposed to just playing notes, which we can do very well. The more skilled we are, the more we can take the good through the mundaneness of playing the notes to get the concert behind us, so I can get to the cookout in the afternoon.
Everyone has that. It's a part of everyone's life. When you speak to two conductors or members of symphony orchestras, and they'll tell you the same thing. They'll leave the Metropolitan Opera orchestra to take a job playing the same instrument with the New York Philharmonic because the operas are three- and-a-half hours long. They'll

leave playing Wagner to play Shostakovich because the symphony is gonna be 22 minutes long. That's what we do as a part of our culture.
But note grouping and phrasing, and the potential for "this goes with this" and "this connects that" is no different than reading a great book. I've seen "Chocolate Legato," in the first chapter here [referring to the introduction of *What to Listen for in the World* by Bruce Adolphe], and I'm gonna read it as soon as you leave. The title is interesting. I read the first paragraph, it's interesting. I want to get back to it. That's because the author started it off and gave me something of interest. But that's the author's doing. So, that's all of our responsibility—to share the ideas.
Speaking of continued learning, I saw Jason Fettig rehearse the *Gran Partita* with a Marine Band a month ago. About three-quarters of the way through rehearsal he told them one or two sentences about what Mozart was like at this time in his life. You may have seen it. But he could have just as easily said, "well, let's hear more here, or less here," but that's just technical stuff. That's just one part of the brain that says more or less, longer or shorter. But he said, "this was Mozart's intent: to make sure you're more singing here, more cantabile," or "Dolce as opposed to cantabile here." They're similar expressions, but when you tell someone dolce versus cantabile, it may mean the difference in a classical sweetness or the sweetness of a songbird versus the cantabile of a Grand Opera. There's a difference there. So that Socratic method says, "I want you to think about what the differences are. You may not be able to achieve it the very next time you do it, but more importantly you'll think about it." Then when someone says, "how do you get the difference between cantabile and dolce", then you say, "you hear the difference." You can answer it with your impression. More importantly, you've helped them to think artistically through it.
I use jazz, I use dance, I use sculpture a lot in my teaching and training, because I use it a lot in my study of the fine arts. I see myself as an artist. Remember, the performing artists have a role in the development of the work but are not 100% essential all the time. If we only study instrumental music, then we've missed the rest of how the arts work. So that's real key.
You can bring a dancer into rehearsal, or you can send a video out of a tap dancer. You can compare the tap dancer's articulation to a rapper who's speaking. Although the words are different, the tap dancer doesn't use words, the rhythmic poetry is exactly the same. So, why does that communicate with most citizens of the world? Because there's a rhythm involved in it, and there's an inflection in the phrasing. There's an inflection involved in it. To just throw away rap and say, "this is worthless artistically, musically" is exactly what they trained us to do.

**HR:** That's an interesting comparison.

**AW:** Well, they don't want you to make that comparison when you're in college because of musical arrogance. Classically trained musicians are musical snobs. Except the ones at the top of the profession.

**HR:** Why do you say that?

**AW:** Because I think they have a greater appreciation for the arts. I think they have a greater appreciation for the musicians around them.
You should watch it tonight. There's a great video done about three years before Luciano Pavarotti's death. One of my favorite singers in the world of that genre. He's singing in Italy, and he's singing a duet with the legendary soul singer James Brown. It's one of James Brown's pieces of music called *This is a Man's World*. They sang it with a full orchestral accompaniment outside in a gigantic amphitheater in Italy. James Brown sang the first verse, Pavarotti sang a countermelody to the first verse—it may have been a guitar part, I'm not sure—but it was a classical countermelody. Then they sang them together, melody and counter at the same time, but the interesting part is when they finished their performance, they were on opposite sides of the stage—live outdoor concert, 75,000 people there—when they finished the performance, and James Brown was the invited guest, before acknowledging the audience, they turned to each other, met in the middle of the stage, and gave each other this gigantic embrace. It was admiration and it was respect for another person's art form.
Jazzers do that in everything. John Coltrane does *My Favorite Things*. I was listening yesterday to the great jazz pianist McCoy Tyner playing the music of Bert Bacharach—an entire CD of the music of Burt Bacharach. If you think of it throughout history, people that are the very best in our profession have a wide range of respect for others. It's just that layer just underneath it that teaches us musical arrogance.
It's important that we don't listen to their voices. We've all trained—trained through formal studies, which is the end of formal study, but the beginning of self-study.

**HR:** A question that goes along with that: if you were going to teach future conductors, whether the undergraduate level or those already in the field, how would you encourage them to be more connected to the emotional aspects of the pieces rather than solely focusing on the technique? Do you believe that technique can be taught through the lens of music-making?

**AW:** Yes, but they're on opposite sides of the brain. One's analytical and one's artistic. To shape beat pattern doesn't require a lot of artistry. You can get a three-year-old to do that—floor, door, window, ceiling and they're in. The baton technique can be trained and is feasible if the ensemble is trained to follow, but the ensemble doesn't pay you any attention. You can be Jiminy Cricket conducting on the nose, they won't follow you.
I would tell them to study their craft. To make a list of everything within the realm of organized music—which is separated from noise—of everything that they should know and hear and have in their vocabulary. No different than a person learning English or math. The broader their vocabulary, the broader their musicianship is going to be, and when they say, “when do you know that you have enough on your list,” I would just say, “include all of the above.” The “all the above” is an infinite amount to me. That's what I would do.
I think the technique of conducting is no different than learning the periodic table in chemistry. There are certain mechanics that we must learn in order to be competent in

chemistry, and the periodic table is critical. It's no different than the multiplication tables in mathematics. They insist that we learn those before we were able to go to the next level. So, baton technique for most people is that. But there has to be a blend between the technique of baton and the artistry in your imagination that you can conjure up. The challenge, however, is that moving both arms with an object in our hand is about as foreign as riding a bicycle backwards. It's not something that we do. So, it's a new vocabulary, a new language that we must learn. Not that we don't ride the bicycle forward, we'll learn about the bicycle backwards. But that's still not the mode of getting around.
So, it's a pas de deux. You've got a lead dancer and you've got a follow dancer. The lead dancer has the easy job. The follow dancer, who typically is female and wearing high heels and a gown, has to … Ginger Rogers had to dance with Fred Astaire. She did everything Fred Astaire did, but she did it backwards and in high heels. So, she had to develop that vocabulary in order to be a successful ballroom dancer with Fred Astaire. So, who had the most difficult job? She did. That's all technique.

**HR:** Do you see that as two very separate things? Or do you think you can learn those techniques in an artistic way? Or through artistry?

**AW:** Well, if yes, I think there are no answers. There are no *good* answers. The question is, when do you release one to develop the other? So, the answer is: you do them simultaneously. When a child is learning the language and they mispronounce a word while they learn the language, you say, "no, lamp," and you emphasize the "p" because the child has learned to do the language incorrectly. It works hand in hand. So, you must teach.
To answer your question, I guess the answer is yes. If that's the job that you have of teaching young conductors to conduct music artistically, artistry must never leave the artist. We must add the other layer of intellectual thought.

**HR:** What specific exercises or activities, if any, do you have that you recommend to students to build a stronger connection to the score?

**AW:** When I work with conductors in conducting symposiums, I'll generally tag team with the university professor who teaches that class for a living, and they'll be more proficient at it. But they may not always be proficient at having the conductor listen to the ensemble. So, when they do technical conversation with the position of the baton, position to the arm, and hug the tree, and other things to go along with it, Laban techniques, and they do all of that, then I will ask them, "Why are you looking at the back wall? There's no one there. What are you listening for in this particular section?" to be able to tie them into what the music is.
Or I would tell the performers to play exactly what this person conducts and don't play the music. I would ask, "how do you think the music should sound," and then the ensemble sound immediately changed. Then we're doing them a service. I think that is very key that the ensemble plays what you ask them with conducting. If you don't ask them anything, they shouldn't do anything. Which is exactly what happens in many, many situations.

**HR:** Do you feel as a conductor that it is possible to be emotionally connected and invested while you're conducting and analyze at the same time?

**AW:** It is difficult. I'm not the conductor who writes numbers on my score. I don't write two-bar phrase, three-bar phrase, four-bar phrase, five-bar phrase on my score. Because then I'm thinking mathematically, and I'm not listening to the ensemble. I think the conductor must be trained to listen to what music is coming out 100% of the time. From the first sound of the day to the first scale in half notes. Not necessarily to correct, but to listen and make sure what they're hearing are not habits that the player or the ensemble has accumulated. I think we must learn to, at some point in time, throw the technique out, but that comes from hours and hours and hours of study, and hours of preparation from the ensemble. Not hours, but levels of preparation from the ensemble. And once the ensemble is properly trained, with all the balances, blends, and colors…

We can't leave them alone. If we could leave them alone, then the best golfers wouldn't need swing coaches. If we leave them alone, then basketball players wouldn't need a coach on the sideline. If you leave them alone, then the president doesn't need a cabinet, because you assume this person knows enough to lead the country.

Everyone needs to be reminded of short-term goals and objectives on a piece of music. So oftentimes, conductors get into concerts, and we'll use this cliche phrase, "it's my job to conduct and it's your job to play the instrument." That's why ensembles are drastically different one to another to the next one. Because in many ensembles, particularly university level, the upper-level ensembles are all in applied studies. So, why are they so drastically different? It's the person on the podium.

Most of the full-time professional orchestras or the professional bands have very, very skilled individual musicians. Why are they different? And that's the answer.

As a flutist, once you prepare for recital, and you get all the nuances of fingering, articulation, where the tongue goes, which notes are high, which notes are low, which way you have to change the direction of the air to make this happen, how much air to breathe in here, then there's a point near the performance when most of that has to go out and you allow for music-making to become primo. With that still running in the background. It's like a computer—other programs are still in the background, although you are only working in Word.

I think the same way. As you can tell, my approach is simple. I believe in trying to allow for complex activities, such as conducting a symphony, to be as simple as we can make it. Einstein's theory of relativity does that. $E = mc^2$ is a conclusion of a much broader study of energy and mass. He brought it down to the simplest or the least common denominator. He also loved riding a bicycle and he played the violin. But we do the opposite. Oftentimes, in our activity, we try to make a complicated art form sound more complicated. It makes us sound like we're more knowledgeable. It's ego. It's the lack of self-confidence. It's ego. It's not being a servant to the art form with which we're working in. It's run rampant in our activity.