

Amateur Orchestra Conducting: A Concise Tutorial (First Edition)

Leda Wang

Date: February 14, 2024

Contents

1 Preface	2
2 Composition of an Amateur Symphony Orchestra in USTC	4
3 What Makes a Person a Suitable Conductor of an Amateur Symphony Orchestra	4
4 How to Learn to Command? Technique	5
4.1 Instrumental Method	6
4.2 Music Theory	6
4.3 Listening Training	7
4.4 Reading and Analysing the General Score	7
4.5 Music History, Important Composers and Important Repertoire	8
4.6 Basic Conducting Method: How to Play the Beat	9
5 How to Lead a Rehearsal? Expression	9
6 Rehearsal Techniques for Band Training Studies	11
7 Psychology of Band Rehearsal	13
8 Overview of String Technique	14
9 Overview of Woodwind Technique	15
10 Overview of Brass Technique	15
11 Overview of Percussion Technique	16

1 Preface

The first edition of this tutorial was written by the author when he served as the President of the Student Symphony Orchestra at the University of Science and Technology of China at the end of the first semester of his senior year. The author joined the university's student symphony orchestra and student philharmonic association upon enrollment. Initially, the author only had experience in amateur piano playing and had only encountered a simple piano concerto in the first semester, which marked the beginning of his participation in orchestra rehearsals. Later, due to the needs of the organization, the author quickly gained exposure to conducting theory at the end of the first semester of his freshman year and officially started conducting rehearsals and supervising the orchestra in the second semester. A year later, the author briefly participated in the rehearsals of the university's student ethnic orchestra. During this process, the author interacted with a group of prestigious and talented senior students who had a passion for music performance in several major music performance organizations, accumulating a wealth of experience related to orchestra rehearsals.

In recent years, in the process of orchestra development, all core managers have faced great challenges in selecting and cultivating conductors for the orchestra. From the history of the organization's development, the appearance of those most successful conductors often resulted from accidental factors rather than deliberate cultivation. Moreover, their performance in cultivating and selecting successors in conducting has been less than satisfactory, even leaving behind various new problems for the organization. On the other hand, amateur orchestras themselves are highly unstable and objectively have varying levels of technical proficiency, which is significantly different from professional orchestras. This situation means that amateur conductors need to face different situations and adopt strategies that are not entirely consistent with professional conductors. Nevertheless, a good conductor can enhance the cohesion of the orchestra as a student organization and promote the artistic progress of the orchestra, while a poor conductor can easily lead to the loss of orchestra members and the destruction of the foundation laid by predecessors.

In the author's brief orchestra career, he deeply felt the difficulties in cultivating and selecting amateur orchestra conductors and was well aware of the orchestra's past struggles. Through conversations with predecessors, the author accumulated some relevant experiences and lessons but never had the awareness and opportunity to systematically summarize them. Recently, while

organizing tutorials on hosting concerts by predecessors, the author suddenly had the idea of summarizing the experiences in conducting orchestras and rehearsals, intending to use it as training material for potential new conductors in the future. However, it turned out that this task was arduous and challenging. Conducting, as a discipline that still lacks a complete theoretical foundation to this day, is a profound and highly fragmented field of study, with diverse qualities that are difficult to summarize in a logical manner. The author conducted a simple and rough classification and organization, simplifying the details as much as possible while ensuring comprehensive content, with the aim of providing a concise understanding of the considerations for conducting amateur orchestras to prospective conductor candidates and serving as a memo for daily reference during training.

The author believes that writing such a tutorial is groundbreaking in China. It is almost unheard of to have such a detailed tutorial specifically written for the training of amateur orchestra conductors in Chinese magazines, journals, and books. The author hopes that this tutorial can be adopted by more peers and further improved and supplemented with suggestions and conclusions in practice. Following the path specified in this tutorial does not guarantee a high level of conducting skills, but it endeavors to ensure the smooth operation of the orchestra when the artistic level of the orchestra's leaders is not high enough.

The author would like to express special thanks to Yi-Fei Liu and Hong-Rui Zhang for their encouragement and advice. Without their continuous communication and guidance in music theory and practice, this tutorial may not have been created.

The author would also like to thank all the seniors who provided suggestions and guidance in the process of writing this tutorial. Their valuable opinions and rich experiences have greatly improved the content of this tutorial.

Conducting is a grand art, and there are still a lot of unmentioned aspects for amateur orchestra conductors to pay attention to, such as the selection of music, community management and artistic management, etc. The author apologises for the mistakes and abbreviations in this article, and hopes to improve them gradually in future editions. The author apologises for any omissions or brevity in this article and hopes to improve it gradually in future editions. In the meantime, I ask all readers to remain focused on musical practice. Practice is the only criterion for testing the truth, and we advocate proactive thinking and flexible responses to various situations.

Finally, the author hopes that this tutorial can be widely read and applied, and that it can contribute to the cultivation of amateur orchestra conductors in China. Although this tutorial is far from perfect and may have some shortcomings and limitations due to the author's limited experience and knowledge, the author believes that as long as more people are willing to contribute and share their experiences, we will be able to continuously improve and enhance the

level of amateur orchestra conducting in USTC.

2 Composition of an Amateur Symphony Orchestra in USTC

The (Western) symphony orchestra is composed of a mixture of different types of Western musical instruments and performers, varying in size.

Components: (Items in parentheses indicate unstable presence.)

1. String section: Violins (divided into two groups), (violas), cellos, double basses. Violas can be trained from violinists with solid basic skills.
2. Woodwind section: Flute, clarinet, (oboe, bassoon, etc.). Usually, oboes and bassoons are not present; the former is typically replaced by the soprano saxophone, and the latter is substituted by electronic keyboards or a small portion of low strings.
3. Brass section: French horn, trumpet, (trombone, tuba). It is important to note that due to the lack of French horns, the alto saxophone is commonly used as a substitute.
4. Percussion section: Timpani, ~~snare~~ drum, (bass drum, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, cymbals, etc.). The most important instruments are the first two.

Amateur orchestras like ours usually do not exceed a three-section configuration, and the various substitutions create additional challenges in terms of sound balance and overall tone control. On the other hand, the composition of amateur orchestras is highly unstable, and even neighboring semesters may have significant differences.

3 What Makes a Person a Suitable Conductor of an Amateur Symphony Orchestra

The threshold needed to conduct an amateur orchestra is not as high as is often imagined, but it does have some requirements for basic musicianship and personal ability.

Firstly, an orchestra conductor needs to be proficient in at least one instrument. For an amateur orchestra, proficiency might be defined as being able to play a relatively complete piece of music on one instrument.

Historically, most conductors have come from strings and piano, but that doesn't mean that those are the only two categories of people who have access to conducting. For amateur orchestras, I still recommend that capable string players take the backbone within the section, as a capable string player is just as vital, and often it is easier or more fun to play the piano yourself than to lead rehearsals:). Of course, if there is a lack of talent, the string leader often has the same ability to quickly take over as conductor.

However, in the case of piano players, training from childhood exposure is often disconnected from the orchestra due to the unique nature of this instrument. Piano players have the advantage of being able to read and understand the general score very quickly, as well as having a generally better audio-visual and theoretical foundation. But conducting an orchestra is often much more complex and different than practising on your own. These are in fact two completely different fields. Therefore, my advice to piano players who are interested in conducting is to have more contact with the orchestra, to learn more about a wide variety of instruments from different fields, to talk to fellow orchestra members, and to observe rehearsals. If this kind of **passion** drives you to learn quickly, then I believe you are not far away from being a qualified or even excellent conductor.

The core quality required of a conductor is a strong **passion** for the rehearsal repertoire and for the orchestra as an organisation; this is always the most important. This includes a passion for studying the score, for the people in the orchestra (rehearsals), for understanding the different instruments, and for the music itself; the conductor needs to show his or her dedication during rehearsals. A person who looks at the formality or position of conducting an orchestra and ignores the dedication and commitment required to achieve this goal is totally unsuited to the role of a conductor; ultimately, this can be very distracting for both the orchestra and the individual.

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that in a school with an extremely strong research atmosphere like USTC, it has to be admitted that club work will always be a sideline, and the majority of students still need to focus on their daily studies. For those who are extremely strict in their academic pursuits, if you feel that conducting is a waste of time and you don't have the appropriate reserve of abilities, I don't think it's a very suitable career for you; but on the other hand, for those who are so overly strenuous in their academics that they are on the verge of basic difficulties in graduating, or are facing the situation of taking a break from their studies or dropping out of the school, we would like to suggest that you prioritise your academics, even if you're exceptionally gifted in the field of conducting. (Historically, conductors who have been successful in orchestras, symphonies, and philharmonic societies have been able to balance their studies with their associations.)

4 How to Learn to Command? Technique

The less responsible but always correct answer would be “practice makes perfect”.

If one were to talk to a professional conductor on this subject, one would realise the extreme arrogance of the assessment. “You can't learn to conduct, either you are born to conduct or you don't learn”. Indeed, it is true that, to this day, there is not even a theoretical doctrine

on the practice of conducting. Those books that have been published on conducting will have commentaries on practice, arguments on points of view, and suggestions for staging works. Then there are, above all, formulaic drawings of the universal movements of conducting, how to play the beat cloud. But what people should do to conduct, and how to learn to conduct themselves, is not discussed in detail anywhere.

The following is presented from a third-person point of view, referring to the person who wants to learn to conduct as a student.

4.1 Instrumental Method

Firstly, stringed instruments. The principles of different stringed instruments are basically similar, and the student needs to have a general understanding of their corresponding ranges, and he needs to be proficient in the basic techniques of stringed instruments. In addition, he needs to know the articulation and the main technical difficulties of at least one wind instrument, or be familiar with at least some wind players. In addition, he will need to take the opportunity to get his hands on a variety of percussion instruments. Although percussion segments are not as important as folk orchestra in the works we rehearse as a club, a qualified conductor needs to have a fine knowledge of the basic several drum/cymbal articulations as well.

The conductor needs to know the best and most appropriate sounds for all the instruments so that he can accurately express his artistic ideas. Of course, there is always a gap between knowledge and reality for amateur ensembles; it is common for some musicians to have problems with intonation, let alone tone control. But having an understanding of the best sound can give a direction to work towards during rehearsals. On the other hand, students must also learn to compromise with reality in time, balancing their own ideals with the objective capabilities of the amateur orchestra, a point that will be repeated later.

4.2 Music Theory

The conductor of an amateur orchestra does not need to be familiar with the details of professional music theory in its entirety; in general, a complete study of section music theory is both time-consuming and inconvenient for self-study. As a matter of fact, composition and orchestration are relatively easy to understand, and this can be done on one's own by reading a book and then deepening one's impression in practice; the student may not need to know anything about polyphony. Harmony is relatively difficult, but in fact do not need to gnaw through the classic textbooks; conducting amateur groups, students only need to have a good foundation in listening, understand the basic harmonic patterns of change in the piece they need to bring, and be able to find the discordant wrong notes in the orchestra, and that's it. The

important thing is not a particular harmony itself, but the process of harmonic change, which will help in the analysis of the piece.

4.3 Listening Training

As with the sight-reading and ear-training needed to learn the piano as a child, the conductor should be able to recognise sounds accurately and be able to exclude as much as possible interference from the instrument itself. On this basis, melodic exercises can be carried out; sight-reading or watching a melody and analysing the melodic emphasis, advancement and transitions. Then, add basic harmonies and practise listening for harmonic changes based on the melody.

Another point not to be neglected is rhythmic training. Try breaking a measure into two, three, and nine beats at a fixed timing (e.g. a measure is at 48 beats a minute), then back to eight, two and one. It's often ugly when you first start practising and you don't even get it right for a long time, but it will have a subtle effect. Expose yourself to different rhythm patterns until the rhythmic transformation is as familiar as drinking your own water. For some rhythmically complex secondary music, where the conductor has the most central responsibility in taking charge of this aspect of the tempo, these rhythmic patterns tend to be less regimented than traditional compositions. When encountering this music, it's also important to listen to the original piece more often to improve your proficiency with the corresponding rhythmic pattern.

4.4 Reading and Analysing the General Score

Another very important point lies in reading and analysing the general score. This is not exactly the same as focusing on a particular instrumental score; the student needs to focus on the details as well as the global information of the voice parts and phrases, especially the weaving and harmonic changes. Accordingly, it is a matter of making appropriate analyses of the form, harmony, orchestration, and even polyphony. At the same time, the divisions should not be completely ignored, and attention needs to be paid to a few particular instruments at turning points. Pay attention to every detail you can notice, not only what the notes themselves are, but also know or conceptualise the requirements of these notes in terms of strength, weakness and playing style; have a complete picture of the pattern of musical development, and be clear about what kind of musical effect you want, which will clarify the conductor's objectives and greatly enhance the efficiency of rehearsals.

Professional training generally requires students to play the general score directly on the piano, starting with Bach's choruses, then gradually changing to string quartets, chamber music, and finally orchestral works; this is of course excellent training, but it is too demanding for

amateur students. In any case, before rehearsal the student must know the general score by heart, as well as possible, and preferably by heart; the general score presented at rehearsal is only a reminder, but the student should have a general idea of what is to come in the future of the music even before he turns to the general score.

The habit of marking the score varies from person to person. Conductors should also check with the scorekeeper about the version of the score to be used, in case the total score and the subsections do not exactly match.

4.5 Music History, Important Composers and Important Repertoire

Students are not required to have a mastery of the history of Western music, let alone be “well versed in centuries of artistic prosperity”. But focus on Beethoven; the seminal master who laid the foundations for all future orchestras, and who was the driving force behind every aspect of the orchestra. To this day, the underlying logic of the orchestra, the basic form of performance, still operates on the basis of the model he pioneered; and anyone who can master his nine symphonies will surely have a good understanding of how an orchestra operates as well. My advice, in any case, is to listen to Beethoven’s nine symphonies more often before conducting the classical repertoire.

With regard to particular composers and works of art, I think the rule for amateur orchestras is not to touch anything by Brahms and later Austro-German composers unless there is a corroborated, relatively simple repertoire; the large-format works of the late Romantics tend to be technically difficult and expressively demanding, and such a repertoire is basically a thankless task for amateurs. Other composers’ works depend largely on how difficult the repertoire is. But in any case, if you decide to try to rehearse someone’s repertoire, do a thorough research and examination of that composer, what happened in that era, the artistic style of that era, and the performance requirements of that era. Otherwise, the farce of rehearsing Ravel but not understanding Debussy and the French Impressionists at all, or rehearsing Schubert’s symphonies but never touching his piano works, will happen.

Learning is never-ending. If you think you have a good knowledge of the above topics, you can continue to study the history of world music, the history of Western art (history of civilisation), the history of Western philosophy A great conductor also needs to have great spiritual power.

It remains to be emphasised that the conductor should have his own taste, but with full respect for all forms of music. Amateur orchestras should not engage in a chain of musical stigmatisation; given the objective level as well as the practical difficulties, the practice of music is of much greater significance.

4.6 Basic Conducting Method: How to Play the Beat

Primary schools music textbooks teach you how to read two beats, three beats, four beats; in fact that's enough. Any more complex rhythms are nothing more than making additions, or subsections on top of that. Exactly how you choose to do this needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

If the beat is to be played, the movement must be standard; this does not mean that it must be exactly the same as the track in the book, but that the beat can be clearly read by all the musicians. As a matter of principle, the first beat must go clearly down, and the last row must close clearly up, and these two beats should be very clearly different in height; the middle two beats of the quartet should be of any height, but should be clearly different from the first and last beats. It is especially important for the string section to see this gesture; the full movement is often not visible on the side of the first and major ticks, and when they are confused they need the clear up — down difference more than anything else to adjust. This is often easily overlooked.

On the other hand, it is important to work on the independence of the two hands, i.e., one hand beats the beat while the other hand does additional cues unaffected. Again, this is an interesting exercise; after mastering the movement, it is customary in everyday life to practice the standard metronomic method with one hand while the other hand does its own thing. If you can get to the point where your hands don't interfere with each other, you'll be able to control your cueing very well.

How do I start the beat? This requires special study and extra concentration at the beginning. As a beginner, it is also possible to play a full beat in advance before starting, barely as an alternative.

Finally, controlling the tempo — likewise requires long practice. A professional conductor can count a minute with precision in the presence of outside distractions. I tend to recommend memorising a classic repertoire of some common rhythmic patterns to form a well known template of tempo, after which similar rhythmic patterns can be substituted into this template to control the overall tempo. Some practice with a metronome may be in order to achieve a consistent tempo output.

How to improve the standard of movement? One way is to practice in front of a mirror, and another way is to videotape the rehearsal if possible, and review it afterwards.

5 How to Lead a Rehearsal? Expression

Generally speaking, a conductor has three types of expression at his disposal: gestures, facial expressions, and words. The most important of these is the infectious gesture; but for

amateur orchestras, where sophisticated gestures are not conducive to understanding, language becomes an important aid. As far as the use of words and expressions is concerned, they can be as much a facilitator as a hindrance.

Clarity of movement is the primary requirement. In principle, only the part under the big arm should be used, but, sometimes, in order to give the musicians a more visible reminder, the amplitude of the movement can be moderately increased, but this should not result in a distortion of the movement.

In this respect, instrumental conductors and choral conductors should take different approaches. Accordingly, a choral conductor's gestures need to be more sing-songy, as if creating fluctuations in a viscous liquid, and do not need to have obvious turning points, whereas an instrumental conductor only needs to deliver the movement smoothly in the same medium, with ease, precise control, and with clear starting and ending points.

All artistic conceptions should have a corresponding movement. It is the ideal conception of the conductor that creates the movement, not the technical conventions that define the sound vision. That is, in principle, one must express one's conception completely in body language. This is quite a tall order for a student, and it is understandable even if it is not met. On the other hand, amateur orchestras have a limited ability to understand obscure gestures. It may also be necessary to strike a balance, weighing up language and gesture to find a mode that is as efficient as possible. It's best to align — first in terms of rhythm and intonation which means getting the whole clip over with standard beats, and then try to aim for a higher artistic goal afterwards.

But at the same time, the ideal state of instrumental performance is to express the developmental process of the work, a process that springs naturally and from the work's own forces, rather than being forcibly created. So there is an equally difficult balance between conducting and over-conducting. This is something that even many experienced professional conductors are sometimes confused about; the student just has to remember this principle and apply it when it makes sense.

When should I play the beat? In fact, when rehearsing a piece at the beginning, I always recommend starting with a standard one-track beat, unless the piece has special rhythmic needs. Being able to play a standard beat is sufficient for more than 90

How do I choose my interpretation, or how do I look at adapted works? Please note that for amateur ensembles it is possible to choose an artistically less orthodox approach; appropriate orchestration/tempo changes or further interpretation of the score are perfectly acceptable. Musical practice is always paramount, and amateur ensembles should take a more pragmatic view of the process of completing this practice with the highest possible quality, rather than adhering to an almost fundamentalist line. Of course, I am equally unsupportive of over-adaptations of the classics by particular German and Austrian composers, but these repertoire is equally

unsuitable for rehearsal in an amateur orchestra under most conditions.

6 Rehearsal Techniques for Band Training Studies

In principle, the most important thing when rehearsing a large-scale band is efficiency. What people call the ability to conduct a band rehearsal is mainly the ability to identify problems, dismantle them, and solve them.

For an orchestra, the greatest role of a conductor is to save time. Similarly, when evaluating a conductor's ability, the focus is often on the amount of time spent "rehearsing efficiently". When preparing in advance, the conductor must have a very concrete idea of each note in his mind; only then will his rehearsal have a clear direction to work towards, and the musicians will be convinced.

Keep in mind the main purpose of the rehearsal: to harmonise intonation, tempo (rhythm), strengths and weaknesses, and playing style. The next step up is the pursuit of more detailed phrasing and artistic style. The first three should be the focus of the amateur orchestra; quite often, if proper intonation and strengths and weaknesses can be rigorously established, with reasonable tempo and neat playing, this is already a very effective performance.

The first step is to establish a strict schedule of rehearsal time. In other words, after a period of contact (with the orchestra), if there are thirty minutes to rehearse a particular five-minute piece, how should the conductor organise this? Such a plan, while not needing to be completely precise, should have a good idea of what you are going to do. For amateur orchestras, it is particularly important to balance the gap between the conductor's own ideal vision and the strengths of the orchestra; the conductor's ideal should be dynamically adjustable, so that he or she is always aware of his or her real needs according to the state of the orchestra, and thus has a clearer idea of what needs to be emphasised in the rehearsal. It is also important not to spend too much time on a particular passage, or to insist on rehearsing from beginning to end; the most central function of rehearsal is to solve problems, and to use rehearsals to deal with pieces that need to be practised and honed. Except for the last two or three rehearsals in the programme, do not insist on rehearsing a complete piece.

Second, don't over-speak and over-involve music-theoretical analyses during the rehearsal process. Performers are often not that concerned with theory and storytelling; instead, there will be those who are bored or suspicious of narrative descriptions. Appropriate rhetoric is necessary, but keep it in check and only help the musicians understand your artistic vision; it's a trade-off between enlivening the atmosphere and rehearsing efficiently. For example, during a rehearsal of the Parsifal Overture (hypothetically), it would be far better to tell the story of the Grail Knights than to tell the string players which way to vibrate as the motif develops, or

a counterexample would be to tell the story of the sunrise or of the Keeper of the Grail in the place of the horn solo.

When is it necessary to stop playing in order to correct a mistake? In principle, it's best to go mostly uninterrupted once at the beginning of a rehearsal until it falls apart to the point where it's impossible to work with it before finding a place to start again. In the course of subsequent carving, if a mistake in intonation or a less serious rhythmic error is caused by a particular player's own poor condition or mistake, it can be disregarded; if it is an expressive flaw, it is perfectly acceptable to continue playing but to emphasise it in verbal form to that voice at the same time. On the other hand, if the conductor is too critical of some minor faults, it may cause misunderstanding or even resentment among the players. Particularly detailed questions or long solo phrases or stylistic suggestions for a particular musician in a particular section should be exchanged privately, and the time for such behaviour should be minimised during orchestra rehearsals. It is also important to explain why you are stopping, and not just ask for "one more time" without saying anything, unless the reason for stopping is that the orchestra is falling apart.

How do I communicate specifically with different instrumentalists? Try to give them specific technical advice that you are familiar with. If there is a specific request, sing it, no matter how hard it is for you to sing, rather than describe it in words. Also, make sure they're keeping up with you; for example, when giving detailed technical advice, indicate the bar number of the example you're giving. Simply talking about unfolding and reproducing sections may not ensure that most people keep up with you.

Always having trouble sorting out difficult fragments? Don't forget how you practice piano. The common ways you try to get through difficult pieces are: slow down, one hand, repeat. The process of rehearsing an orchestra is similar; you usually need to slow down and keep just a few voices, slowing down partially over down first. Then, layer by layer, add groups of instruments and repeat this partial and gradual acceleration. (Of course, if this doesn't work many times, it's time to consider whether the selection is technically difficult, and to try to avoid this before rehearsal.)

What is the relationship between the beat and the change of speed? In principle, the speed determines the size of the movement amplitude, the faster is small, the slower is big, the conductor should control the even time change, that is, at different speeds, the speed of transporting the beat is more stable. Strength and weakness are often intuitively apparent in the score, and additional adjustments and emphasis should be achieved by the height of the movement, the eyes, or the cues of the non-runner; however, musicians are often not so sensitive to speed changes, and generally need more emphasis on the movement.

7 Psychology of Band Rehearsal

There is a great deal of gossip about the mysterious world of band rehearsals of all kinds. People like to read books that “report on the legendary abilities and eccentricities of famous musicians”. However, this is not particularly informative for the musician’s small circle of peers.

The conductor is not just the artistic leader of the orchestra as a group; in fact, the conductor should be an educator, a leader, and a collaborator all at the same time. In fact, there are always people in an orchestra who doubt the significance of the conductor’s existence, believing that their own interpretation has nothing to do with the existence of a conductor; a good conductor should be able to transcend the player’s own technical ability, and be able to guide the player to bring out the best of his or her inner character, i.e., to help him or her to discover a musical understanding that transcends his or her own self. A conductor who can do this will undoubtedly gain the respect of the orchestra, and the fulfilment of this condition requires the conductor’s full respect for the players. It is a process of establishing the conductor’s authority.

The most difficult thing for every new conductor at the beginning is undoubtedly to establish his authority quickly in rehearsals. This is a difficult thing to do; because the people he is trying to coach are generally more experienced than he is. And, the process is highly context-specific, with each conductor needing to find a way of conveying emotion that is uniquely his own. However, if the conductor himself has a deep understanding of the score and the corresponding musical style, clearly gives his musical ideas with gestures, and has a strong enthusiasm, this can go quite a long way to overcoming the orchestra’s scepticism towards him. Don’t cover up your mistakes unnecessarily, unless you don’t realise it when you make them; on the contrary, admitting them will make it easier for the orchestra to understand. However, it should also be noted that mistakes should not be made too often, otherwise the players will naturally question the significance of the conductor’s presence. At the same time, authority is not something to be imposed; the conductor of an amateur orchestra should not be a dictator type, and although he or she should be self-assertive, he or she should not be headstrong.

For the orchestra to accept the conductor’s authority, the conductor needs to know how to maintain order in the orchestra while being charismatic (e.g. with a sense of humour or erudite qualities), and needs to know how to be strict and tolerant at the same time. Using the carrot-and-stick approach, a good conductor makes the orchestra realise the importance of cooperative rehearsal, and allows them to learn new things from it, thus keeping the members of the orchestra interested in rehearsal for a long time. If there are a large number of unexplained absences from rehearsals in a short period of time, the conductor should also reflect on whether this is his or her responsibility.

How should the conductor handle interpersonal relationships with the orchestra? Basi-

cally, the conductor needs to know what to say and what not to say. Accordingly, the wording of criticism, when to be encouraging, and when a joke is appropriate will affect the conductor's relationship with the orchestra. The conductor should not always be a good old boy; on the contrary, he should be willing to point out major playing habits or mistakes in the performance of the music. On the other hand, the conductor should not be at liberty to express radical personal opinions about the musicians' performance, unless the conductor has a particularly good relationship with the players. In general, the principle remains the same: the conductor should show artistic and interpersonal respect for all the players in the orchestra, so that the orchestra, in turn, will respect them and they will give their fullest in the rehearsal process.

We, as a student organisation, are not involved in such business as communicating with our sponsors and are not too involved here.

8 Overview of String Technique

The point to be emphasised at the beginning of this section is that the orchestra conductor does not need to be well versed in all the instrumental methods, but he needs to know all the principles and technical possibilities, and to understand all the difficulties of the players. He needs, therefore, to be continually asking for experience from a variety of people who are proficient on different instruments.

There is a difference between the accentuation of the fingers and that of the bow; while the latter is used to obtain a crescendo, the former is used to emphasise a certain note and to add clarity. Careful consideration needs to be given to what level of vibrato to use for different pieces.

The natural tendency of bowing changes is to make the upper bow stronger and the lower bow weaker. The upper bow is used to inhale and the lower bow is used to exhale. Use bowing correctly and consciously in its specific sense, e.g., full, half, and one-third bows, middle, end, and tip. Try to guide all musicians to use the bow as fully as possible. Bow changes in continuous phrases must be smooth and natural, without pauses or extra accents caused by bow changes.

For split bows, breaks in general, and skipping and plucking, the conductor should be aware of the technically created differences in tone-specific details and try to give the correct guidance.

Other more modern bowing techniques can be largely ignored unless a special repertoire is encountered.

Extra attention should be given to the mid-ti during rehearsals, as the severe imbalance in sound makes it difficult to detect mistakes they make during rehearsals.

9 Overview of Woodwind Technique

Always be aware of the intonation of this group of instruments; even in a relatively accurate state of tuning, the intonation of the various tubes can potentially be off by half a semitone in the higher registers. The presence of a soprano saxophone makes this fact even more tricky. At the same time, it needs to be understood that different woodwind instruments have different difficulties in controlling strength in different registers; in the case of the flute, for example, it is more difficult to be weak in the high register and more difficult to be strong in the middle register. Therefore, the acoustic balance of different woodwind instruments is also a grand study that requires a lot of on-the-spot adjustment art.

Breathing adjustments and breath changes are even more important for woodwinds. Giving a tone head or a strong start corresponds to a different blowing method than a vague tone head or a weaker entry. The former is exhaled quickly, while the latter requires a slow release of already prepared air from the mouth.

The effect of a quick break or spit depends on the player's level and condition. If the player is not technically up to the task, understand them. However, the woodwinds are also rich in expressive colours; learn more about orchestration or instrumentation to understand the characteristics of different woodwind instruments and their combinations.

10 Overview of Brass Technique

Our group has a long history of diligent brass practice, so the musicians must have a better understanding of specific techniques than non-conductors. Talking to them more can solve some of your problems. The top brass voices often enjoy the same status in the corps as medieval court buglers.

If the brass can play the right notes consistently and steadily, they are very often up to scratch. If they can control the strengths and weaknesses correctly and reasonably well, they are already performing quite well. Sustained brass playing is more physically and conditionally taxing on the musician than the other two, a fact that needs to be understood by the conductor in rehearsal more than ever. It should be noted that there is a certain delay in the starting of all brass instruments. Therefore, it is important to give appropriate cues before their entry after a long break.

German, French and English brass timbres are quite different. In contrast, the German tone is more monotonous, but also more in keeping with the stereotype, see Wagner or Bruckner. The English trumpet sounds more radiant and loud. The French use horns that are very close to bassoons, with stronger woodwind attributes, and conductors can study Debussy's symphonic

works.

11 Overview of Percussion Technique

For the percussion section, correct playing technique is more important than for the other voices, as this completely determines the quality of the sound. In contrast to bells, cymbals, etc., which require a more pure, controlled sound, drums are richer in timbre, have more scope for manipulation and, undeniably, the threshold for enhancement is relatively low in a symphonic orchestra. Rhythmic stability is particularly important, especially when the drum kit is used as a pad to clearly give the rhythmic pattern.

12 Summary

The art of conducting is highly complex. In addition to technical skills, a comprehensive balance of objective reason, subjective initiative, emotions, decisiveness, and interpersonal skills are the determining factors in leading an orchestra.

At the highest level, the conductor's activity is linked to the spirit, which is the most powerful human force, and the spirit is often the most powerful expression of art. The mission of the conductor is therefore a noble one: a mission that requires a combination of spiritual strength, knowledge, technique, emotion and creativity.

From this point of view, the conductor also deserves to know more about Beethoven's great spiritual power, the struggle against destiny and the endless struggle. The call from the Ninth Symphony's solemn double-theme fugue is a clear one: all the world's people are united! And his lonely mind, which was ahead of its time and unappreciated, felt some apprehension and questioned: can the whole world be united?

It was certainly difficult. The art of conducting is to unite the whole orchestra. — Even this is challenging, as can be seen in this tutorial, which is neither too short nor too long. Orchestra conductors will undoubtedly need to find a way through this problem, and the answer to the question should not only be found by referring to the advice given in this tutorial, but also by practical exploration. It is hoped that the conductor of an amateur student orchestra will be able to balance the elitist route with the massed route, and that he or she will be able to give his or her own best path to rehearsal with the orchestra in practice.

13 References

For a variety of reasons, it is difficult to give some good references as in a proper academic paper. But here are some sources for further understanding.

All conducting tutorials should be inherited critically, and facts that do not apply to amateur orchestras should be rejected. Often the most useful of these books are the analyses of examples.

The video series *Learning to Conduct* by Wang Leyou on the bilibili video site can be watched, it's valuable, and this article has been influenced by the ideas in it.

Tutorials on the four main pieces of music theory? You can search on the Internet (do not use Baidu). Don't believe in authority, most of the Chinese translation of the textbook does not speak the language of man, and may not be able to inherit the original intention intact. Note that instrumentation is not the same as orchestration, and that the former is more important for conductors.

Musical style? Classical style is recommended, and this book is recognised as a masterpiece. Feel free to go online for music history as well.

For the German and Austrian styles, take Beethoven as the middle point, and go up to Mozart, Haydn and Bach, down to Schubert, Schumann, and then Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, etc. The French style can focus on Debussy, Ravel, and Bizet. Italian opera has been a major influence on all forms of music. Russian school musicians can start with Tchaikovsky and go down to Rach, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. There are many more prestigious composers in the national and par-modern genres, some of whom are too complex in composition to force a categorisation. The number of those who have not yet been mentioned is still large, and getting to know all their works will take some time.

There is no end to learning, but basically, enquiry, independent thinking, and learning from what you use are the basic ways to get started quickly in an unknown field.