



Orchestral Dialogues

A model for Leadership in the Creative Age

Throughout the Fourth Industrial Revolution leaders have been raising questions on how they can successfully cultivate and manage creativity within their organisations. As an orchestral conductor, I typically work with eighty players in an effective creative organisation. The orchestra has roots in as early as the 16th century and so far it has proved itself to be a model, which works well and can be adapted to many different circumstances. The orchestra is one of the creative bodies and evolved structures by which the leader (the conductor) can at the same time be individually creative, while enabling creativity in a group. The key question is what can leaders around the world learn from the model of conductors and orchestras?

Redefining the Order

The popular belief is that complete individual freedom is fundamental to creativity and any rules will confine and destroy it. However, even a cursory look at the great 'creatives' show that all of them had certain rules and expectations, which channelled their creativity rather than blocking it. Even one of the greatest creative achievements of man, Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine chapel were subject to supervision from Giles of Viterbo. Michelangelo twice ran away from Rome to avoid the commission and had to be forced to do the painting. Photographs by Edward Steichen or the early films of Tarkovsky and Orson Welles could only be shot and shown in black and white – and yet they produced some of the most moving cinema and breath-taking photography of all time. Whilst

there are of course confines or rules, which inhibit creativity (i.e. the Stalinist demands on artists), it is not the rules, but the type of rules that one has does the blocking of creativity.

In the case of orchestras rules are laid down by the musical score, realized through layers of hierarchies and structures, within and between instrumental groups. In rehearsals and in the social life of an orchestra these rules may cause issues, which occur in any structured group. However in the moment of performing something different happens, and it is this moment at which it is worth looking deeper.

Musical notation is simply a well-developed timetable. It shows a series of single events represented by note heads and players are told when to initiate each event, how long the event lasts, some relative guiding factors about the event (eg. which are louder or quieter) and lastly how to connect and separate these single events (bar lines, phrasing marks). However detailed the score may be it can only ever be a very rough representation of the eventual unbroken sound world (exemplified in Borges' short story "On the Exactitude of Science" where cartographers make a map so detailed that it is the same scale and size as the kingdom it is mapping).

Thus in order to bring all these individual actions into a single, unified sound world every time the player must create new relationships and connections between the events; as Pliny said "nothing which has been heard can be repeated with the same words". To turn the score from black dots and lines into a piece of music demands each and every player's creativity to fill in blanks.



This act of creating is very hard to define. Artists and scientists resort to metaphors to be able to describe the creative act. However, the product of creativity can be characterised, particularly in comparison to 'reproduction'. Reproduction is the copying of a 'whole in which an order (logic) has been previously observed'; whereas a created object is a 'whole in which there is new set of order (logic)'. This definition has been articulated many times by others, from composer Claude Debussy "Works of arts make rules, rules don't make works of art" to physicist David Bohm "Creativity is to redefine the order".

Artists create 'wholes' by defining the boundaries of the whole. For instance pictures are framed – anything within the frame is the artwork, anything outside is not. Plays in theatres are framed by proscenium arches and curtains which open and close while concerts are framed by applause: the time framed by applause becomes the complete temporal canvas on which a piece of music becomes a 'whole'.

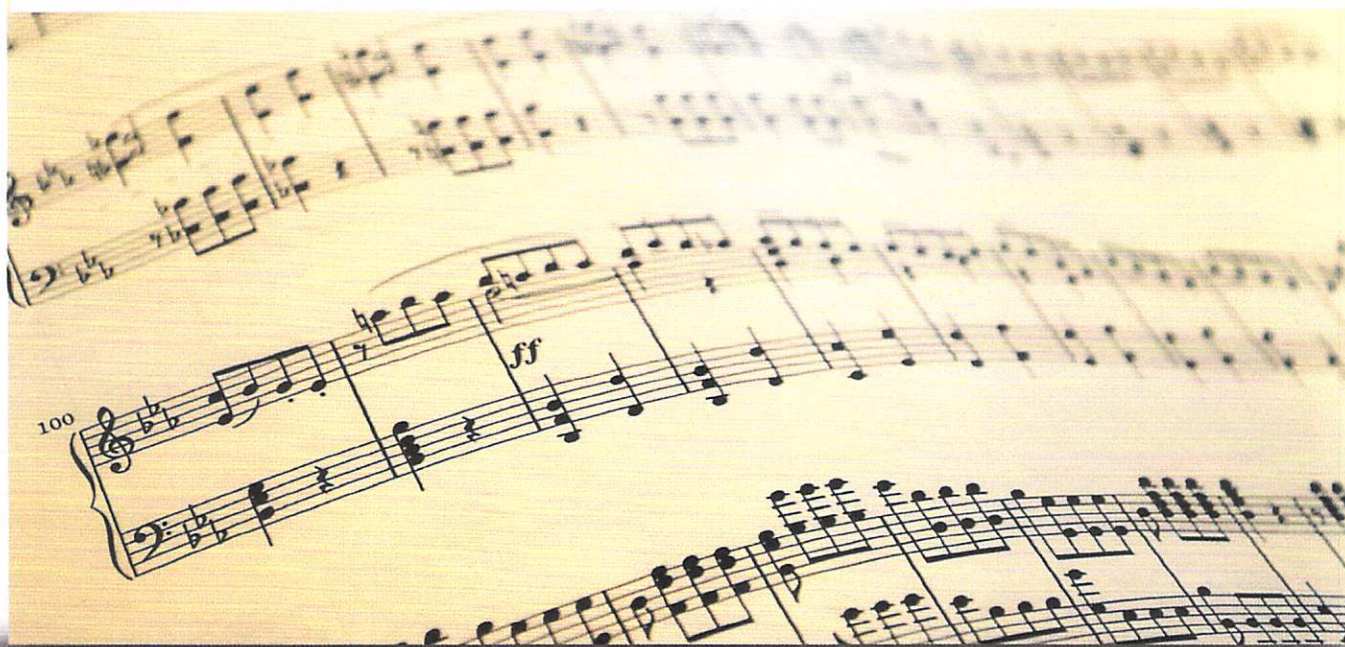
Being In the Future

Historically the scientific understanding of the world was that everything was comprised of smaller and smaller building blocks; first atoms, then Protons, Neutrons, Electrons until in theory we would eventually find the smallest building block out of which everything was made. However, with the dawn of Einstein's theory of general relativity and subsequent explorations into quantum mechanics scientists have come to view the universe as an undivided and connected whole. Within this undivided universe, creation can be characterised and defined as Movement.

In order to allow creativity to occur between people then Movement must occur in the form of Dialogue. Communication, and hence creativity, is easy to block if you hold a prejudiced view or if you need to impose your view on somebody else. However when communication is open and flowing a true Dialogue will occur.

The conductor allows creativity of the players by fitting into and not disturbing their communication channels. The conductor listens to the combined sound of all players, allowing them to monitor and receive information from all players at the same time. The conductor gives out information through gesture, a separate unique channel running simultaneously and continuously alongside the channels of all other players.

consciousness to analyse everything that has happened (the past) in order to guide the music that is about to happen with their gestures (the future). This simultaneous interaction with past, present and future is the source of the conductor's creativity. They are making the 'order' or 'logic' within the whole, which has to be a 'new order' by virtue of the fact that the conductor doesn't make any sound but only reacts to the sound of the orchestra. Whilst a



Contained within the very nature of a conductor's gestures is the key, which allows them to be creative. This is achieved through practicality and training, not supernatural means. The relationship of a conductor's gesture to the music is such that they have to pre-empt what is about to happen, most clearly seen when you compare a conductor to a dancer. Dancers make their gestures concurrently with the music in order for the music and gesture to be conjoined as a single art form; whereas the role of a conductor's gestures is not an inherent part of the performance. They are there in order to communicate with the players and give them direction about what is about to happen. Hence a conductor's gestures are always in advance of the sound of the music: they operate in the future of the music.

Simultaneously to making gestures, a conductor is listening intently to what is happening exactly in the moment (being in the present), and using their

conductor has a general plan and a map to follow in the form of a score, it is their sensitivity to what has happened already in the performance and their internal flexibility which allows them make what is about to happen congruent with what has happened.

Moments of Creativity

In order for creativity to happen Movement must be allowed to occur. Within groups this Movement is a form of Dialogue, which is present in orchestral performances through the simultaneous and open communication channels. A conductor participates in this communication without disturbing it and allows movement within themselves through simultaneous connection to past, present and future.

Creativity has become more and more important in the business world. In order to let creativity into a business, teams are split into smaller and smaller groups and everything is done to encourage freedom. However using the orchestra as a model it is possible to build complex structures which can amplify the creativity by implementing the right type of rules and frameworks. All of the structures and rules within an orchestra and between a conductor and an orchestra are of a type, which directs but doesn't block, allowing all members to be truly creative.

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Jonathan Berman, who was described as "*the charismatic British master of the baton*", is an award winning Symphony and Opera conductor who works in the USA and Europe. Future performances take him to Frankfurt, Basel, London, Ankara, Hong Kong and Turku, Finland.

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"Artists create 'wholes' by defining the boundaries of the whole."

However, leadership of a creative process (and this is certainly true in the case of the conductor) should not be expected always to result in a successful outcome! In the case of music, there are so many factors, which can destroy the fragile creative environment – from poor acoustics in which players struggle to hear each other, to nerves and tiredness, which can block people's listening or simply unwillingness to contribute in an open way.

The conductor strives all the time for everyone involved to be open, communicative, flexible and receptive while making their own individual contribution. When these all come together, the experience for the players, the conductor and the audience is unforgettable. These are the moments when classical music and orchestras justify their existence, they are what we long for whenever we step into a concert hall, and the search for these moments is what drives me as a conductor.

