AUDITION AND THE FIRST MONTHS IN THE ORCHESTRA

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Masteroppgaven er gjennomført som ledd i utdanningen ved Universitetet i Agder og er godkjent som del av denne utdanningen. Denne godkjenningen innebærer ikke at universitetet innestår for de metoder som er anvendt og de konklusjoner som er trukket.

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ABSTRACT

"Audition and the first months in the orchestra", written in English by Aleksa Toskov, is a master thesis from the University of Agder, Faculty of Fine Arts, Institute of Music, classical department in Kristiansand, Norway.

Key-words: Audition, Orchestra, Musician, Excerpts, Probation Period, Symphony

This master thesis is divided into five chapters:

- 1. In the first chapter I'm mostly dealing with the methods that I have chosen for the research of the study field of my master thesis.
- 2. In the second chapter I try to give the reader information about the based on the literature of both historical and scientific nature.
- 3. Third chapter is the main chapter of my master thesis and I am using the Interview method to explore the challenges I put for myself.
- 4. In the fourth chapter I continued the research from the previous chapter and explored some of the aspects based on my research question.
- 5. The last, fifth chapter is the shortest one and I used it for summing up conclusions I reached in the previous chapters, especially the third.

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During the two years of my studies at University of Agder, I had a privilege to meet good teachers. These studies opened new horizons in my musical life because at my previous universities I haven't been acquainted with the scientific work. I believe that I have improved some of the performance techniques during the first year of my studies and I would to use this opportunity to thank Professor **Jan Erik Petersen** for his lectures on the field of Baroque Music and his personal dedication.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

The purpose of writing about the audition for a professional orchestra lies in the fact that most of the musicians who finish their higher education begin thinking about getting a permanent job. Some of the aspects I'll try to discover are: When would be the best time to start applying, and which type of the orchestra is the most suitable for different musicians?

During my education I had the opportunity to go to auditions several times for respected orchestras and I haven't been informed about the challenges and possible circumstances that may occur during an audition. That's why I find it important to develop this subject in order to help new generation of young players especially considering that not much literature has been written about orchestral auditions. I hope that my research will be useful for further development of the field.

Considering that I'm a violinist, in the following chapter I'll briefly write about the string sections of the three most common types of orchestras.

1.2 The Research question

What characterizes the orchestra musicians' experiences with the audition and the life as employed in the first moths in the orchestra? A comparison of the experiences of orchestra musicians from a musical and social perspective.

During the preparation for my master thesis assignment, I've come to several possibilities for a research question. Even though majority of the auditions take place in a single day, there are many aspects which can be considered exploring.

The most interesting and perhaps least explored aspect for me are the actual process of the audition and also the very beginning of the employment. I'll concentrate on predicting and solving possible mistakes musicians might make at the audition day, how to avoid them and how to prepare best for winning a position, although it may be that the real fight starts straight after that initial one.

1.3 Methods

As I mentioned in the previous text, I can't rely entirely on the literature because of the lack of it. After making the interview with two orchestral musicians, I've become inspired to use tools like comparison and discussion. Impressions and observations based on my own experience from auditioning and the world of classical music in general have also been important.

Interview

I find it convenient to use the interview method in my master thesis research because musicians most commonly share experiences verbally during their careers. It is one of the ways to get to know peoples' impressions, hopes, fears, feelings, views, opinions...

In order to avoid the exposure of the candidates and keeping the interview confidential, I will address the interviewees by Musician A and Musician B.

The only information I indicate about the interviewees is that they have different sex (male and female), nationality, age (35 and 40), and the fact that they are both employees of a bigger symphony orchestra in Norway.

"An interviewer should take into account that the openness and intimacy of the interview may be seductive and can lead subjects to disclose information they may later regret."

(Kvale 2007, p. 28).

The most important challenge for an interviewer is to be objective and some of the ways to do succeed are:

- avoiding unnecessary personal questions
- putting a personal, if exists, relationship on the side
- making an interview clear, concise and as short as possible

If the interview gets longer than planned or the questions are based on too many personal facts, it may lead to quasi-therapeutic relationship¹ consequence between the people. However, the interviewer should be concrete with the questions asked and make them significant. I would like to point out the need for understanding the necessity of an in-depth interview and its distinction from a simple conversation. There should be number of stages that an interviewer prepares for; the relationship between the two begins at the very moment they meet and the job of the interviewer is to create a relaxed atmosphere so that the participant can feel free. A casual conversation turns into a required in-depth interview² after the short time when the interviewer realizes that it's the right moment to begin with his investigation. The first questions are recommended to be simple and supposable with no real significance to

¹ (Kvale 2007, p. 29)

² "In broad terms, the researcher's task is to ease the interviewee down from the everyday, social level to a deeper level at which they can together focus on a specific topic or set of topics." (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, p.144)

the final interview result but with the purpose of getting a spontaneous answer from the interwee e.g. details about his job, family, basic facts of life...

The interview questions provide the best result when presented simple and understandable to the interviewee. Beside the written and prepared questions, there is a possibility for extension of the questionnaire according to the interviewers' persistence or curiosity influenced by indecision of an interviewee. This is done in order to get more precise descriptions of the already asked question but it requires an active listening. After the interview is finished it's too late to proceed with any investigation and the best way to process a questionnaire is to record an interview if possible and use the situation to create eventual, additional questions at the spot.

"...analogy with chess, where each move by the opponent changes the structure of the chessboard, and the player has to consider the multiple implications of the opponent's move before making his next move, anticipating the future moves of the opponent..."

1.4 Literature review

The books that I have read helped me as a starting point of my research. Apart from books, I had the opportunity to watch a superb and admirable DVD "Trip to Asia" featuring Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle. Another valuable source was the internet and especially web site of the Oxford University Press and several orchestras.

1. Becoming an Orchestral Musician by Richard Davis; the author of the book is a principal flutist of the BBC Philharmonic and also a Senior Lecturer and an orchestral coach in the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. His book is of great importance for my research. Davis also used the interview as a

³ (Kvale 2007, p. 64)

main method in his book and tried to share and discuss his own experiences as a professional musician. The book was warmly welcomed by his colleagues in the BBC Philharmonic. It is the first comprehensive guide for professional musicians on how to succeed in joining an orchestra or ensemble and it has been described as 'an unbeatable-value master-class' by Classical Music Magazine.

- 2. *Rethinking Music* by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist; another book which is phenomenal musical study and it was introduced to me by prof. Knut Tønsberg during the beginning of my studies at University of Agder. This book and *Aesthetics* brought my research to another, hopefully higher level.
- 3. *Estetika* or *Aesthetics* by Milan Uzelac; the author was my teacher of the subject philosophy at the University of Arts in Novi Sad, Serbia. He has been teaching musicians for decades and that inspired him to write this book and concentrate on the aspects of taste and other aesthetical disciplines.

The following four books were particularly important on my master thesis research in the Chapter 2: *The Orchestra, Anatomy of the orchestra and Chamber Music.*

- 4. *The Orchestra* by Michael Hurd; the author is a composer and also the author of several other books, mostly biographies and historical books. The book offers serious historical facts about the development of the orchestras.
- 5. Anatomy of the orchestra by Norman Del Mar; this is an extremely helpful book. Considering that I have limited my research to the string section of the orchestra, I'm using just a small part (section I) of this fascinating book which has been written by one of the greatest acknowledged authorities on the orchestra.
- 6. *Chamber Music* by Homer Ulrich; this book is a profound historical research of the chamber music during centuries and it helped me with some comparisons explored in the Chapter 2.

7. *Opera the Basics* by Denise Gallo; as the title says, this is a book of basic information about the opera and I found it useful for my research in terms of understanding the unique musical life and role of the orchestra in the opera house.

Finally, two books which I used for describing the most important method for my master thesis – the interview.

- 8. *Doing Interviews* by Steinar Kvale; the author of this book has been one of the important references for certain chapters in the following book and I found his book very understandable and clear. He is a professor at the University in Aarhus in Denmark and his research is of remarkable significance at the field of interviews.
- 9. Qualitative research practice by Ritchie and Lewis; this book has been edited by mentioned authors and it's actually a project of a National Centre for Social Research in London. It is a total of twelve contributors together with two editors. The methods described have been developed over several decades and it was extremely helpful to me for setting standards of my interview questions. Both this and the previous book are from the same publisher SAGE Publications Ltd.

CHAPTER 2

ORCHESTRA

In this chapter I will give a short description of string sections in some of the orchestras of the world of classical music.

If pursuing an orchestral career, there are many possibilities for a musician to find his place in a particular orchestra. Not every musician is fond of all the types of orchestras and some might audition for only symphony orchestra because they may find performing music in a pit of the opera house less attractive. Some of the reasons for choosing an orchestra could be after getting to know the working conditions because not all the orchestras have the same working hours and this could be essential to people with families.

Never-the-less, not most of the players audition for any orchestra and even though the market of the musicians has been increasing during the centuries, getting the job seems to be a tough process now-a-days especially considering the demanding of the audition and the probation period which I'll be discussing later in the thesis.

2.1. Symphony orchestra

"Today we talk quite happily of the 'symphony orchestra' – quite forgetting that it can give a perfectly satisfactory concert without playing a single symphony!" (Hurd 1981, p. 23).

Why is it called a Symphony orchestra then? Even though church music was dominating and opera was important, in the end of the 17th century orchestral music was developing at the courts in all the great countries of Europe at the time. There were many musical forms that the orchestras brought to the centre of attention. One of

the first successful ideas was the *Suite* ⁴ from which all the leading musical forms of the 18th century developed. The particular term *Sinfonia* came from Italy and it was used for a little suite called *Overture* in other countries.

It was basically an orchestral part of the opera and it took time for the *Sinfonia* to become an independent work. After its constant development, a need for the Symphony was born and this musical form has dominated the world of orchestral music ever since.

It was the 19th century that brought the tremendous increasing in size of an orchestra. Some of the first composers that were fond of this were Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949). Despite the fact that the wind sections of the orchestra had modification in terms of adding new instruments, the string section was constantly enlarging and became a strong and unique part of the symphony orchestra.

The important characteristic of the string instrument technique reflects in vibrato and it gives the ensemble a unique colour which may indicate the sound of the whole orchestra itself.

Other segments and reasons for the string section being powerful are sudden appearances of the virtuoso soloists in the begging of the 18th century who directly influenced the fast development of the bowing and fingering techniques. Famous Italian violinists at the time were Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), and cellist Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805). At this time the idea of the symphony orchestra was still far away and the main orchestral activities were in the string arrangement with a cembalo and occasionally woodwinds.



Baroque violin

⁴ "a collection of movements which contrast with each other in key, speed rhythm mood." (Hurd 1981, p. 23)

I would like to point out an interesting difference in names for the strings in European most spoken languages: English – *Strings*, German – *Streichinstrumente*,

French – Les Cordes, Spanish – Las Cuerdas, Italian – Gli Archi. ⁵

2.2 Chamber orchestra

The chamber orchestra is a term most usually used for a string orchestra with the addition of wind or rarely other instruments. Even though chamber music originally came as a term for playing music in a smaller hall (Italian *camera* – room), now-adays concert halls are getting bigger and it's not likely that an ensemble consisted of several people can make sound as powerful as the orchestra.

On the other hand, some symphony orchestras give regular concerts with only their entire string section and they call this section – *Chamber orchestra*. One of the interesting ideas appeared in Trondheim Symphony Orchestra⁶; they have created a successful and critically acclaimed chamber orchestra by combining the members of the Symphony Orchestra, professional musicians and students.

But what does this mean? Has the chamber music changed its form of supposable being an intimate music activity taking place in a room?

I find this issue very interesting considering that the answer might be in the fact that in the 20th century name *chamber* is not addressed to the size of the hall where the music is to be performed but to the group of people who are actually playing it. Here we can see that some terms from the past change their meaning together with the change of the audience requirements in the way. The advantage of the chamber orchestra is that by cutting some stands or adding few, the orchestra can be flexible and modify itself according to the size of the hall.

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⁵ "The Italian term for the string group presents a curious anomaly. Although the word for string is *corda* (similar to the French) the section as a whole is called not *le corde* but *gli archi*, i.e. not the strings, but the bows." (Del Mar 1983, p. 30)

⁶ http://www.trondheimsolistene.no/#about (Accessed March 29th 2010)

I will briefly analyse some of the examples of how the idea of a modern chamber orchestra was created. In case of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) solo concertos', the accompaniment consists of a string ensemble with most usually four wind players (for instance two horns and two oboes). We can clearly see that Mozart wanted a smaller orchestra for a concerto and that he didn't use the entire woodwind instruments like in his symphonies. One of the reasons could be that he was especially fond of wind ensembles and wrote music for this group of instruments apart from the strings. After Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827), and undoubtfully influenced by him, composers dedicated themselves to writing music for the symphony orchestra.

Some of the attempts in romanticism like Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) led to the birth of modern chamber orchestra. Tchaikovsky wrote his *Serenade for Strings* and indicated that he wanted a big ensemble, or logically the string section of the symphony orchestra. Another popular work by Tchaikovsky, string sextet *Souvenir de Florence* op.70 is frequently performed by string orchestras even though some find it as one of his least successful works. ⁷

"...countless string ensembles have come into being and have acquired international reputations without the need for more than the occasionally co-opted wind or timpani players in order to add a particular work for some special concert or programme." (Del Mar 1983, p. 136)

2.4 Opera orchestra

The main difference between an opera orchestra and other is that that players in this case sit in the orchestra pit and some musicians don't consider this aspect sufficiently attractive. The reason for this setup is that spectators can concentrate on the activity at the stage. Most of the opera orchestras now-a-days perform symphony concerts in their theatres or at other venues. I find this aspect important both because of the professional and health reasons; the acoustics in the pit doesn't reflect the real sound

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⁷ (Ulrich 1966, p. 32)

that the audience receives. That's why the players in the pit most of their working career have a partly wrong impression of the sound that they are producing and any stage concert activity helps for experiencing the actual sound of the concert hall.

Other reason why the opera orchestra could be a bad choice is because of the possibly bad conditions in the pit in the terms of light. Every desk has its own lamp but the vision is undoubtfully reduced, so people who are already prescribed a high dioptre should avoid continuous playing in the orchestra pit.

The important person in the orchestra pit is a principal violinist or a concertmaster. Before 19th Century, the opera orchestras had no conductor and the sections were tuned by a concertmaster. This important position has been acknowledged ever since with applause from the audience when entering the pit ⁸. The role of the concertmaster is still important both in the string section and the entire orchestra. Another fact is that each group of the string section have their leaders and assistants of leaders. The size of the string section varies in order of which opera is performed; for instance baroque and classical operas didn't have demanding of a big number of musicians in the strings as the romantic and later operas.



London Musici orchestra at Sadlers Wells Theatre in London in November 2008

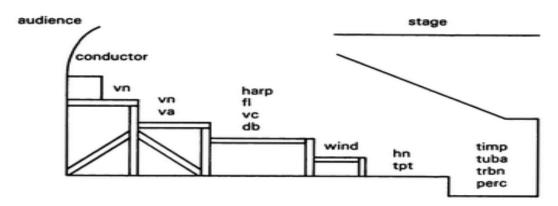
⁸ (Gallo 2006, p. 69)

Composer who went even further in "hiding" the orchestra was the famous German opera composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Even though the main architect disagreed, Wagner supervised the construction of a famous *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth, Germany.

"The Bayreuth Festival prides itself on making reputations rather than profiting from them." ⁹

Due to the expensive demands from Wagner, the building had huge financial deficit for years but it kept running opera performances and the Festival which first took place in 1876 has been held annually until the present days. The musicians are carefully selected from the best and most renowned opera orchestras in Germany, mostly concertmasters and leaders of sections when it comes to strings. This is just one of the facts that testify about the significance of the Bayreuth Festival.

"...he had the orchestra repositioned from its customary place into a sunken area in front of and partly beneath the proscenium. Orchestra and audience were separated by a low wall, and the source of the opera's music was now essentially invisible to the spectators." ¹⁰



13. Cross-section of the orchestra pit at Bayreuth, c1900: after A. Lavignac, 'The Music Dramas of Wagner and his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth' (New York, 1902)

⁹http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40950?q=Bayreuth+Festspielhaus&search=quick&pos=18&_start=1#firsthit (Accessed April 12th 2010)

http://www.bikwil.com/Vintage10/Wagner-Innovator.html (Accessed April 16th 2010)

CHAPTER 3

AUDITION

"One outstanding and curious feature of the string timbre is that it cannot be imitated in any way." (Del Mar 1983, p. 136)

What is an audition? How long does it last? What kind of experience is it?

Those are just few of the significant questions that I will try to provide the answers to. Third chapter of my master thesis is dedicated to exploring and discussing the aspects of the audition, its process, personal impressions of the candidates, inevitable social experiences and results of each of the rounds.

Most of the material that I have used as a base for my research comes from the book of Richard Davis – *Becoming an Orchestra Musician*. Despite the fact that Davis is not one of the leading scientists but a professional orchestra musician and a lecturer, his work made a great impact to me and I find his texts extremely deep and meaningful.

Although it didn't happen for me to encounter any other book which focuses directly and only to the auditioning process, I have used other books in order to be able to compare and analyse the actual audition, as well as the social and aesthetical segments of it, which I find to be important.

3.1 Applying

After completing my interview, and various books and articles I read, I have come to the conclusion that musicians mostly start applying for the auditions already during their formal studies. One of my interviewees' even got the job as a student! Of course, there are those less brave or perhaps less interested who wait until they finish their higher education.

"Don't wait until you are perfect, because you will end up waiting for ever." (Davis 2004. p. 55)

I don't think that waiting is necessarily a bad choice, and everyone has different reasons for applying sooner or later in life, although it should begin latest by the age of thirty considering that in the recent times orchestras have the age limit for the applicants.

This applies mostly to the European and North American orchestras and the limit is normally thirty five years of age. The culture of orchestral playing is still developing in many parts of the world.

3.1.2 Requirements

Beside some basic requirements from the orchestra such as the material to be sent proving for instance nationality, date of birth, contact details, CV ¹¹ or musical career information, the inevitable part are the orchestral excerpts. Some of the orchestras require a money deposit due to their inconvenient experiences with those candidates who applied but decided not to attend at the last minute.

Since there are usually very many applications, it is recommendable to send a shorter CV because it would take too much time for the panel to process all the documentation from the applicants. CV should include the crucial facts about the orchestra experience of the applicant and this is normally clearly indicated in the list of important application details. Lacking the proof for mentioned required information, some musicians choose not to apply but they need to do it regardless of their supposable little orchestral experience.

"There are some orchestras that will only consider listening to players with vast experience, and others that will hear almost anybody."

(Davis 2004, p. 54)

But what does experience mean anyway and how can we evaluate it? The candidates are expected to have played in an orchestra of any kind before they apply for a job. My first employee was offered a job after the first audition despite the fact that the experience segment was lacking. Even though my second interviewee succeeded at the very first audition, it took a fairly lot of time and freelancing before the last audition took part. This shows that there are other types of auditions and that possibilities for

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⁴ Latin - Curriculum Vitae

getting valuable experience are to be encountered. I'll discuss about that later in this chapter. My conclusion is that experience is important but not crucial when the decisions are made by the audition panel about who will win the position.

In the audition requirements, the orchestral excerpts are the important aspect. Selection of the excerpts is based on the panels' expectations. The average number of the announced excerpts is around ten, but the number can be smaller and up to hundred.

The number varies according to the requirements and type of the position that the candidate applies for. Wind players, percussionists and leading positions of string players usually have much more demanding excerpts then the applicants for other tutti string positions. The reason for this is that later in the employee their job is going to be much more complicated and demanding, professionally speaking. They are treated as soloists and their salaries are higher accordingly to that.

When it comes to the excerpts, both of my interviewee' found them reasonably difficult. One of the obstacles I have encountered during preparation for some auditions was that the orchestral excerpts weren't clear and sometimes I even couldn't recognize certain notes.

It is unclear in this example whether an applicant should play the above or the under part of the excerpt. This can be confusing and it's recommendable to prepare equally both parts.

The material that the orchestra provides is usually from their archive and it's been used for the needs of the orchestra.

Written bowings, encircled dynamics, fingerings and other marks can affect the clear vision of the printed music and by that make it more difficult to learn:

[&]quot;An ensemble of musicians, in contrast to a soloist or group of soloists, in a concerto". http://www.thefreedictionary.com/tutti (Article accessed April 13th 2010)



Mahler's Third Symphony, Excerpt from the Second Movement

In the following example, there are not too many added marks by hand, duration and placement of all the notes is visible. The only inquiry could be the written bowings and fingerings.

In the audition requirements is not specified that the candidate is obligated to use the exact bowings or fingerings written because it's a matter of a personal taste but this is an open issue and by that it represents a possible confusion of the candidate.

2.2) Brahms: Symphony No 4, 3rd movement



Brahms's Fourth Symphony, Excerpt from the Third Movement

To avoid this possible inconvenience, apart from dedicated preparation for the audition, one should listen carefully to the entire recordings of the works (if recorded), because the excerpts are just a small part of a big picture. Seldom, the candidate is expected to prepare the whole piece of music but mostly the excerpts are to be found on a single page or a few. In this way, the panel avoids losing valuable time to listen to all the candidates even though jumping from one excerpt to another is a challenge especially in case of different stylistic period or speed of the excerpt.

It's recommendable to take some time between the excerpts in order to prepare for each one because candidates usually get only one chance to play them. Preparing the orchestral excerpts could be difficult due to many recordings of the piece and the variety of speed, volume and other characteristics. Consulting an orchestra member would be a smart choice when doubting about a certain excerpt.

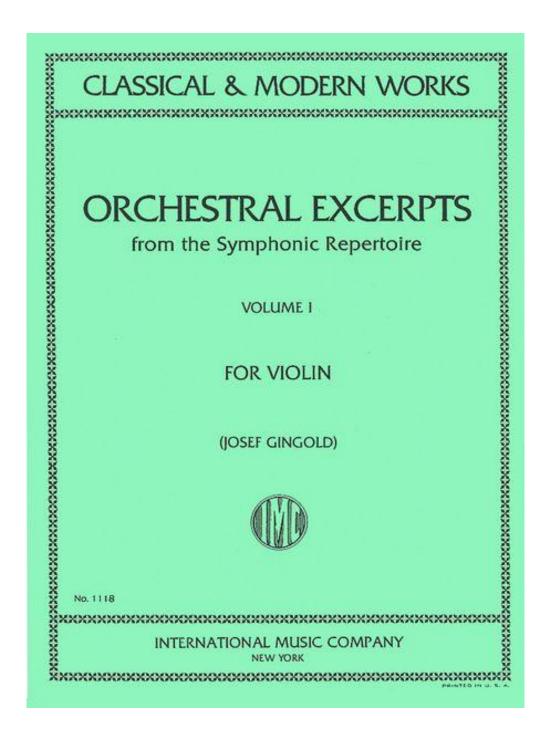
Beside the excerpts, which are announced to the candidates two weeks in prior, candidates are normally obliged to play in addition some solo pieces of their own choice or to choose one from the several announced. Those pieces are in most cases standard repertoire of the particular instrument and they are always the same at the auditions worldwide. In case of violin audition, the required piece of music is a Mozart Violin Concerto. For the particular audition that I have interviewed the musicians, musician A said "Orchestral excerpts were difficult but I was practicing them for a long time". On the other hand, musician B said "Some excerpts were more difficult than other, but in general they were similar to the previous auditions I took part in".

How is it possible to practice the excerpts for a long time when they are announced only two weeks in prior to the audition?

In his book, Davis indicates that the excerpts are nearly the same ¹³ at the auditions and that musicians should start preparing them long before applying, like in the case of my interviewee Musician A. The answer that I got from the Musician B shows that the required excerpts have already been encountered in other places, but there were other ones. This means that a musician can find the literature long before the audition, but he never knows which exact excerpts will be announced at the short notice.

¹³ (Davis 2004, p. 68)

Luckily, in the second half of the twentieth century, there have been published various books with common excerpts for orchestral auditions and the some of the most appreciated and useful are "Test Pieces for Orchestral Auditions Violin", edited by Oswald Kästner, Schott Music, "Orchestral Violinist", edited by Rodney Friend, Boosey & Hawkes, London and three editions of "Orchestral Excerpts from the Symphonic Repertoire", by Joseph Gingold, International Music Company, New York.



3.1.3 Audition day

The auditions are most commonly scheduled at ten a clock in the morning and the candidates are expected to arrive one hour before so that someone from the orchestra management may give them short information about the audition. At this meeting the numbers are being drawn in order to establish the exact time of each candidates' audition. After this, the candidates are given a possibility to use some of the rooms in the orchestra building. Not everyone gets their own room and there are examples of dissatisfaction:

"It wasn't a proper room, it was a space with a wall missing and I didn't feel comfortable. There was enough time for warming up."

Those are the impressions of my interviewee Musician A. From my personal experience, the orchestras always provided the candidates a room, but the number of applicants in the room varied from two to even thirty! In case of my interviewee Musician B, the best possible solution occurred because no other candidate showed up at the audition, the proper room was available and the warm up time was sufficient. In case of a high number of candidates in the same room, musicians' concentration and psychological preparation for the audition may be unbalanced. Listening to others and evaluating their warming up may be an obstacle to maintaining reasonable judgement about personal playing and sudden doubting in its value.

All this may lead to the exaggeration of a notorious and almost unavoidable component of every audition – nerves. The pressure is rising due to many possible circumstances, and audition slowly becomes a mental warfare. Just thinking that in those few minutes of the audition, your entire future career can be determined, may bring a candidate to an excitement. Although being nervous usually affects the sound in a bad way, there are examples of musicians giving more qualities in the terms of emotions that they wouldn't create in other performing occasions.

Musician B believes that the result of the audition depends a lot on the expectations and purpose of making the audition in the first place¹⁴, in this case because of the personal reasons.

What will happen if I make a mistake?

The thought that haunts every audition candidate; in this case, suggestions from Davis are not to be influenced by the mistake but to keep playing and making constantly better impression. If the rest of the audition goes superb, one might even benefit on that mistake¹⁵ by showing the panel his determination for success and musical survival at the audition.

3.1.4 Rounds

Auditions consist of several rounds. The first round at the auditions for major orchestras is held in a room, occasionally concert hall, and the candidate is separated from the panel by a wall made especially for the audition. To make it more professional, the candidates are even expected to be completely muted during auditions so that panel can make objective decisions based on playing by avoiding the accidental recognizing of the candidates' voice. This applies to the first round only and the other common name for the mentioned wall is screen. The important part of the audition is a pianist, who is normally provided by the orchestra. According to many of my colleagues and my own experience, the pianists are not always good players, so a candidate needs to be prepared for everything. After the first round, which is normally the shortest round, the results are announced and the selected candidates, if any, succeed to the second round. Before the second round there some member of the panel approaches the successful candidates and informs them about the expectations from the panel in terms of pieces that they wish to listen to.

Some candidates are not satisfied with the decisions of the jury so they demand the answers and reasons for not being selected for the following round or a position. This might be complicated because the jury and some orchestras deserve the right not

¹⁴ "I tried to do my best but it wasn't crucial if I made it or not because I already had a job. If you want a job too much it affects your playing, it's easier if you can mentally find out the way to overcome the fear."

¹⁵ (Davis 2004, p. 74)

to give any explanations of the jury's decisions. It is smart to ask anyway because the information might be valuable for next attempts. My interviewee Musician A said that people were discussing the audition results before they were announced based on their impressions. That led to the decision of Musician A to be isolated from those gossips and assumptions:

"I stayed away from other people because I find it disturbing to sit around and talk too much. The first conversation I had was after the first round."

Why isolating?

As I was discussing in the previous paragraph, musician needs to reduce the inevitable level of stress to a minimum. Isolating from the crowd of candidates allows a musician to focus on the requirements for the audition. My interviewee Musician B says that the audition day was long and stressful, even though there were no other candidates. This indicates that in a situation of many applicants, one should find his piece and place for resting and preparation.

The process of getting used to the auditions takes time; with this process also increases the ability of controlling the nerves better as well as the emotions¹⁶.

One of the important, but not always required round is surely chamber music. Together with the orchestral excerpts the sheet music of certain work is sent and if the candidate succeeds to this particular round, he joins few members of the orchestra and together they make an open rehearsal and evaluate the musician and his reactions and skills of adapting to the new group of musicians. Except of chamber music round, there are other possibilities such as first sight music round. Giving the applicant little time and testing the results gives the panel a clear picture how talented is a candidate for fast learning of an unknown piece of music. Sometimes orchestras have unexpected projects and there is no time for regular preparation. Those types of rounds create additional adrenalin and real challenge in the auditioning process.

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¹⁶ (Davis 2004, p. 74)

3.1.5 Panel

Maybe the most objective audition panel is organized by famous one of the most successful orchestras in the world – The Berlin Philharmonic. No matter which instrument is auditioning, every member of the orchestra needs to attend and evaluate the candidate. Usually, the panel consists of the chief conductor, concertmaster, section leaders and possibly some members of the management. Other orchestra employees are welcomed to listen but they have no right to vote and participate in discussions. Musician B is a frequent member of the panel but Musician A was only participating at auditions as a listener.

What does a panel expect to hear?

The answer was given by the Musician B:

"The jury will normally talk about what their mutual expectations are, in my case those are: intonation, musicality, rhythm and understanding of style."

Musician A stated the same expectations, but also an interesting aspect of wanting to hear the sound of a candidate as it was the person with whom would later be created the music together.

If the member of the panel is expected to evaluate a candidate playing a different instrument from his own, the same goals should be set, but there is a task of maintaining objectivity. One of the possibilities to approaching the reasonable and justified expectations has been described in the following quotation:

"I have played all the excerpts in their context, and so I see the relevant orchestral colours in my mind during each section, and imagine how I should blend with the other instruments." (Davis 2004, p. 65)

Having the opportunity to listen to the various auditions, Musician A is discussing and pointing out another aspect; Musician A listened to the audition where four acquaintances and colleagues played at the same audition and none of them succeeded to the following round.

Quite surprisingly, at the next audition which took place at the similar period of time, all four of them succeeded to the following round. The explanation for this could be found in the fact that all the players were from the same school and teacher so the conclusion of the Musician A is that it's of high importance to the candidate who is actually sitting in the audition panel and that the decisions may be contrary just according to that selection of the panel. It's not likely to believe that all the candidates were demotivated for auditioning at the same day or that all of them had fantastic results by chance at the other audition.

I would like to point out the significance of being a member of an orchestra panel by explaining challenges and complexity of that role and requirement of the ethical principles of the individual.

TASTE

Apart from social, psychological and musical aspects of an audition, I find it relevant to write about the philosophical segment.

As many other of his contemporaries, ancient philosopher Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) was discussing aesthetical sensation of the individual when observing a piece of art and its' particularity. The hidden sense which Cicero (106 BC- 43 BC) claims that separates well from evil, not argumenting the real reasons, is the ability which in the eighteenth century was metaphorically referred as "taste" ¹⁷ (my translation). It this century philosophers had the idea to search for a solution, due to a lack of attempts of defining the aesthetical category *beautiful*, by changing the theory of *beautiful* with the theory of *taste*. It was believed that taste is a feeling which appreciates anything justified by sense, so it becomes the priceless help in distinguishing truth from goodness. Ability of experiencing the feeling *beautiful* is a matter of change and diversity, as well as of the individuals that possess that feeling. That's why in order to develop feeling of beautiful, when thoroughly evaluating art, it is necessary to set the standards of experiencing that feeling in order to distinguish it from every-day sensations.

¹⁷ "Skriveno čulo za koje Ciceron kaže da razlikuje dobro od zla ne oslanjajući se na prave razloge, jeste sposobnost koju su u XVIII stoleću metaforično nazvali "ukusom";" (Uzelac 2003, p. 198)

Kant (1724-1804) went much further in exploring this idea and making a conclusion that it's impossible to judge objectively about anything only by feelings. He has opposed to the other philosophers by believing that good taste is not necessarily connected with feeling of beautiful. On the contrary of feeling, when discussed about the good taste, or when it comes to a certain object that I find beautiful, I don't interpret my individual appreciation, but also the appreciation of the others ¹⁸ (my translation). The conclusion is that Kant believed that taste is a common feeling which is justified and appears only in communication with others, and never by individual perception of art or a piece of art. That's how it prevents the individual from rising above the limitations of his personal characteristics and expectations.

3.1.6 Results

"...recent survey of business interviews: 90% of decisions as to whether the interviewee would or would not get the job, were made within the first thirty seconds of their entering the room." (Davis 2004, p. 63)

In the case of orchestra auditions there is an obvious exception because the interview is at the end of the auditioning process. When I asked my interviewees how they were told about the audition results, both said that it was a short meeting with the members of the panel and that they basically congratulated them on a successful audition. This is understandable considering that the panel is usually tired after the auditions and they don't feel the need to acquaint the candidate about the particular reasons for offering him a job.

The actual "interview" is presented by showing personal musical skills. Both of my interviewees stated that from their experience the decisions of the panel don't need to be unanimous in order for the candidate to be offered a job. However, Musician B points out that if supposable some of the members disliked the candidate, other members need to show a lot of determination and provide reasons for a positive impression they experienced. This means that even though different opinions are

¹⁸ "Za razliku od osećaja, kada je reč o dobrom ukusu, odnosno, kada je reč o nekom objektu koji nazivam lepim, tada ja ne tumačim svoje individualno dopađanje, već i dopađanje drugih." (Uzelac 2003, p. 202)

tolerated, majority of the members need to be for or against accepting the candidate so that the decision can be made successfully.

3.2 Orchestral Academy

Many orchestras make special auditions for students in order to give them a chance to get valuable experience in a professional group of players. On the other hand, some universities have a special agreement with certain orchestras and they offer auditions for orchestral academies. One of the leading German academies on this field is Thuringian Orchestra Academy¹⁹. In this case successful applicants become students of the university and beside a continuous engagement in the orchestra they are obliged to attend lessons at the university where they are commonly taught chamber music, individual instrumental lessons or rarity theoretical subjects.

At the end of the orchestral studies, each student receives an official Diploma and this may be useful for the resume of the musician if pursued a career of an orchestral musician.

Other kind of cooperation between an orchestra and university can be an agreement in which is stated that students must participate in certain number of projects per year organized by the orchestra. This usually appears at smaller universities with limited number of students who are unable to form an orchestra due to the lack of instruments at the university. One of the examples is the agreement between University of Agder (UIA) and Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra since UIA offers education in following orchestral instruments – violin, cello, flute and clarinet. If there were viola and double bass students, it would have been possible to create a chamber orchestra and even, with some help of other universities or professional music players, a small symphony orchestra.

However, if the particular orchestra has a programme called orchestral academy, the candidate who passed the audition is treated as an equal member of the orchestra.

 $^{^{19}\} http://www.hfm-weimar.de/v1/studium/orchesterakademie/seite.php\ (Accessed\ April\ 09^{th}\ 2010)$

What is the difference between a full time member and a newcomer?

The purpose of the orchestral academy is to allow the young (the academies usually have age limit for the applicants which varies between 25 and 28 years of age) player to be a part of the orchestra and to participate at the rehearsals and perform concerts together with the members of the orchestra. Being a student of the orchestral academy can be convenient for a young musician because there is always a financial aid offered from the orchestra. The difference is, though, that the salary of a regular employee is much higher than the fee offered to the new member. The reason for this is that employees' play most of the projects organized by the orchestra and the participant of orchestral academy is obliged only to a carefully chosen certain number of projects.

The other difference is that the student is seated in the end of the section that he plays in

and this aspect may be significant. When it comes to winds and percussion, the musicians are all soloists and their instruments are treated like that no matter who plays them - a student or a professional musician. Having their own score, each of them has a tremendous role in the process of playing certain piece of music. The strings, however, are much larger group of people and orchestra's manager rotates the musicians, with the exception of concertmasters and their assistants, so that everyone gets a chance to sit in different positions and with different colleagues. This doesn't apply to students of the orchestral academy and they are seated on last stands of the sections. Students, though, get opportunities to be in the spotlight in projects that are organized specially for them.

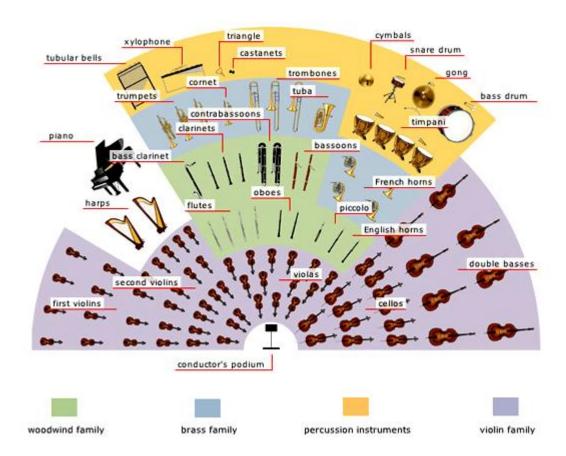
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy²⁰ students for instance are obliged to perform chamber music concerts every semester and knowing that their colleagues from the orchestra are evaluating them, they prepare seriously for those performances.

Duration of study at orchestral academy varies between one and four semesters.

After this period the orchestra is not obliged to hire the musician although the connection usually becomes strong between the student and the orchestra.

http://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/berliner-philharmoniker/orchestra-academy/educational-concept/ (Accessed April 05th 2010)

Beside orchestra academy, there are other ways how musicians get possibilities to participate in orchestras' projects. The most common ones are successful players who proved themselves at international competitions and a solid recommendation from a well known and respected player.



3.3 Extra work auditions

There are two ways the auditions are organized for the extra work in the orchestra, either the musician sends an official letter to the management requiring an audition and letting the orchestra know about him being available for projects or orchestra announces official audition.

Every orchestra has a list of names which are potential extra players. Necessity for those musicians comes on various occasions, mostly due to the sudden sickness of a regular member of the orchestra. Some other examples are the requirements from the composer himself about the size of the orchestra.

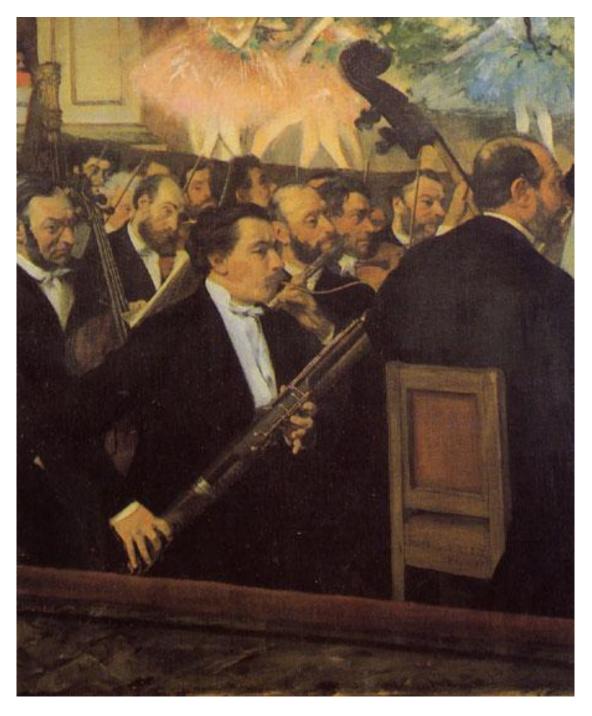
"For example, all the Mahler symphonies need extra wind, brass and percussion players since he wrote for a larger-than-average orchestra." (Davis 2004, p. 79)

Famous former conductor of The Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Maris Jansons was famous for making double rehearsals, both regular and special rehearsals where he would practice the entire programme with the extra players in order to be assured that all the musicians are doing their best. Other conductors stick to the rehearsal plan and don't demand additional rehearsals with the substitutes or extra players.

Before the romantic period in classical music, composers didn't specify the size of an orchestra because of the fact that it took time for orchestral music to gradually develop into serious concert activity. Also, generally in previous centuries there was much smaller number of musicians worldwide. Now-a-days the orchestra's manager knows exactly which number of players is appointed for each project and accordingly to that the extra musicians get the occasional invitations.

CHAPTER 4

PROBATION PERIOD AND LIFE IN THE ORCHESTRA



Edgar Degas, The Orchestra at the Opera House, c.1870

In this chapter I will concentrate on the professional and social aspects of a musicians' life when being accepted to the orchestra.

After passing the audition, most of the orchestras offer to a musician a contract for the probation period (or trial) in order to use this period of time to evaluate him on different levels. Interview is an important segment of hiring someone for many jobs in the world but when it comes to the orchestra, giving a job to someone new is just the first step in the long process of discovering someone's personality and musical abilities. The probation period usually lasts six months, but it may be shorter and longer according to the results. If the orchestra is still not positive about offering the musician a permanent contract, but they like his playing nevertheless, there is an option to make a new short termed contract after which a final decision can be hopefully made. Both of my interviewees have been given a six months probation period and they have justified the orchestras' expectations.

Respect and Adaptation

"Real ensemble players have the ability to play in exact unison with you, with a colour that blends together with your own to produce a new sound" (Davis 2004, p. 85)

This is the result that every orchestra hopes for and expects from a newcomer.

Musician A was experiencing the excitement of a probation period several times in a career. The first and the last seem to have fairly different impacts and complications to my interviewee and the first inquiry indicates a desire of a young player to prove the achieved qualities:

"I didn't know whether to show all I have or try to be humble by not getting in anyone's way"

It is a paradox to say that we get into someone's way if we are meant to create the music together. The Musician A referred to the inquiry which is explained by Davis in the previous quotation, and in order to achieve that ability, it takes years of experience. On the other hand, he indicates that fresh new player may give different energy of playing and by that motivate the section or even the entire orchestra²¹. I don't think this equation can survive if pursued deliberately and it obviously needs to be a spontaneous personal characteristic.

That's why Musician A, as still a young player, wasn't sure of personal musical capacities and didn't quite know how to find the place in the section. During the other probation period, after many years had passed, Musician A had different difficulty which reflected in the unclearness and lack of initial agreement about the particular position in the orchestra. The management had different idea and the musician was fighting for own principles so it took some time in order to establish the position and to achieve mutual understanding. Musician B doesn't recall having any problems during any of probation periods. The difference between the interviewees in this segment is that Musician B had much more free lancing experience than the Musician A and that was the reason for adopting fast to the orchestra and a particular section. However, even though professionally there were no surprises, Musician B found the very first probation period very demanding in terms of working hours and the second in terms of the music that was required for performances.

Orchestras have different working hours²² and this may result with a possible inconvenient and unexpected tiredness of the musician. Being professional matters and accordingly to that, one should always be fresh at the rehearsals, concerts or other orchestral activities. The difference between a professional orchestra musician and most of the other professions is that a musician is obligated to perform evening concerts while most of the people rest or use this time for entertainment and other activities.

What is respect and how do we show it and deserve it?

Once again, I have encountered a social issue; in case that a musician get's accepted for the leading position in the section, he may need to lead certain rehearsals and by that have the responsibility of instructing and demanding musical aspects of playing from his colleagues. The obstacle to that may be that some of the members of the

²¹ (Davis 2004, p. 87) ²² (Davis 2004, p. 190-192)

section are much older and experienced musicians so a newcomer will have to keep that fact in mind when doing his job.

Musician should in general try to create and keep good relationship with all the members of the orchestra and other employees at work as well. It must be extraordinary inconvenient to work with someone who we have bad communication with. The musicians usually share stands in the sections of the orchestra and sit next to each other, so it's of high importance that the relationships are at least at a good level. In case of a musician at the probation period, he should be modest but not shy because it might be interpret as lack of enthusiasm or appreciation for being selected.

And what is the better way of making communication than by playing together?

My conclusion is that healthy professional relations with the other members of the orchestra will develop healthy relations in the terms of verbal communication and any other social interaction. I have come to this opinion after finding out about the music theory association between language and music²³. The advantage of the music is that it's a world language that everybody understands. Yet, one may be surprised how many similarities could be found between the two. Just like in the language, each piece of music has its own set of rules such as rests, notes, phrases, themes, which indicate to the player how to interpret the particular composition.

If the position that a musician has been appointed is in the tutti string section, a newcomer might get the opportunity to meet the entire section rather fast, due to the rotation as I was mentioning in previous chapter. This way a musician will experience lot of different musical tendencies from the individuals and try to find his place in the group. The examples of how the respect between the musicians is shown are various and depend on the circumstances. For instance, if the conductor wishes to listen to a particular section of players or a single player of the orchestra, musicians shouldn't laugh at possible mistakes usually made by inconvenience of playing while others are listening.

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²³ (Cook and Everist 1999, p. 141)

"We should also be aware of how dull the musical world would probably be without...especially those nerves that can create an atmosphere where you sense that two thousand hearts are beating together in anticipation." (Davis 2004, p. 113)

Musician A was not surprised, during the first probation period by the obstacles in terms of working hours and professional obligations because of the previous preparation and advices from the teacher. Davis, on the contrary had no preparation because he was taught to be a soloist²⁴ and he finds this to be one of the best possible ways for a student to learn the skills of instrumental techniques. It is an obligation of a musician to listen to other players and try adapting to their sound, intonation, and blending into the sound and instrumental colours.

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²⁴ (Davis 2004, p. 85)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I have chosen to write about the topics that haven't been explored nor researched enough, by my opinion. The findings are interesting and hopefully valuable for the development of the subject, and I focused on the musical aspects. I was especially inspired to write about the audition because I have lots of memories from my own professional experience and I could occasionally recognize myself in some of the situations discussed.

The main conclusion I have come to, regarding the audition is that preparation, both mental and professional should be done much earlier in life then it's usually done. Musicians wait until they finish their regular studies but I have discussed and proved why it of such importance to start thinking is and preparing auditions already during the formal education.

On the other hand, social aspects have been strongly connected with the musical and I have come to the conclusion that good social relations between the employees are equally important as professional preparation and behaviour at work.

I tried to explain and justify the significance of philosophical aspects when it comes to evaluation and the decisions of the orchestral panel at the auditions. Each member has different expectations and their opinions matter both individually and as a group which is responsible for the decisions. I find the philosophical aspect important as an ethical issue.

CHAPTER 6

CD RECORDING

In addition to my master thesis, I am submitting a CD recording of my playing.

The works I have chosen to record are three orchestral excerpts from different epochs and from different musical forms:

- 1. Johan Sebastian Bach Matthew Passion, violin solo from Erbarme Dich
- 2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Symphony nr. 39, IV Movement
- 3. Bedřich Smetana Overture Bartered Bride

Those excerpts are some of the most frequent requirements on auditions for professional orchestras worldwide and can be found in all major books with orchestral excerpts for auditions.

Considering that mentioned excerpts are not long, I have added a movement from Bach's Solo Sonata BWV 1003 – *Largo*, First Movement of the Mozart Violin Concerto KV 218 and First Movement from Brahms' Violin Concerto op. 77 accompanied by Terje Mathisen, Professor at University of Agder. All the pieces have been recorded in early year 2010 in Sigurd Lie Hall, Institute of Music, University of Agder.

All the recorded material is connected with the thesis in terms of standard required material at the orchestral auditions. Mozart concertos are not obligatory only for the violin auditions, but also for all the other instruments that he dedicated his music to. The first movement of the Brahms' concerto is one of the most demanding, and it appears as a possible choice between several concertos at the auditions. Occasionally, candidates are supposed to prepare a solo piece for the audition, and I have chosen a great work of Bach for my recording.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEWS

Considering this to be one of the important research methods for my master thesis,

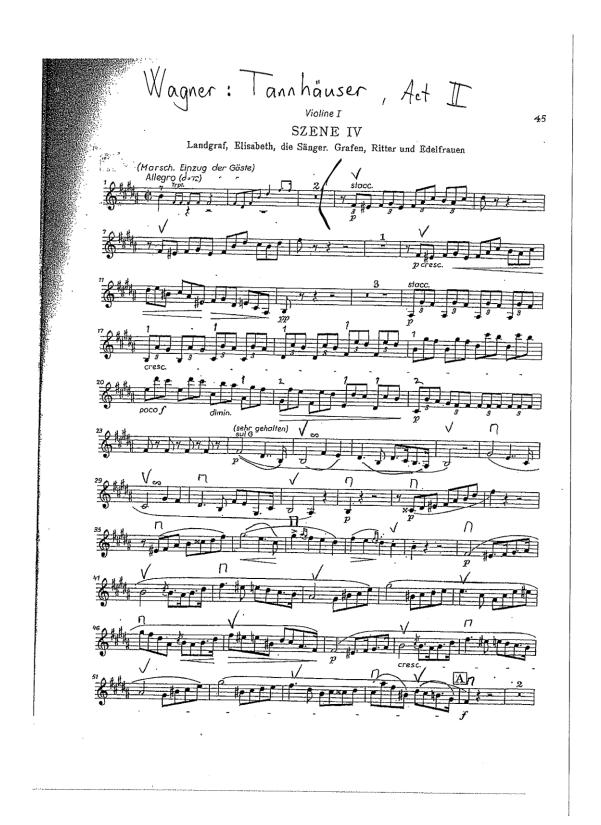
I've done interviews with two carefully selected professional musicians of different nationalities, sex, age and instrument, both members of a same bigger symphony orchestra in Norway. There are fourteen questions and the same number of answers. I was advised from my supervisor not to provide the entire interview so I'll enclose only the questions.

Interviewees didn't find themselves uncomfortable by any of the questions asked.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Question 1: How many auditions have you participated in?
- Ouestion 2: Which audition was the first successful?
- Question 3: Have you ever been auditioning during your studies?
- Question 4: Describe briefly your first probation period in the orchestra.
- Question 5: Were you expected to work more intense and demanding then you initially presumed?
- Question 6: Can you describe the audition that led to employment for your current job?
- Question 7: What are the main differences between that audition and the previous?
- Question 8: Have you been informed from the panel with the decisions and reasons for being offered a position?
- Question 9: Did you find the required orchestral excerpts particularly difficult?
- Question 10: Were you given enough time to warm up and a room for yourself?
- Question 11: How long was your probation period and was it more demanding then previous ones?
- Question 12: Have you ever been a member of the audition panel?
- Question 13: Do the decisions of the panel need to be unanimous in order for the candidate to be offered a position in the orchestra?
- Question 14: What are the objectives that you expect to hear from the candidate so that he or she would have your appreciation?

COMMON ORCHESTRAL EXCERPTS FOR THE OPERA ORCHESTRA





MOZART: ZAUBERFLÖTE



CASSE - NOISETTE (Der Nussknacker).

Violino I.



Lack's Music Library









COMMON ORCHESTRAL EXCERPTS FOR THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Symphony No. 2



2.4) Carl Nielsen: Maskarade





2.3) Mozart: Symphony No. 40, 4th movement



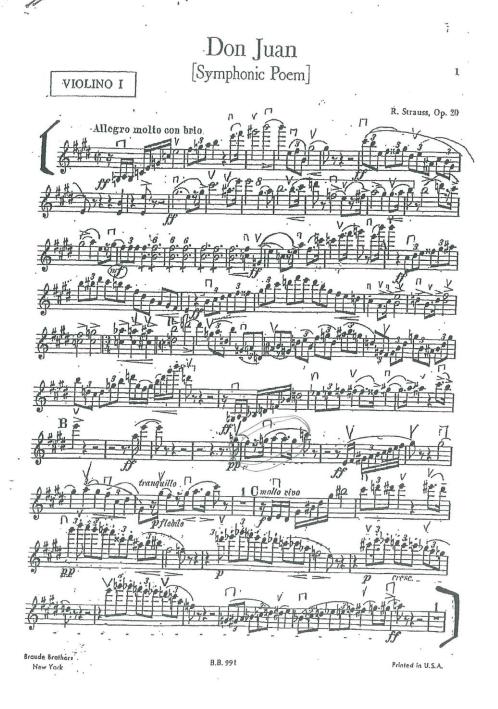
Verklärte Nacht.

Gedicht von Richard Dehmel.



Prokofier - Classical Symphony.







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- Trip to Asia Die Suche nach dem Einklang 2008
 Berliner Philharmonic, Sir Simon Rattle
 Documentary Film
 Directed by Thomas Grube