

PERSONAL AND ARTISTIC STATEMENT

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Nonverbal communication...is that what conducting is all about? Or are we just the composer's advocate as Leinsdorf professes in his landmark book? As someone who has been on both sides of the podium, the conductor's role is more complicated. You ARE the music, you ARE the inspiration behind the music; and you ARE the teacher whether the conductor is in front of a student orchestra or a group of seasoned professional musicians.

A great conductor should be of course a great musician but he/she also part problem solver, part therapist, part inspirational leader, part ballet dancer, part teacher and part fund raiser...always keeping this primary goal in mind; to bring out the best in your players, to give your audience a special experience and a good reason to leave the security of their homes to come out to hear live music.

Live music. Whether a listener or a player, there is something special in hearing, feeling, sensing music. Can't you just feel Beethoven's struggle in his Third Symphony. Who is the hero here? Napoleon or Beethoven for choosing the road to live and to not to give up. Or the struggle of Shostakovich or Tchaikovsky problematic life hiding his homosexuality. Can we figure all this out by just hearing the music? By watching the conductor? It depends on who is conducting.

What an awesome responsibility to be a conductor. When the opera begins, when the musical begins; it's all in the hands of the conductor.

My philosophy about conducting? Know thy art and know it well. Know your orchestra; know the musicians by name; look at them and understand their point of view. Be fair and honest. Be demanding but never forget that those are people in front of you are not just a sea of strings or wind players but PEOPLE. Have an artistic vision for the orchestra; where should we be in 5 years, 10 years? And most importantly, share your vision with everyone and LISTEN to your players, your Board, your audience.

Today's music director looks much different than a generation ago. The days of conductors flying in for a few rehearsals, a couple of handshakes, perform the concert and then fly home on the next flight out of town. The music director is the public face of the Orchestra. He/she should be an integral part of the cultural tapestry of the community. The Maestro needs to be seen shopping at the local mall, attending other concerts or theatrical production, or just seen walking around town with his family.

I recently met somebody face to face who told me that that she has recently become a loyal concertgoer and this was the first time she has seen me not in tails and not from behind. You just don't know what an positive impact a music director has when he/she steps off the podium and just becomes part of the community, meeting folks one on one.

As part of the Orchestra team, music directors need to be fully immersed and involved in fundraising and making certain the Orchestra is in good financial health. The seats must be filled and the musicians must be paid a fair and equitable wage. Through innovative and thoughtful programming, the underserved population, the nontraditional concertgoer, and young people must all feel welcome to the concert hall. Young people in particular should not be intimidated by all those people on stage dressed in black. With the assistance of the artistic team, the conductor should provide opportunities in and outside the concert hall for these constituencies to hear and see their orchestra; their friends and neighbors who have this special talent to create something so universally beautiful. The orchestra belongs to people of all ages and from all walks of life. It's a challenge but it's a challenge I have embraced here in Virginia and I am proud to say my audience is as diverse as my concerts.

As a conductor who has travelled a great deal, I always learn something new with each rehearsal and performance I conduct. Each experience is unique and I love each experience. I am happiest when I am on the podium, creating something from black notes on a page with people who share the same love I have for this very special art.