

Part II : leading while playing

Birth of a new kind of entertainment in Italy

As I mentioned in the first part, 18th century leaders of all sorts preferred to lead by playing an instrument, participating acoustically during both the rehearsals and the performances ; a leadership practice mostly associated with eighteenth century music, although evidence reveals that the practice existed since at least the 17th century. If the expansion of the mensural system around the *tactus* generated the time-beating practice, being a decisive moment in the history of musical leadership, the development of a new musical entertainment in Italy at the turn of the seventeenth century was surely equally significant. Indeed, one cannot underestimate the impact of the birth of Opera in Italy and its dissemination throughout Europe and therefore the impact on music organization :

‘Opera is the grandest and most expensive of musical entertainments, and in its fullest forms has almost invariably required some kind of subsidy to survive, whether royal, national, local, corporate, or philanthropic. It has probably aroused more passion and critical comment than any other musical genre. It has been condemned as irrational and nonsensical; on the other hand, it has been considered the supreme expression of the human spirit. It has helped to bankrupt kings; it has provoked revolutionary demonstrations; it has praised monarchs, encouraged popularist movements, expounded philosophy, explored psychology; and, more often than any of these, it has simply provided entertainment’⁵¹.

Being by definition a mixture of elements (music, drama, poetry, visual art, sometimes

⁵¹ Oxford Music Online 'Opera' 27/02/2017

dance), opera was from its origin a blend of musical styles. Its source was rooted in the monody, a new style of composition at the turn of the seventeenth century that wanted to imitate or recreate the essence of ancient Greek music declamation of text while singing. A monody, from the Greek *monōidos* meaning ‘singing alone’⁵², can be defined as a vocal solo piece accompanied by a continuo instrument in which the text have a prominent position. Giulio Caccini, in the preface of his collection of madrigals and strophic arias for solo voice and continuo *Le nuove musiche* (1602), enlightened the various components of this new style, offering a new texture, treble melody/bass, that will be present in solo aria and in *secco recitativo* in the opera context. If the keyboard player was, in the 16th century, almost only accompanying sacred music by doubling the voice parts (*basso seguente*), he surely gained a significant role in the context of early opera. Even if 17th century composers such as Monteverdi included different styles of composition in his operas, like madrigal polyphonic style or venetian church music ornamented style, the monody was by far the most prominent, the team singer/continuo player being the leading one. With the first public opera house in Venice in 1637, the development of opera seems to have favored a more restrain amount of players and singers, focusing on solo voices and a small instrumental ensemble, favoring continuo instruments (theorboes, harpsichords, harps). It is not a surprise that the composer chose to direct his opera from a keyboard instrument, that being in a good position to assist the singers, therefore enabling them the liberty drama requires.

However, if keyboard leadership was the most common practice in opera in the 17th century, there is evidence of leadership from other continuo instrument, notably the luth or the

⁵² Oxford Music Online 'Monody' 27/02/2017

theorboe. For example, Marin Mersenne describes the practice as thus : “Those who conduct at concerts nowadays mark the measure by the movement of the neck of the lutes or theorboes on which they play”⁵³.

The dawn of the orchestra as an institution

It is the institutionalization of the orchestra in the 17th century that would help standardize different leadership practices in various contexts in addition to the time-beating practice, a topic covered previously. Indeed, besides the ecclesiastic musical life, various European courts started to organize their musical life by founding instrumental ensembles having different social purposes. Even if the concept of an “orchestra” is difficult to define before the eighteenth century⁵⁴, the first violin-family ensemble with several musicians on each parts seems to be the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* (the twenty-four violins for the King), servants of the French court, having as a goal to promote the majesty of the French King. Large-scale ensembles did exist before the seventeenth century but were characterized by a great flexibility of both orchestration and size and were assembled only for special occasions, playing different roles depending on the context. Ensembles for Florentine's intermedii offer examples of this kind of heteroclite blend of instruments, often having a symbolic meaning. What makes the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* historically relevant is the apparition of an “institutional identity”⁵⁵, the stability of its members and its omnipresence in the musical

⁵³ *Harmonie universelle*, Paris, 1636. Pt.2, book 5, p.325

⁵⁴ Zaslav, Neal. *When is an Orchestra Not an Orchestra?*. *Early Music* (Vol.16 #4, Nov., 1988) pp.483-495

⁵⁵ Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.69

sphere of Paris, accompanying dancers or playings for the King's suppers and for various courtly festivities. Given the fact that the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* was composed exclusively of violin-family instrument, it can be stated that it was one of the first ensemble to be led from the violin. As a matter of fact, in 1665, Mr. Dumanoir, head of the violinists' guild, was appointed the twenty-fifth violin to lead the ensemble⁵⁶. The French court institutionalized different kind of musical ensembles besides the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* : inter alia the *Petits Violons* (also called the *Petite Bande*) and the *Grande Écurie* (wind band). Since his first appointment at the French court, Giovanni Battista Lully, better known as Jean-Baptiste Lully, played a crucial role in French musical life. He had been appointed *Compositeur de la musique instrumentale* in 1653, which gave him the responsibility of leading the *Petits Violons*, and in 1661 he was given the the position of *Surintendant de la musique de la chambre du roi*, placing him in charge of the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy*, surely led from the violin. Even if Lully didn't invent, as it is often written, the *premier coup d'archet* (first bow stroke) nor the uniform bowing, he standardized this style of orchestral playing and had a great influence on spreading those orchestral performing conventions around Europe. Wanting to imitate the prestige of Versailles, countless European courts called upon musicians that worked with Lully to implement his tradition of playing. For example the German composer Muffat, who studied six years with Lully in Paris from 1663 to 1669. It is no coincidence then that Lully developed a disciplined and hierarchical system of orchestral playing under the authority of the Sun King, Louis the fourteen. The climax of Lully's autocratic absolutism occurred when he purchased the privilege of the *Académie Royale de Musique*, reinforcing and consolidating his monopoly over French musical life. This also had great influence on his

⁵⁶ Ibidem. p.74

methods of leadership, from the fact he exerted power in a monarchic and authoritative way. Indeed, we cannot underestimate the impact of Lully's way of exercising leadership in Paris, since it led to the institutionalization of an hierarchical system in which a musical representative symbolized the authority of the King.

The Composer/Performer



Fig. 8. Nicola Logroscino leading his own opera (1753)

It is important to emphasize that the musical scene was organized at that time in a completely different way than today's classical music scene. As we noticed with Lully's case, the seventeenth century was notably characterized by the active participation of the composer during the performances, being most of the time in charge of the execution of the music. There is in fact no different in the eighteenth century. An anecdote recounted by Charles Burney in one of his trip to Italy describes the composers authority in performance :

attending a performance of a mass in Bologna for which each movement had been composed by a different composer, he clarifies that “every composer beat time for his own performance”⁵⁷. When the composer wasn't present, the assigned leader replaced him, normally the Kapellmeister who was the most prestigious position in eighteenth century musical life. There are also contexts, Italian opera for instance,

⁵⁷ Burney, Charles. *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*. London, 1773. p.234

in which the composer was in charge of the preparation of the performance, guiding the musicians during rehearsals and only had to lead the first three performances. Leopold Mozart wrote in January 1771 to his wife that little Wolfgang was required at the first keyboard to lead in Milan his opera *Mitridate, rè di Ponto* only for the first 3 nights (the premiere being December 26th, 1770), leaving father and son free the rest of the time doing what they liked, walking around in the venue⁵⁸. Would it be possible nowadays for a conductor to leave the orchestra alone after few performances during a tour? It would be a wonderful expression of confidence, although there are social implications which will be discussed later on.



Fig. 9. Above : Count Basie's band, with singer Jimmy Rushing, 1943
 Fig. 10. Below : Frederick the great with his orchestra

In that sense, the musical life of that time resembles today's jazz and film music spheres. It is completely normal for a John Williams or a Michel Legrand to be in charge of the recording of their

music, who would dispute it? Also, great jazz and big band leaders like Duke Ellington, Count Basie or Glenn Miller were in charge of the musical execution of their own arrangements, participating acoustically, using gesture at rare occasions, and when they do,

they don't interpret the music, they only give the “groove” or some

⁵⁸ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Briefe*. Letter from Leopold to his wife. January 5th, 1771

important entries. Like most of leaders in the jazz domain, the responsibilities of the Kapellmeister were much more numerous and included composition, administration tasks, vocal accompanying and so on. Even though the Kapellmeister had to beat time sometimes during rehearsals and performances, it is far to be his main responsibility. Furthermore, the composer wasn't only involved in orchestral performances. Haydn's Op.64 quartets were published in London as “Performed under his Direction, at Mr. Salomon's Concert”, meaning he participated in the preparation of the music, guiding the musicians more as a coach. In fact, the composer was often, armed with an instrument, illustrating exactly how he wanted his music to be played. Burney recalled an anecdote during an opera rehearsal in London he attended on April 7th at the theatre in the Haymarket under the direction of Geminiani in which Pasquali led the orchestra : “I remember [...] Geminiani taking the violin out of his hands, to give him the style and expression of the symphony to a song, which had been mistaken, when first led off”⁵⁹. In his journal, George Smart⁶⁰ shares a very funny episode involving Haydn and the kettle drum. In 1794, Haydn came to London to present 12 great symphonies for Salomon's concerts :

“At a rehearsal for one of these concerts the kettle drummer was not in attendance. Haydn asked, "Can no one in the orchestra play the drums?" I replied immediately, "I can." "Do so," said he. I, foolishly, thought it was only necessary to beat in strict time, and that I could do so. Haydn came to me at the top of the orchestra, praised my beating in time, but observed upon my bringing the drumstick straight down, instead of giving an oblique stroke, and keeping it too long upon the drum, consequently stopping its vibration."The drummers in Germany," he said,"have a way of using the drumsticks so as not to stop the vibration" at the same time

⁵⁹ Burney. *A General History*, London 1789. iv. p. 452

⁶⁰ “(b London, 10 May 1776; d London, 23 Feb 1867)” Oxford Music Online 'Smart, Sir George Smart ' 9/03/2017

showing me how this was done."Oh, very well, "I replied", we can do so in England, if you prefer it." It was Haydn, therefore, who first taught me to play the drums, a thing I had never attempted before that day, and have not done often since"⁶¹.

It surely reinforces the idea that the composer, as a coach, expected his musicians to play exactly as he wanted, capable of demonstrating it himself, sometimes on unusual instruments.

The tasks of the leader at the keyboard – Mattheson's point of view

Johann Mattheson describes comprehensively, in his *Vollkommene Kapellmeister*, what a Kapellmeister should know (practically everything related to music) and what his responsibilities were. Mattheson declared he was the first to address issues of *Directione & Executione*⁶². Thus he dedicated only his last chapter on musical execution, insisting more on how a Kapellmeister should behave with the musicians during rehearsals and performances, and what important musical aspects he should take care of. It is surprising to note that Mattheson neglects to mention anything about the physicality's of time-beating, instead preferring to insist on the human and psychological aspects : "He should in no way be offensive or scandalous in his living and conduct, for commonly the greatest contempt arises from that"⁶³. In fact, this psychological aspect of leadership in the 18th century is rarely treated in literature. It must have been of great importance to Mattheson, since he deals extensively with it in his chapter about the leadership aspect of the Kapellmeister. A Kapellmeister must

⁶¹ Smart, George. *Leaves from the Journals of Sir George Smart*. Longmans, Green and Co., London. 1907. p.3

⁶² Mattheson, J. *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*; translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p.1434

⁶³ *Ibidem*. p.1437

strive to keep a good reputation and esteem since they are “such delicate things that, with a single false step, all which one has gained for himself in many years through great assiduousness can be destroyed”⁶⁴. When asking some indications to the performers, “he should do it quite seriously, yet as gently and politely as is possible”⁶⁵. Even outside performing his official responsibilities, his behavior should be “gregarious, sociable and obliging”⁶⁶. He takes as an example J.S. Cousser “formely Chapel Master at Wolffenbüttel” who was a model in that matter. As a teacher, the latter was inexhaustible, welcoming anybody to his house in order to help them, didn't matter the level of the student, playing and singing in the manner he wanted the music to be produced and being always so kind and friendly. In contrast, in the context of a rehearsal or a performance, he inspires fear to the performers. Then he knew how to criticize them for their errors in a very honest and sharp way, provoking sometimes tears, but knew also exactly what to do to “calmed down again immediately and diligently sought an opportunity to bind the produced wounds through extraordinary politeness”⁶⁷. Mattheson surely realized that a good attitude towards the musicians and singer could increase the musical level of a performance. Leopold Mozart was also concerned with this issue, which he reveals in a letter written to his son :

“But do your best to keep the whole orchestra in good humor; flatter them, and, by praising them, keep them all in your favor. For I know your style of composition – it requires unusually close attention from the players of every type of instrument; and to keep the whole

⁶⁴ Mattheson, J. *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*; translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p.1437

⁶⁵ Ibidem. p.1437

⁶⁶ Ibidem. p.1437

⁶⁷ Ibidem. p.1438

orchestra at such a pitch of industry and alertness for at least three hours is no joke. Each performer, even the least important viola-player, is deeply touched by personal praise and becomes much more zealous and attentive, while a little courtesy of this kind only costs you a word or two, However – you know all this yourself – I am just mentioning it, because rehearsals afford few opportunities to do this, and so it is forgotten; and when the opera is staged, one really needs the cordial support and enthusiasm of the whole orchestra. Their position is then quite different, and the attention of every single performer must be tested even further. You know that you cannot count on the goodwill of everyone, for there is always *an undercurrent of doubt and questioning*. People wondered whether Act II would be as new and excellent as Act I. As this doubt has now been removed, few will have any doubts as to Act III. But I will wager my head that there are some who are wondering whether *your music will produce the same effect in a theatre as it does in a room*. And here you really need the greatest goodwill on the part of the whole body of players...⁶⁸.

However, the Kapellmeister should mostly take care of three aspects when he directs a musical performance : “the number and selection of persons, singers, instrumentalists and instruments ; the pure tuning of these last ; and the rehearsals”⁶⁹.

One responsibility surpassed them all : “The keeping of the beat is, as it were, the principal function of the director of a piece of music at its presentation”⁷⁰. However, he thinks that “a little sign, not only with the hand but merely with the eyes and gestures, could accomplish most of this ; if only the performers would assiduously keep their eyes on the director”⁷¹. Indeed, the greater part of the task of the leader was accomplished from the harpsichord,

⁶⁸ Mozart's Family. *Mozart's letters*. Translated by Lady Wallace. Everyman's Library. London, 2006 pp.151-152

⁶⁹ Mattheson, J. *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*; translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p.1443

⁷⁰ Ibidem. p. 1441

⁷¹ Ibidem. p. 1441

because, as he said : « as regards performance, a Kapellmeister should, next to singing, also be able to play the clavier, and in fact quite well, because in performance he can best accompany all the others and direct at the same time.»⁷². Indeed, 18th century leaders preferred to lead



Fig. 11. Jena collegium musicum, c.1740

while playing a keyboard instrument. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach⁷³ is clear about that as he wrote : "the Keyboard, entrusted by our fathers with full command, is in the best position to assist not only the other bass instruments but the entire ensemble in maintaining a uniform pace"⁷⁴. His father, J-S Bach was

surely a fantastic leader, as Johann Matthias Gesner describes :

“If you could see him, I say, doing what many of your citharoedists and six hundred of your tibia players together could not do, not only, like citharoedist, singing with one voice and playing his own parts, but watching over everything and bringing back to the rhythm and the beat, out of thirty or even forty musicians, the one with a nod, another by tapping with his foot, the third with a warning finger, giving the right note to one from the top of his voice, to another from the bottom, and to a third from the middle of it - all alone, in the midst of the greatest din made by all the participants, and, although he is executing the most difficult parts himself, noticing at once whenever and wherever a mistake occurs, holding everyone together, taking precautions everywhere, and repairing any unsteadiness, full of rhythm in every part of

⁷² Mattheson, J. *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*; translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969 p. 1442

⁷³ “(b Weimar, 8 March 1714; d Hamburg, 14 Dec 1788). Composer and church musician, the second surviving son of (7) Johann Sebastian Bach” Oxford Music Online 'Bach, C.P.E.' 04/03/2017

⁷⁴ Bach, C.P.E : *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, Eulenburg. London, 1974. p. 34

his body - the one man taking in all these harmonies with his keen ear and emitting with his voice alone the tone of all the voices⁷⁵.

It gives an idea of how the leader's (most of the time the Kapellmeister) true task was to make music happen in the most efficient way, often because of the lack of rehearsals. As Zaslav and Spitzer, in their book *The Birth of the Orchestra*, demonstrate, most eighteenth-century orchestras performed not even with a single one⁷⁶. For sure, the rhythmical and accentuation aspects were essential in keyboard leadership practice. Therefore, it is in instrumental and opera performances where the Kapellmeister abilities as a keyboard-leader were the most indispensable, the continuo part being the unifying technique *par excellence*. In a letter to his father dated August, 1778, W. A. Mozart explains to his father that he will return to Salzburg on the condition of not leading from the violin : «It's from the keyboard that I want to conduct, accompany the arias »⁷⁷. Certainly, the keyboard-leadership was for him the perfect way to lead opera : “The Russian Royalties left Vienna today. My Opera (Die Entführung aus dem serail) was performed for them the other day, and on this occasion I thought it advisable to resume my place at the keyboard and conduct it. I did so partly in order to rouse the orchestra who had gone to sleep a little, partly in order to appear before the royal guests as the father of my child”⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ Koury, Daniel J. *Orchestral Performance Practices in the 19th century; Size, proportions and seating*. University of Rochester Press. USA, 1981. p.51

⁷⁶ Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.385

⁷⁷ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Correspondance complète*. Traduction de Geneviève Geffray. Flammarion. Paris, 2011. p. 862

⁷⁸ Koury, Daniel J. *Orchestral Performance Practices in the 19th century; Size, proportions and seating*. University of Rochester Press. (USA, 1981) p.53

Regarding the issue of tempo maintenance, eighteenth century players were greatly concerned about keeping a steady tempo. In many occasions in his *Versuch*, C.P.E Bach suggests different solutions to help the group maintain a steady tempo while playing. For example, in regards to a concerto, Bach finds, when the bass part holds a tone, « wise for the accompanist to maintain the beat and guide the other performers by playing a chord with the right hand on the divisions of the bar even though the harmony does not change »⁷⁹. He also prescribes for the keyboard player a manner of playing that includes gestures of the arms and hands visible by the players since : “ [they] are not only not wrong, but necessary and good, in that they provide a simple way of indicating the tempo to the other performers and make it possible to strike the keys with proper weight so that the tones will sound clear, in accord with the rules of good performance”⁸⁰.

That was clearly obvious for the Kapellmeister, having the score in front of him, to lead from the keyboard given that it allowed him to oversee the different parts, helping the voices with their entries⁸¹. As we saw earlier, when the composer was not present for a performance of his work, the responsibility fell to the Kapellmeister, to lead and execute the music from the keyboard. There were composers who felt insecure placing their trust in a Kapellmeister... Joseph Haydn was one of them. He has been commissioned a celebratory cantata from the Austrian's abbey of Zwettl and, unable to be present for the rehearsals or performance, and knowing exactly how he wanted his music to sound, Haydn could not resist the temptation to

⁷⁹ Bach, C.P.E. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Eulenburg, (London, 1974) p.374

⁸⁰ Ibidem p.379

⁸¹ Koch, Heinrich Christoph. *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Frankfurt, 1802) “Kapellmeister”

write a list of performance recommendations, known as the *Applausus* letter. In it, he gives invaluable information about his performing practices, including issues of accompanied recitatives. In regards to accompanied recitatives, Haydn specifies that the orchestra should start playing only when the singer has finished his lyrics even if the score tells otherwise, Haydn stipulates that the keyboard player is in the best position to take care of this performing challenge and that all the musicians should follow him⁸². In addition, most scholars also agree that Handel was using a *direktionpartitur*, which is a full score, to direct his operas in London.

Sharing leadership/violin leadership

Was the composer/Kapellmeister/keyboard player the only one in charge of the execution of the music in the eighteenth century? When it comes to leadership practices in the 18th century, nothing is quite that simple! As we briefly saw previously, violinists did lead a violin-family band in the seventeenth century. With the development of the orchestra around the string instruments, a new position appeared in the musical scene : the concertmaster (*primo violino* in Italy, *Konzertmeister* in Germany, *premier violon* in France). Although we tend to oppose keyboard leadership to violin leadership, these two actors of the musical scene were working in collaboration. Being “absolutely indispensable in the accompanying body” and “more penetrating than any of the other instruments”⁸³, the violin was in a good position to be a indispensable tool to exert leadership in an orchestral context. If the Kapellmeister was in

⁸² Robbins Landon, Howard Chandler. *The collected Correspondence and London Notebooks of Joseph Haydn*. Barrie and Rockliff. London, 1959. p.9

⁸³ Quantz, J.J. *On playing the Flute*, Faber and Faber. London, 1966. p. 207

charge of the compositions, arrangements and preparations necessary for the performance, the concertmaster had a very dynamic function during rehearsals and performances, making sure the ensemble kept a unified style of playing⁸⁴. The concertmaster position gained prominence throughout the eighteenth century, with musicians and theorists devoting writings on the subjects of being a good concertmaster. The two main books dealing comprehensively with the subject, were Quantz's *Versuch eiener Anweisung die Flöte Traversiere zu Spielen* (1752) and Galeazzi's *Elementi teorico-pratico di musica* (1791).

In Quantz's book, the chapter is called 'Of the Qualities of a Leader of an Orchestra' and describes what a leader must accomplish to insure a good orchestral execution. According to him, very few musicians can have the honor of being the leader of an orchestra since he must have very exquisite talents in many aspects of performance. The most important element is a leader should have great insight into musical composition and know "how to play all types of compositions in accordance with their style, sentiment, and purpose, in the correct tempo"⁸⁵. Indeed, if the Kapellmeister was a composer by definition in the eighteenth century, the concertmaster was most of the time nothing else. It might be difficult nowadays to accept this idea, but it would have been impossible, virtually ridiculous, for a musician of the eighteenth century to seek a concertmaster position in a great orchestra without being decent composer and improviser himself. At that time, leading required a profound understanding of the music.

However, even if skillful soloists were often great improvisers and decent composers,

⁸⁴ Koch, Heinrich Christoph. *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Frankfurt, 1802) "Kapellmeister"

⁸⁵ Quantz, J.J. *On playing the Flute*, Faber and Faber. London, 1966. p.208

Leopold Mozart, in his *Versuch*, stressed the notion that these musicians lacked essential aspects of orchestral playing : “The latter can play everything according to his whim and arrange the style of performance as he wishes, or even for the convenience of his hand ; while [a good orchestral musician] must possess the dexterity to understand and at once interpret rightly the taste of various composer, their thoughts and expressions”⁸⁶ Therefore, a musician should have simultaneously all the qualities of a good orchestral musician in addition to “a specially lively adroitness to be prominent in his calling with honor, in particular if he wishes in time to become the leader of an orchestra”⁸⁷, states the father of the prodigy of Salzburg. In order to gain this orchestral expertise, an apprentice leader should have played “for several years in large and celebrated orchestra” in which he has played many different kinds of music”⁸⁸ for purposes of learning how the job should be done.

Moreover, according to Quantz, the leader has to develop skills specifically related to his position. In particular, he must be able to keep the tempo and account for any discrepancies in time from any of his orchestral musicians. He suggests that “before he begins a piece, he must carefully determine at which tempo it ought to be played. If it is a quick and unfamiliar piece, he will do better to begin too slowly than to quickly, since passing from a slow tempo to a fast one is easier and less apparent than passing from a fast tempo to a slow one”⁸⁹. That is why he also suggests to “frequently direct his eyes and ears both to the performer of the principal part

⁸⁶ Mozart, Leopold. *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 1948 p. 216.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*. p. 217.

⁸⁸ Quantz, J.J. *On playing the Flute*, Faber and Faber. London, 1966. p.207

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*. p.208

and to the accompanists, in case it is necessary to accommodate the one and keep the others in order”⁹⁰. Another responsibility of the leader was the uniformity of tuning within the orchestra. This was a crucial element because, as Quantz says : “The more prevalent the lack of correct common tuning, the greater is the damage done. Whether the pitch of the orchestra is high or low, the effect of a composition will always be considerably impaired if the instruments are not in tune with one another”⁹¹. As it was stated previously, rehearsals were not a common practice in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that Quantz stressed the importance of orchestral rehearsals. For him, rehearsals are the moments when the leader can teach and explain to his orchestral musicians how the music must be executed and accentuated. He, like L. Mozart, specifies that orchestral playing is quite different from solo playing and that’s why the leader must have a great deal of experience in orchestral playing and not only in solo playing. For him, it’s a pity that “a person is pushed in who has had the good fortune to insinuated himself into favor with a solo or concerto, perhaps learned by heart, without further investigation into the manner of whether he possesses the proper knowledge to lead others”⁹². He must have known by experience that a musician lacking musical knowledges and a solid-background would have looked stupid when put in charge of an orchestra, even if he can demonstrate remarkable skills of virtuosity in concerto performances. Ultimately, the leader has the responsibility of how to distribute the instrumentalists in an ensemble, insisting a lot on the crucial important of the placement of the musicians and on the ratio of instruments. Quantz designed seating plans that took into account the size of a hall and

⁹⁰ Quantz, J.J. *On playing the Flute*, Faber and Faber. London, 1966. p.209

⁹¹ Ibidem. p.209

⁹² Quantz, J.J. *On playing the Flute*, Faber and Faber. London, 1966. p.207

the role of the music (opera, concert hall, chamber halls).

Violin leadership gained more prominence throughout the eighteenth century, especially in opera. As the orchestral writing became more and more complex and, the musicians had a greater importance in arias and *recitativo accompagnato*, the continuo group became less essential. In his *Elementi Teorico Pratici di Musica*, Galeazzi outlines the concerns of an orchestral musician and explains the concertmaster's authority and responsibilities. It is interesting how Quantz and Galeazzi agrees on most aspects. Indeed, the latter remind the reader on the difficulties of being a good concertmaster, “how extensive must be the knowledge, how inveterate the experience, and how deep the insights of one who wishes to sustain such a brilliant position with decorum”⁹³. Following the example of Quantz, Galeazzi stressed the three main concerns of the concertmaster : “the quality, the number and proportions of the different instruments, and the site where the music is to be performed”⁹⁴. The main difference between their two chapters about leadership is the treatment of the different context. In fact, if Quantz is mainly talking about the instrument/concert context, Galeazzi discusses the various contexts the concertmaster has to deal with : church, opera and concert, reflecting on the growing responsibility of the concertmaster at the end of the eighteenth century. Galeazzi approaches each subject taking into account these three contexts. For example, concerning the placement of the musicians in a hall, he affirms that “the best arrangement for effect is to place the orchestra in the middle and the audience all around, but for the purposes of appearance, it is more satisfying to place it at one end along the wall of the

⁹³ Frascarelli, Angelo. *Elementi Teorico-Pratici di Musica by Francesco Galeazzi, An Annotated English Translation and Study*. Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester. June 1968. p.379

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*. p.380

hall because the audience thus enjoys all the orchestra full face”⁹⁵. He then describes the exact position for each instrument, specifying that the basses should be near the harpsichord if there is one⁹⁶, indicating that this instrument was still in used in orchestral context as late as 1791. At this point, was the keyboard player still involved in the leadership?

According to Galeazzi, playing in a church was far more challenging, suggesting all different kinds of placement plans, and bringing the idea that in this context, his authority could be relative since “this depends upon the one who directs the music or who has the authority in that particular church, this is outside the obligations of the concertmaster and concerns him only in an advisory capacity”⁹⁷. Even if he often didn't have the authority to decide, the concertmaster had to have a crystal clear idea on the matter. This brings us to the collaborative relationship between the Kapellmeister and the concertmaster. Galeazzi acknowledges the fact that time-beating might be useful when playing in a church, since the acoustic issue could cause disorder and confusion⁹⁸, but find it often difficult to “keep the eye on the beat when it is made at a great distance, and sometimes the attention that the execution of the part itself requires is such that it is not possible to look away”⁹⁹. Indeed, in the church as well as in the theater, the Kapellmeister, being most of the time the composer, had to inform

⁹⁵ Frascarelli, Angelo. *Elementi Teorico-Pratici di Musica by Francesco Galeazzi, An Annotated English Translation and Study*. Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester. June 1968. p.382

⁹⁶ Ibidem. p.382

⁹⁷ Ibidem. p.383

⁹⁸ Ibidem. p.384

⁹⁹ Ibidem. p.384

the concertmaster of the different tempos “to which he must exactly conform”¹⁰⁰. In the theater, as mentioned, previously the composer often “goes away after the first three performances, all the burden rests upon the concertmaster who must be responsible for everything and must maintain at every performance the movement of the various pieces which he has received from the maestro, never changing it without previous agreement with the singers, since they cannot alter the tempos at their pleasure without previous agreement with

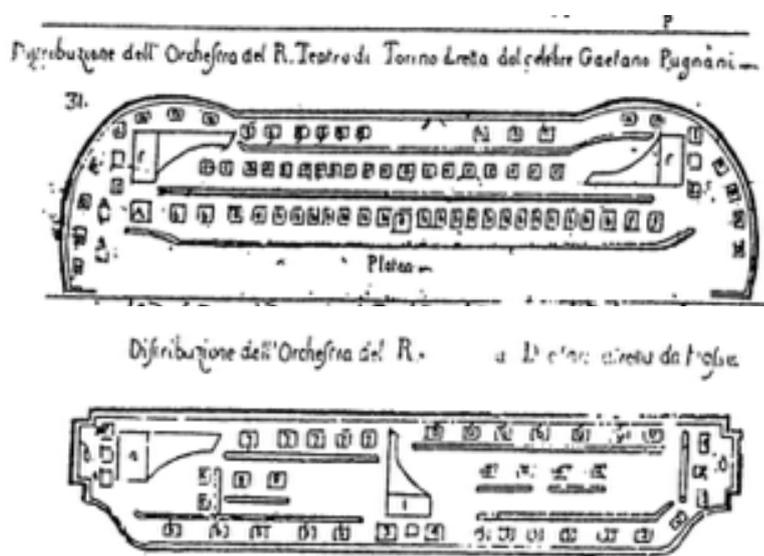


Fig. 12. Above: Royal theater of Turin orchestra seating-plan
 Fig. 13. Below: Desden opera house orchestra seating plan

the concertmaster, otherwise, they would be responsible for the troubles that might arise”¹⁰¹.

Concerning the placement in the theater, Galeazzi takes as an example two seating plans from

two great European opera houses : the Desden opera house led by Hasse and the Royal theater of Turin by the celebrated Pugnani. If the first is “admirable for the unity of the performers”, despite the fact that it causes a defective effect since the spectators on the left side have a predominance of wind instrument and few of the strings and the one on the right to much of the violins but not enough winds, the second is “perfect to the effect, because in whichever

¹⁰⁰ Frascarelli, Angelo. *Elementi Teorico-Pratici di Musica by Francesco Galeazzi, An Annotated English Translation and Study*. Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester. June 1968. p.394

¹⁰¹ Ibidem. p.395

spot the spectator is seated, he hears very well all the four parts of the harmony and the effect of all the instruments so wisely disposed”¹⁰². Galezzi also concludes with examining the duties of the concertmaster. Among them, a concertmaster should be an accomplished sight-reader, be an “experienced time-keeper”, play with “strength and brilliance so that he can be heard by someone near him and by the singer on stage”¹⁰³ and have an extremely developed ear. An accomplished concertmaster had also to be really flexible, without imposing any tempo on the singers or soloists, asking them beforehand their preferences.

When one looks to other kinds of sources (letters, travelogues), one finds out relevant facts on the actual violin leading practice. In a letter to his father from Paris, July 3, 1778, W. A. Mozart, being afraid that his symphony composed for the *Concert Spirituel* in Paris would be badly performed, suggested that if it was the case, he would have “[took] the fiddle from the hands of the first violin, Herr La Houssaye, and [lead] it [himself]”¹⁰⁴. We can understand that, in these circumstances, it was his way of leading an orchestra. In fact, it was the way of leadership for many of the most prestigious orchestras in Europe. The Mannheim's orchestra, “indisputably the best in Germany”¹⁰⁵ according to Leopold Mozart, have always been famous because of the strong leadership of their concertmaster. The story started with Johann Stamitz (1717 - 1757) and continued with one of his student, Christian Cannabich (1731-1798) who

¹⁰² Frascarelli, Angelo. *Elementi Teorico-Pratici di Musica by Francesco Galeazzi, An Annotated English Translation and Study*. Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester. June 1968. p.392

¹⁰³ Ibidem. p.394

¹⁰⁴ Abert, Hermann. *W. A. Mozart. Translated by Stewart Spencer and edited by Cliff Eisen*. Yale University Press. New Haven and London, 2007. p.507

¹⁰⁵ Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004. p.257

succeeded him as concertmaster in the late 1750s. Cannabich's leadership astonished W. A. Mozart who wrote that “[he] is the best leader I have ever seen”¹⁰⁶.

It is also pertinent to have the point of view of an eighteenth century opera audience. Through letters sent to an unknown friend, Pierre Jacques Fougereux, a Frenchman visiting England, describes his visit to London. It is in the fifth letter that Fougereux writes a bit on the musical concert scene in London's theatres. He attended three Handel opera performances at the Royal Academy during his stay : *Siroe*, *Tolomeo* and *Admeto*. Valuable information is given about the singers, the famous Faustina and Cuzzoni singing the leading roles, but the most relevant information regarding our topic, is the description Fougereux gives of the opera's orchestra : “The orchestra was composed of 24 violins led by the two Castrucci brothers, two harpsichords, one of which Indel (sic) german great player and great composer was touching, one archlute, three cellos, two double basses, three bassoons, and sometimes flutes and [clairons]. This orchestra make a great deal of noise”¹⁰⁷. From his point of view, the leaders were the Castrucci brothers, probably *à la tête* of the two violin sections, with Indel (sic) only touching the first harpsichord. It summarizes also well the dynamic within an opera's orchestra in the first part of the 18th century : the concertmaster was in charge of the orchestra, mainly the high string instruments (violins, violas), the wind instrument having a special role, often as soloists and finally the continuo group. As a matter of fact, the low string instruments, were reading from the same part as the two harpsichords, as seen in many images of the time.

¹⁰⁶ Stowell, Robin. *Good Execution and Other Necessary Skills : The Role of the Concertmaster in the Late 18th Century*. *Early Music*, Vol.16, No.1 (Feb., 1988) p.26

¹⁰⁷ Dean, Winton. *A French Traveller's View of Handel's Operas*. *Music and Letters*, Vol.55, No.2 (Apr. 1974) p.177
“L'orchestre étoit composé de vingt-quatre violons conduits par les deux Castrucci frères, deux clavessins, dont Indel allemand grand joueur et grand compositeur en touchoit un, un arichilut, trois violoncelles, deux contrebasses, trois bassons et quelquefois des flûtes et des clairons. Cet orchestre fait un grand fracas”



Fig. 14.

Even if iconographic evidences are often vague and superficial, some paintings and engravings of the 18th century can illuminate some aspects of performance practice, in particular concerning the position of the performers. If today's musicians are accustomed to each having their own music stand,

it was certainly a different case in the eighteenth century, as often most of the time the cellists and contrabassists read from the keyboard part.



Fig.15.

It was surely the situation in opera performances, with the two harpsichords on opposite ends of the pit. For example, the engraving representing a performance of Giuseppe de Maio's Serenade, *Il Sogno d'Olimpia* on November 6, 1747 presented

in the *Sala Grande* of the Royal Palace of Naples, which was turned into a theater for the musical performance, the Teatro San Carlo been used for ballroom and for the masquerade¹⁰⁸.

Furthermore, a series of paintings made by the Italian artist Marco Ricci (1676-1730) when he was in London depicts the behind-the-scene performance of an opera. These paintings called

¹⁰⁸ Murray, Alden. *The Court and the Cuccagna*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 5 (Jan., 1960), p. 157

*Rehearsal of an Opera*¹⁰⁹ depict an informal group of musicians and singers situated around a



Fig. 16. Ricci, *Rehearsal of an Opera*, c1709

harpsichord, probably looking at recitativo secco and arias. The various paintings seems to illustrate different stages of the rehearsal process, but

the interesting point is that the cellist and the contrabassist are present for these rehearsals, reading from the harpsichord part. This reinforces the idea of a strong cohesion with in the continuo group, working during rehearsals with the singers allowing more freedom to the latter, in addition to the strong direction of the leader of the orchestra, the result of made a time-beater completely needless. In fact, all this has brought Raguenet the idea, in his *Parallèle des italiens et des françois*, that Italian opera was played : “without knowing who is the Master who directs it”¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ Leppert, Richard. *Musical Confrontation and Cultural Difference in Early 18th Century London*. Early Music, Vol. 14, No.3 (Aug., 1986)

¹¹⁰ Raguenet. *Parallèle des Italiens et des François en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra*. 1702. pp.91-92