

To beat or not to beat:  
Analysis and reflections on musical leadership practices in the 18th century

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# Introduction

In his book *le geste musical* (The Musical Gesture), Jean-François S nart asks the question : “Do we really need a conductor?” He then answers : “to this question, often found on ignorant or even malicious lips, it is appropriate to respond in the affirmative”<sup>1</sup>. Even if some people would affirm sometimes that “the conductor is a necessary evil” or “a habit which is difficult to break”, such “brutal and disconcerting affirmations” can only betray the musicians' frustration or ignorance related to this essential question. Indeed, conductors being omnipresent in the classical music sphere, one is reluctant to reevaluate their role. One can say that this kind of statement (S nart being far from the only one to share these ideas), does not encourage the reflection about this question. Nevertheless, we see more and more orchestras choosing to play without the help of a conductor. For almost a century now, historically-informed performance practice has gained more and more popularity in the musical scene, and musicians have been increasingly interested in historically accurate articulation, phrasing, instrumentation, ornamentation, tempi, etc. This musical revolution has brought some newly founded ensembles to exclude the conductor completely. Often the keyboard or the violin player is the founding father of the group and therefore leads. In contrast, many early music ensembles are using the modern way of conducting, which is to have an interpretative conductor that stands in front of the group. This begs the question : does the choice of the leadership have an influence on the music or is it only superficial? Wouldn't it be relevant to know how composers like Mozart, Handel or Bach would have « conducted » their works? Did Mozart conduct his wind serenade "Gran partita" or his operas by making gesture like we

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<sup>1</sup> S nart, Jean-Fran ois. *Le geste musicien*. Louise Courteau. Montreal, 1988. p.21



Fig.1. W. A. Mozart (Tom Hulce) conducting his music in Forman's movie *Amadeus* (1984)

can see in Forman's movie *Amadeus*? Couldn't we learn from their practical experience? This research aims to bridge the gap and demystify the conducting practices in the eighteenth century, by thinking through their practical repercussions.

Since the nineteenth century, the conductor has evolved to become one of the most attractive element of an orchestral concert. Today, the gestural aspect of conducting is part of the 'show'. Was it the case in the eighteenth

century? According to the Oxford music online, conducting is « the art (or method) of controlling an orchestra or operatic performance by means of gestures, this control involving the beating of time, ensuring of correct entries, and the 'shaping' of individual phrasing. ».<sup>2</sup> So, we could summarize modern conducting this way : a conductor exerts control over tempo (that includes rubato) and phrasing. He should develop a personal interpretation (often even in concertos) and help the musicians by giving entries. Do we find such a figure in eighteenth century musical life?

This question cannot be answered by a definitive yes or no. Conducting practices differed

<sup>2</sup> 'Conducting', Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

greatly back then and therefore we cannot really speak about “historical” conducting practices since the word conducting derives from a nineteenth and twentieth century concept. Of course, one can find similarities between the historical ways of leading ensembles in the eighteenth century and the modern way of conducting, but one rapidly realizes the great difference between the two realities. This research will investigate the different leadership practices in the eighteenth century by focusing firstly on the presence of time-beating in theory and in practice, and secondly on different ways of exerting leadership without the aid of a visual method.

#### *Sources and translations*

To achieve this research, a variety of historical sources were used, including : Iconography, descriptions of performances, eighteenth century performers' point of view, treatises, scores, and so on. Each of them offers a unique point of view regarding certain aspects of leadership. For example, iconographic evidence is limited purely to the visual aspect of leadership, often superficial, while treatises, provide first-hand descriptions of performances. Writings from performers' point of view describe often in detail the dynamics within the orchestra itself. Thus, it is this diversity between the sources that provide the keys to unlocking the mystery of the eighteenth century leadership practices. If not mentioned, the translations are done by the author.

# Part I : The question of time-beating in the 18th century

## *Predecessors of time-beating practices*

One of the main feature of modern conducting is the physical gesture. A conductor beats time through-out the performance. Did time-beating exist in the eighteenth century? In fact, visual signs are the most ancient method of musical leadership, with origins dating back to 1500 B.C<sup>3</sup>. The musician directing the performance in Ancient Egypt used a system of visual signs that indicated the curve of a melody by means of gestures of his hands and arms, a primitive form of cheironomy. Cheironomy is defined as : « the doctrine of hand signs: a form



Fig.2. Example of cheironomy as practice in ancient Egypt.

of conducting whereby the leading musician indicates melodic curves and ornaments by means of a system of spatial signs »<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to the ancient Egyptians, the art of cheironomy was developed in various other

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<sup>3</sup> Sachs, Curt. *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World*. W. W. Norton. New York, 1943. p.78

<sup>4</sup> Oxford music Online. 'Cheironomy'. 21/01/2017, 16:47

cultures, including Hebrew and Byzantine traditions as well as Western chant. Some of these musical traditions still exist today in practice, and are using the same ancient cheironomy technique. It is important to clarify that this system was and is used in non-written vocal music or in a tradition where the notation is concerned only with pitches, such as plainchant which is sung with free rhythm. With the development of musical notation, especially the mensural system<sup>5</sup>, rhythm started to be notated in a precise and organized way. As George Houle points out, : “the mensural system related all notes to a down-and-up gesture of moderate speed, called the *tactus* (meaning 'beat')”<sup>6</sup>. We could say that the main ancestor of conducting, the use of a steady *tactus*, was born around the year 1260, when Franco of Cologne<sup>7</sup> established a notation system in which the rhythm of a note has a meaning in itself, independently of notes that surround it<sup>8</sup>. We cannot underestimate this evolution in music notation, especially with regard to the history of musical leadership. From that point, keeping the *tactus* became the main concern of musical directors.

### *Sixteenth and seventeenth time-beating in theory and in practice*

There exists an abundance of pictorial evidence for time beating practices, dating back to the thirteenth century. However, most suffer from a lack of precision, making analysis

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<sup>5</sup> “Mensural music : It is polyphonic music in which every note has a strictly determined value, distinct from the free rhythm of gregorian chant.” Oxford music Online. 21/01/2017, 16:47

<sup>6</sup> Houle, G., *Meter in music, 1600-1800: Performance, perception, and notation*. Indiana University Press., 1987. p.1

<sup>7</sup> “(fl mid- to late 13th century). German theorist and composer. His *Ars cantus mensurabilis* contained the first major statement of an idea that has been fundamental to Western notation ever since: that different durations should be expressed by different note shapes, and not merely by different contexts.”, 'Franco of Cologne', Oxford music Online. 26/01/2017, 16:47

<sup>8</sup> Oxford music Online. 'Franconian notation'. 01/02/2017, 15:58

of them difficult. In the best examples, one only acknowledges the participation of a time-beater. But nothing more... Consequently, questions arise as to what was he doing? How was he doing it? Why was he doing it? Luckily, various writings from musical theorists shed light on historical time-beating in practice and therefore are more reliable than pictorial evidence. The first musical treatises to broach issues of time-beating issues date back to sixteenth century. From that point onwards, we find a profusion of treatises that witnesses a tireless

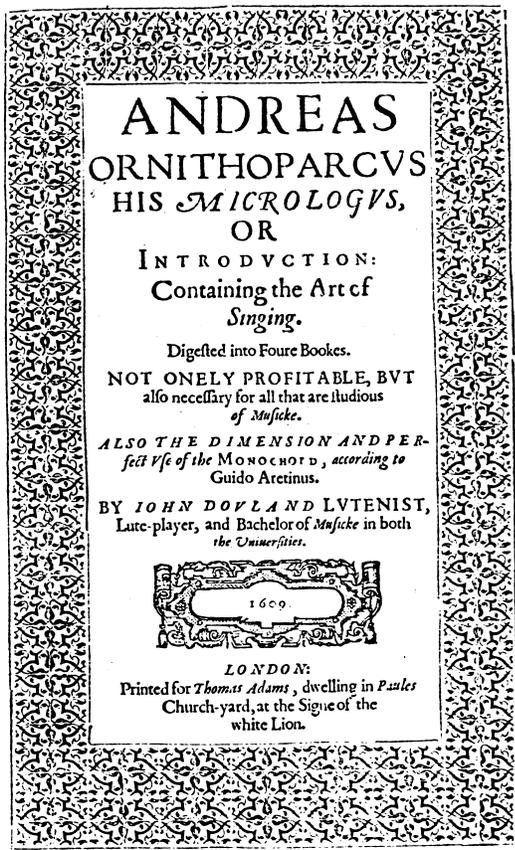


Fig.3.

interest in time-beating. In the sixteenth century, the most notorious works dealing with the *tactus* and its practice are Agricola's *Musica figuralis Deudsch* in 1532, *Libro llamado de taner fantasia* by Fray Tomas de Sancta Maria in 1565, Lafranco's *Scintille de musica* in 1533 and the *Micrologus* of Andreas Ornithoparchus (translated to English in 1609 by Dowland). One can deduct from these sources that time-beating in the sixteenth century was “a successive motion in singing, directing the equalitie of the measure : or it is a certain motion, made by the hand of the chiefe singer, according to

the nature of the marks, which directs a Song according to measure”<sup>9</sup> and only involved vertical movements organized in two ways, using an even “down and up” motion for duple

<sup>9</sup> Ornithoparchus, Andreas. *Micrologus*. (English translation by John Dowland, original from 1519). London, 1609. p. 46

time and an uneven “down down up” for triple time.

If 16<sup>th</sup> century theorists used the *tactus* in connection with the notational theories, 17<sup>th</sup> century treatises tend to consider it an independent topic, even the subject for an entire book, for example, the works *Battuta della musica* in 1611 by Pisa and Valentini's *Trattato della battuta musicale* in 1643. In fact, continuing to deal with the issue of time-beating and its practice, seventeenth century theorists further refined and dissected the *tactus*, asking questions about 'how should one perform the hand motions' in regards to the style of a composition. As musical language developed and transformed in the seventeenth century, specifically with regards to the arise of the *seconda prattica*<sup>10</sup>, the art of beating the *tactus* also had to evolve equally, allowing for a more flexible *tactus*<sup>11</sup>.

Nowadays, we often imagine, principally because of iconographical sources, that time-beaters from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were only beating time (surely because sound can't be seen...). But in fact, the time-beater was often much busier during a performance. As Ornithoparchus makes clear, the time-beater was, indeed, the “Chiefe Singer”, being involved in the sound production of the performance. Nevertheless, this brings us to an essential aspect of eighteenth century musical life, the position of the Kapellmeister; the prestigious musician ensuring time-beating in most musical contexts. His responsibilities extended beyond just beating time, to include composition, preparation of the performance

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<sup>10</sup> In the preface of his fifth Madrigal book, Monteverdi explains that his compositional technic use for these pieces establish a new style, a *seconda prattica*, in opposition to the *prima prattica*, a compositional practice having Palestrina as a model allowing a very restricted usage of dissonances.

<sup>11</sup> For a more extensive analyze of the issue of time-beating in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in theory and in practice, see two comprehensive books : George Houle's *Meter in Music 1600-1800* and Roger Mathew Grant's *Beating Time and measuring Music in the Early Modern Era*.

(including rehearsals), administrative tasks, vocal accompanying and training, as well as copying and teaching. Even though the Kapellmeister was often required to beat time during rehearsals and performances, it was far from his main responsibility. In the eighteenth century, Johann Mattheson wrote an extensive book on the art of being a great Kapellmeister, which will be discussed further on.

In short, time-beating was born out of a musical notation system (mensural system) transcribing the music into time-space, through rhythm and organized systematically around the *tactus*, or the measuring reference. The *tactus*, besides its practical implication, was used to illustrate theoretically the functionality of the system. However, through the centuries, theorists and performers developed various methods of beating time for purposes of helping musicians and singers to stay unified rhythmically, essentially to breathe with the *tactus*.

### 18<sup>th</sup> century time-beating



Fig.4.

Naturally, the 18<sup>th</sup> century inherited time beating practices from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly those that have been discussed previously. As we shall see, the increasing interest in instrumental music and the growth of a new style of composition, opera, will completely

revolutionize leadership practices. Nevertheless, time-beating was

consistently used during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially in church music performances. This is clearly stated by Koch in his *Lexicon* (1802), whereby he describes how the Kapellmeister beats time only in Church music, but remains seated in an opera, playing continuo on the harpsichord<sup>12</sup>. This affirmation is confirmed by the systematic usage of a distinctive terminology regarding leadership by the Mozart's family in their correspondence. They consistently use the expressions *Tactieren* or *Tact Schlagen*, in reference to time-beating - in the context of several mass and oratorios performances, however *dirigieren* referring to operatic and concert contexts<sup>13</sup>. This proves without a doubt that an eighteenth century musician had to deal with different leadership practice, time-beating being one of them.

If modern gestural language of conducting communicates musicality (phrasing, accent, rubato, etc.), in the eighteenth century and prior this certainly was not the case. As Brossard explains in his *Dictionnaire de musique*, : “Time-beating is this movement of the hand that lower and raise, helping to show the duration of the tones and that we call bar”<sup>14</sup>. In fact, Mattheson stresses that the main function of the director of a piece is to keep the beat steady for the musicians during a performance.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see further, time-beating wasn't the exclusive way to maintain a steady tempo, but was used only when necessary in very special occasions. In fact, time-beating was something used in opera context - often in festive productions at the great European courts-, as a matter of necessity. For instance, Quantz shares

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<sup>12</sup> Koch, Heinrich Christoph. *Musikalisches Lexicon*. Frankfurt, 1802. p. 1471

<sup>13</sup> Zaslaw, Neal. *Mozart's Symphonies. Context, Performance Practice and Reception*. Clarendon press. Oxford. 1989. p.508

<sup>14</sup> Brossard. *Dictionnaire de musique*. 1703. 'Battuta' « [la battuta est] ce mouvement de la main en baissant et en levant qui sert à marquer la durée des sons et que nous appelons mesure »

<sup>15</sup> Mattheson, J. *Der Volkommene Kapellmeister*, translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's Der Volkommene Kapellmeister. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p. 1441

in his autobiography an anecdote relating to an outdoor performance of Fux's opera *Costanza e Fortezza* in 1723, which gathered over 300 musicians and singers in celebration of the coronation of Charles VI, Austrian emperor of Bohemia : “Because of the many performers,



Fig.5. Fux's opera *Costanza e Fortezza* in 1723, Prague

the Imperial Kapellmeister Caldara had to beat time”<sup>16</sup>. The choice of the verb 'had' is crucial here. It means that in normal condition, with a reasonable amount of performers and in a conventional acoustic, a Kapellmeister wouldn't have felt the necessity to beat

time. Thus, this practice was only employed for exceptional circumstances and occasions. Moreover, even in church contexts, some theorists and performers felt it was more useful to be part of the ensemble and participate in the sound production. This feeling is echoed in Mattheson's *Vollkommene Kapellmeister* (1739) : “Things always work out better when I both play and sing along than when I merely stand there and beat time”<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, we shall further that eighteenth century leaders in general preferred to play an instrument, while leading. The situation in Italy is nearly identical, as time-beating was used only for church music requiring large choruses<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Nettl, Paul. *Forgotten Musicians*. Philosophical Library. 1951. p.294

<sup>17</sup> Mattheson, J. *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*; translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p. 1441

<sup>18</sup> Corrette, Michel. *Méthode théorique et pratique pour apprendre en peu de tems le Violoncelle*. Paris, 1741 p.46

## *Time-beating practices in France – a problem*

If issues of time-beating was clear in German-speaking areas and Italy, the situation in France was far more problematic. First of all, little is known about seventeenth century time-beating practices in France, with scholars relying only on a few iconographic sources. Moreover, the confusion is also due to a myth that was perpetuated: the Lully's case. The legend started when Jean-Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville reported an incident involving Lully's time-beating practice during a performance : “Lully had neglected nothing concerning the music composition and the preparation of the execution and to bring more his fervor, he beat time. In the fire of the action, he gave himself a blow on his feet with the cane he used to beat time”<sup>19</sup>. Even if it is surely the most dramatic episode of time-beating and the most memorable, it overstates Lully's usage of time-beating, since he used different kinds of leadership practices, as we shall see in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it initiated a tradition of absolute authority that has been furiously contested throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a matter of fact, Lully probably founded time-beating practices in Paris around the 1760s. From the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *batteur de mesure*, became a stable position at the Paris Opera. If the Kapellmeister in German-speaking areas and Italy was in charge of the musical preparation and sometimes to beat time for special opera performances, these responsibilities in France were shared between the *maitre de musique* and the *batteur de musique*. We shall further see that there was some shared responsibilities in musical performance outside France also, between the Kapellmeister and the concertmaster. In fact, the *batteur de mesure's*

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<sup>19</sup> Le Cerf de la Viéville, J.-L. *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française*. Brussels. 1706. p.190 “Lulli n'avoit rien négligé à la composition de la Musique, & et aux préparatifs l'exécution ; & pour mieux marquer son zèle, il y battoit la mesure. Dans la chaleur de l'action, il se donna sur le bout du pié un coup de la canne dont il la battoit”

responsibilities were of course to “not only beat time during the performances and also during the rehearsals, but to take care of all the members of the orchestra, make sure they arrive on time and to prevent musicians to quit their location and their instrument earlier during the opera performance”.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of information concerning the situation in France may be attributed also to the fact that a lot of evidence was destroyed during the French Revolution (1789-1799), especially in royal institution such as the Paris Opera or the Concert Spirituel, the latter taking place in a room of the castle of the Tuileries. Despite the absence of information, there remain two sources important in unlocking the mystery of the leadership issue at the Concert Spirituel. Firstly, the *Almanach des concerts* stated in 1760 in its *état des personnes qui composent ce spectacle* (situation of the people that took part of this show) Mr. Aubert as the *premier violon* and *batteur de mesure*<sup>21</sup>. One can deduct from this information that the leader might have varied his leadership practices, depending on the musical context, if it was a rehearsal or a performance. But, this is only a speculation. Secondly, the *Mercure de France* reported in 1762 an experimentation “whereby the orchestra was led by two violinists, one at the head of the firsts, one at the head of the seconds, and there was no *batteur* at all for the instrumental music”<sup>22</sup>. The next year, the position of the *batteur de mesure* reappeared due to multiple complains. Nevertheless, the *batteur de mesure* disappeared altogether in 1774 in favor of the

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<sup>20</sup> Noinville, Jacques-Bernard Durey de. *Histoire du théâtre de l'opéra en France...* Paris, 1753, p.136

<sup>21</sup> *Almanach des spectacles* (1760). p.3

<sup>22</sup> Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.388

violin leadership<sup>23</sup>.

It should not be forgotten that France was the setting for a dispute between the defender of the French opera and the champions of the Italian opera which reached its apogee in *la querelle des bouffons* (Buffons' Quarrel). Indeed, an Italian troupe under the direction of Eustachio Bambini<sup>24</sup> (known as the *Bouffons*) presented in 1752 at the Opéra, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*. It had been performed in Paris in 1746, but didn't attract attention back then; it's the fact that it was performed at the *Académie Royale* that caused such a scandal. Criticism was decimated through pamphlets written by leading philosophical figures of the time, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>25</sup>, one of the main supporters of the Italian style. In his *Lettre sur la musique française* (Letter concerning French music) published in 1753, the pinnacle of the *Querelle*, Rousseau tries to demonstrate the superiority of the Italian music style, by criticizing the sophisticated harmonies of Jean-Philippe Rameau (Rameau being the reference to the defender of the French operatic style) and stating that the French language cannot support musical works of quality. In fact, we find throughout the pamphlets musical, political and religious analogies. In this context, it is difficult to assess the objectivity of the judgments. Indeed, the highly political significance of the situation is substantial. On one side, there is the defenders of the French identity who believe their nation dominates Europe both politically and culturally, and on the other side we find the supporters of the Italian style, an international trend that has triumphed in a majority of European courts, because it was indeed more in the

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<sup>23</sup> Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.388

<sup>24</sup> “(b Pesaro, 1697; d Pesaro, 1770). Italian impresario. After serving as *maestro di cappella* at Cortona and Pesaro, he spent some time in Moravia, where his operas *Partenope* (1733) and *La pravità castigata* (1734) were performed.” Oxford music Online. 'Bambini, Eustachio'. 01/02/2017, 15:34.

<sup>25</sup> (1712-1778) One of the most important writer and philosopher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Geneva.

*Zeitgeist.*

It is frankly from the defenders of the French style that we find the most belligerent, aggressive and defensive statements, considering their word being an integral part of a political agenda. Indeed, wanting to discredit the Italian style, we can read in the *Lettre sur le mécanisme de l'opéra italien* (Letter concerning the mechanism of Italian opera) : “There is no time-beating in the opera in Italy, that is true; but the concertmaster helps out there in a way that is sometimes as disagreeable; he beats time with the foot, he struggles like a madman and supports the orchestra with strokes of the bow that are so pronounced that one can hear them at the far end of the theatre. He who plays the harpsichord in a full accompaniment sometimes hits it so rudely in order to mark the measure that he'd better wear gloves in buffalo leather in order not to break his fingers”<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, time-beating in France started to inspire metaphors of absolute power, the *batteur de mesure* being “a reflection of the absolute power of the Sun King” and “reinforcing the ideology of absolutism<sup>27</sup>”. Talking about the “the natural inhabitants of the country of the opera”<sup>28</sup>, Charles Dufresny<sup>29</sup> explains that these musicians “ depends on the sovereign of the orchestra, a prince whose power is so absolute that by raising and lowering his scepter, the roll of paper that he

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<sup>26</sup> Anonyme (Calzabigi?). *Lettre sur le mécanisme de l'opéra italien*. Naples. 1756. pp.61-63 English translation by Peter Van Heyghen “On ne bat pas la mesure à l'Opéra en Italie, cela est vrai; mais le premier Violon y supplée d'une manière quelquefois aussi désagréable; il la bat avec le pied, il se demène comme un possédé & soutient l'Orchestre par des coups d'Archet si frappés, qu'on les distingue du fond de la Salle. Celui qui tient le Clavecin dans un fort accompagnement, le touche quelquefois si rudement pour imprimer la mesure, qu'il seroit bien de se gantier de buffle pour ne pas s'estropier les doigts”

<sup>27</sup> Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.512

<sup>28</sup> Dufresny, Charles. *Amusemens sérieux et comiques* (Amsterdam, 1699), p.32 “habitants naturels du país de l'Opéra”

<sup>29</sup> (1657-1724) French writer specialized in comedy, written many for the Comédie-Italienne and the Comédie-Française. His *Amusements sérieux et comiques* (1699) inspired the *Lettres persanes* of Montesquieu.

holds in his hand, he regulates every movement of this fickle populace”<sup>30</sup>.

The leadership practices have also been used as an argument by many defenders of the Italian style, who criticized and made fun of the time-beaters, even so far as nicknaming them ‘the woodchopper’. Baron von Grimm who coined the term, complained about the noise that the baton was making when hitting against a music stand or the edge of the stage. Rousseau explains in his *Dictionnaire de musique* that the *baton de mesure* at the Opéra is in fact “A good big stick made of hard wood, with which the Master hit with force to be heard from far”<sup>31</sup>. Even if there is some truth in that description, one can acknowledge the pejorative meaning. As David Charlton suggests in his article on French time-beating practice, scholars



Fig.6. A performance of Rameau’s *La Princesse de Navarre*, Versailles, 1745

tend to overstate the presence of noisy and disturbing time-beating at the *Opéra*<sup>32</sup> by avoiding tense discussion of social context.

Furthermore, eighteenth century time-beating practices in France would deserve a more

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<sup>30</sup> Spitzer, John and Zaslav, Neal, *The birth of the orchestra. History of an institution, 1650-1815*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 2004) p.512. Dufresny, Charles. *Amusmens sérieux et comiques* (Amsterdam, 1699), p.32 “relèvent tous du souverain de l’Orsqueste, Prince si absolu, qu’en haussant & baissant un Sceptre en forme de roulau qu’il tient à sa main, il regle tous les mouvemens de ce peuple capricieux”

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Dictionnaire de musique*. Facsimile de l’édition de 1768. Actes Sud (2007) Baton de mesure : “un bon gros Bâton de bois bien dur, dont le Maître frappe avec force pour être entendu de loin”

<sup>32</sup> Charlton, David. ‘A maître d’orchestre...Conducts,’: *New and Old Evidence on French Practice*. *Early Music*, Vol. 21, No.3, French Baroque II (Aug., 1993), pp. 343-345

comprehensive study, since the context at the *Opéra* was far more complex, involving in its *tragédie lyrique* ballets and choruses that were not present in Italian opera back then. Was the time-beater helping the musicians, the singers, the choirs, the dancers? To what extent? In fact, iconographic evidence shows that the time-beater was often near the stage with his back to the orchestra, maybe to act also as a prompter.

Evermore, Italian musicians of the 18<sup>th</sup> century seems to have not understood the French practice of beating time at the Opera. Ange Goudar<sup>33</sup>, a French adventurer that travelled many years in Italy, recounts in his book *Brigandage de la musique italienne* that “the Italians look at the Paris Opera like a company of blind person ; they say it is because they need a cane to behave”<sup>34</sup>.

### *Criticisms of Time-beating*

Beside this particular political context, time-beating has also been criticized a great deal throughout Europe, notably for its negative influence on the music and musicians themselves, especially in regards to noisy time-beating. For instance, Martin Heinrich Fuhrmann<sup>35</sup>, a German music theorist, criticizes bad musicians who “have gotten into the habit of rapping the beat violently with their feet which defiles the entire performance”<sup>36</sup>. It is by far

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<sup>33</sup> Goudar, Ange (b Montpellier, 1708 ; d 1791) French adventurer and writer.

<sup>34</sup> Goudar, Ange. *Le Brigandage de la musique italienne*, 1777. p. 120

<sup>35</sup> 'Martin Heinrich Fuhrman' “(b Templin, Uckermark, bap. 29 Dec 1669; d Berlin, bur. 25 June 1745). German organist, Kantor and writer” Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Fuhrmann, Martin Heinrich. *Musikalischer Trichter*. (Leipzig, 1706) translation from : Camesi, David. *Eighteenth-Century Conducting Practices*. Journal of Research in Music Education. Vol. 18 no. 4 (Winter, 1970) p. 366

not the only source to describe time-beating performed by musicians, in a chamber music context. As a matter of fact, some theorists found it sometimes useful in practice. For example Michel Corrette<sup>37</sup> in his cello method encourages the cellist, “being a good musicians, to play loud and to beat time during one or two bars by keeping steadily the movement that was taking at the beginning of the piece, that brings the *dessus* in the tempo, and prevent him to go even faster”<sup>38</sup>. One clearly sees that it might have been used for catastrophic musical contexts. However, Fuhrmann stipulates that “some [directors] themselves are prone to act thus disreputably in that they stamp the beat incessantly with their feet; Or with a paper held in the hand, they whip at the pulpit or board in front of them at every downstroke so madly that it resounds with a smack and so that the congregation gathered in the church can hear every beat that is struck; but which is an ugly *soloecismus directorius* for one should never at any time hear the rhythm of the music being beaten except, *nota bene*, the first beat and all others (if it can be helped) should merely be seen being beaten”<sup>39</sup>. One can conclude that Fuhrmann sanctioned audible time-beating but was merely in favor of an unobtrusive time-beating practice in church.

Besides the inconveniences caused by the audible time-beating, this technique in itself (as a visual art) was often seen as inefficient or even an enemy to the music. Johann Mattheson<sup>40</sup>,

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<sup>37</sup> 'Corrette, Michel' “(b Rouen, 1709 ; d Paris, 1795) Fr. composer and organist. Org. at Jesuit College, Paris, 1750 – 9. Known to have visited Eng. Comps. incl. ballets, conc. for hpd., fl., hurdy-gurdy, and org., sonatas for bn., vc., and vn., much church mus., secular songs, and works for org. solo. Renowned as teacher and author of several methods for org., hpd., fl., vc., hp., and v. Hpd. method entitled *Les amusmens du Parnasse*”. Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Corrette, Michel. *Méthode théorique et pratique pour apprendre en peu de tems le Violoncelle* (Paris, 1741) p.46

<sup>39</sup> Camesi, David. *Eighteenth-Century Conducting Practices*. Journal of Research in Music Education. Vol. 18 no. 4 (Winter, 1970) p. 366

<sup>40</sup> 'Mattheson, Johann' “(b Hamburg, 28 Sept 1681; d Hamburg, 17 April 1764). German composer, critic, music journalist, lexicographer and theorist”. Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

one of the greatest music theorist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, relates in his comprehensive *Vollkommene Kapellmeister* that he finds it less effective when he only beats time, but more efficient when he both plays and sings alone<sup>41</sup>. It is difficult to establish if he had in mind an opera or a church performance/ rehearsal context, as German Kapellmeister were involved in both musical contexts. However, he surely suggests that a director who might have beat time could experiment with playing along with the musicians, since his experience demonstrated that it was more efficient. Time-beating was also seen as an insult for professional musician and harmful for the good execution of the music. In fact, Grétry<sup>42</sup> thought that the stick that conducts the musicians is “humiliating them”<sup>43</sup>. In his *Mémoires*, he makes fun of time-beater : “He does the starting sign, he hits majestically, but the rebellious musicians have conspired, and nobody starts. He stays surprised, and he acknowledges the fact that his beating-time stick, without the rescue of the performers, his an instrument of very little effect”<sup>44</sup>. Jokes aside, Grétry believed that time-beating was harmful to the performance of an opera since “each musician is obliged to have an eye on the singing actor ; it is the only way he can accompany well ; it is impossible when one hits him every beat ; because he cannot and

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<sup>41</sup> Mattheson, J. *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*, translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p.1442

<sup>42</sup> ‘(b Liège, 8 Feb 1741; d Montmorency, Seine-et-Oise, 24 Sept 1813). Liégeois, later French, composer of Walloon descent. He made decisive contributions to the scope and style of the 18th-century *opéra comique*, and to technical aspects such as musical ‘local colour’ and the design of overtures. His *opéras comiques* and recitative comedies for the Paris Opéra enjoyed unparalleled success in the 20 years up to the French Revolution. Many of his works were staged abroad, and a number were revived in the early 19th century in Paris: several survived through the middle decades, albeit with updated orchestration.’ ‘Grétry, André-Ernest-Modeste’ Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017

<sup>43</sup> Grétry, André Ernest Modeste. *Mémoires, ou essai sur la musique* (Paris, 1789) p.50

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem. p.49 “il fait le signe pour commencer, il frappe majestueusement; mais les musiciens rebelles se sont donné le mot, et personne ne commence. Il reste tout étonné, et il voit que son bâton de mesure, sans le secours des exécutans, est un instrument de fort peu d'effet”

shouldn't follow two persons at the same time"<sup>45</sup>. By not being able to follow the singer, the composer from Liège observed that the musicians forced to follow the stick of the time-beater were becoming "cold and indifferent"<sup>46</sup>. However, Grétry acknowledges the necessity of time-beating at the Opera in certain context, in larges choruses for instance : "One shouldn't believe that a group of singers as far could hear the orchestra, whatever numerous it is : each singer sings in the ears of his neighbor, and I surprised myself sometimes singing against the bar conducting falsely the choir around me. The chorus master could move forward and look at the stick ; would you say, it is what he does ; although if it is a chorus that is danced and sung ; if a crowd of dancers occupy the scene, the stick is then no longer visible. Thus the time-beater hits against his stand, which is very unpleasant to hear ; because it reminds you immediately that you are at the Comedy. I often thought at methods to remedy to this inconvenient ; I think that we could, if we would placed some organ pipes behind the scene, or even under the theater." [...]<sup>47</sup> Grétry considered audible time-beating unavoidable in the some contexts of the Opera, but always unfortunate when it had to occur.

Regrettably, his idea of using organ tubes behind the scene was never employed during his lifetime at the Paris Opera. However, it was used elsewhere to facilitate performance involving a great amount of performers, for instance the performances in commemoration of Handel that

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<sup>45</sup> Grétry, André Ernest Modeste. *Mémoires, ou essai sur la musique* (Paris, 1789) p.49 "chaque musicien est obligé d'avoir l'oeil sur l'acteur chantant; c'est la seule manière de bien accompagner : il en est dispensé quand on lui frappe chaque mesure; car il ne peut et ne doit pas suivre deux personnes à -la- fois"

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem. p.50

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem. pp.50-51 "Il ne faut pas croire qu'un groupe de chanteurs ainsi éloigné puisse entendre l'orchestre, quelque nombreux qu'il soit : chacun chante à l'oreille de son voisin, et je me suis quelquefois surpris chantant contre mesure et conduisant à faux le chœur qui m'environnoit. Le maître des chœurs peut s'avancer et jeter un coup d'œil sur le bâton, direz-vous; c'est ce qu'il fait : mais si c'est un chœur dansé et chanté ; si une foule de danseurs occupent l'avant-scène, le bâton n'est plus visible. Le batteur de mesure frappe alors sur son pupitre, ce qui est très désagréable à entendre ; car il vous rappelle sur-le-champ que vous êtes à la comédie. J'ai souvent songé aux moyens de remédier à cet inconvenient ; je crois qu'on le pourroit, en plaçant quelques gros tuyaux d'orgues derrière la scène, ou sous le théâtre même [...]"

took place in Westminster-Abbey in 1784. Charles Burney<sup>48</sup>, one of the most eminent musicologist of the eighteenth century, heard these performances and offered an comprehensive descriptions of these events, published under the name of *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and June the 3<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1784, in commemoration of Handel*. Besides the written description, a seating-plan is included, indicating the location of the various musicians and choir members. The director



Fig. 7. Diagram of Orchestra seating-plan for Handel commemoration at Westminster Abbey, London, May-June 1784

Mr. Bates, who is listed as the organ player and the harpsichord player, is called the “conductor” on the diagram. In fact, even if hundreds of performers were involved, Burney explains that the performances didn't necessitate “ the assistance of a *Corypheus* to beat the

<sup>48</sup> (b Shrewsbury, 7 April 1726; d Chelsea, London, 12 April 1814). English musician, composer and music historian. A fashionable and popular teacher of music, he was a composer and performer of modest talents whose greatest success and legacy are his writings on music.’ ‘Burney, Charles’ Oxford music online. Accessed on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017

time, either with a roll of paper, or a noisy baton, or truncheon”<sup>49</sup>. In fact, the solution was that the harpsichord keys played by the conductor Bates were connected to the pipes of an organ at the back of the stage and could be heard by the orchestra and choir members. Some sub-directors helped the conductor, but mainly for administrative tasks, like “conducting the company to their seats”, “arranging the performers” and “conveying signals to the several parts of that wide-extended orchestra”<sup>50</sup>, but not to beat time during the whole musical performance.

In summary, 18<sup>th</sup> century time-beating practices continue to be consistently used in church performances all over Europe, but was not the case for opera or purely instrumental music. If we don't consider the French context, opera and instrumental music was mostly led by a player of the ensemble, either the Kapellmeister who presided at the keyboard or the concertmaster playing the violin. Indeed, the French context is quite different : time-beating was standard in most opera and instrumental performances despite the barrage of criticisms. However, most theorists and performers of the eighteenth century were against time-beating, accepting this practice only under the absolute necessity, when musical performances would not have been possible without it. We shall see in the next chapter how most of 18<sup>th</sup> century leaders preferred to lead their musical performances.

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26th, 27th, 29th, and June the 3d, and 5th, 1784, in commemoration of Händel*. T. Payne and Son. London , 1785 p.112.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*. pp.11-12

# Part II : leading while playing

## *Birth of a new kind of entertainment in Italy*

As I mentioned in the first part, 18<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 it's 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’<sup>51</sup>.

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

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<sup>51</sup> 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’<sup>52</sup>, 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> century, there is evidence of leadership from other continuo instrument, notably the luth or the

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<sup>52</sup> 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”<sup>53</sup>.

### *The dawn of the orchestra as an institution*

It is the institutionalization of the orchestra in the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 century<sup>54</sup>, 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”<sup>55</sup>, the stability of its members and its omnipresence in the musical

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<sup>53</sup> *Harmonie universelle*, Paris, 1636. Pt.2, book 5, p.325

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

<sup>55</sup> 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 ensemble<sup>56</sup>. 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

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<sup>56</sup> 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 difference in the eighteenth century. An anecdote recounted by Charles Burney in one of his trips to Italy describes the composer's 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”<sup>57</sup>. 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,

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<sup>57</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup>, 1770), leaving father and son free the rest of the time doing what they liked, walking around in the venue<sup>58</sup>. 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.



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,

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

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

<sup>58</sup> Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Briefe*. Letter from Leopold to his wife. January 5<sup>th</sup>, 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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"<sup>59</sup>. In his journal, George Smart<sup>60</sup> 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

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<sup>59</sup> Burney. *A General History*, London 1789. iv. p. 452

<sup>60</sup> "(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"<sup>61</sup>.

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*<sup>62</sup>. 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"<sup>63</sup>. In fact, this psychological aspect of leadership in the 18<sup>th</sup> 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

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

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

<sup>63</sup> 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”<sup>64</sup>. When asking some indications to the performers, “he should do it quite seriously, yet as gently and politely as is possible”<sup>65</sup>. Even outside performing his official responsibilities, his behavior should be “gregarious, sociable and obliging”<sup>66</sup>. 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”<sup>67</sup>. 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

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

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem. p.1437

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem. p.1437

<sup>67</sup> 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...”<sup>68</sup>.

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”<sup>69</sup>.

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”<sup>70</sup>. 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”<sup>71</sup>. Indeed, the greater part of the task of the leader was accomplished from the harpsichord,

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

<sup>69</sup> Mattheson, J. *Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister*, translation by Ernest Harris, Johann Mattheson's Der Vollkommene Kapellmeister. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1969. p.1443

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem. p. 1441

<sup>71</sup> 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.»<sup>72</sup>. Indeed, 18<sup>th</sup> century leaders preferred to lead



Fig. 11. Jena collegium musicum, c.1740

while playing a keyboard instrument. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach<sup>73</sup> 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"<sup>74</sup>. 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

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

<sup>73</sup> “(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

<sup>74</sup> 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 voices<sup>75</sup>.

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 Zaslaw and Spitzer, in their book *The Birth of the Orchestra*, demonstrate, most eighteenth-century orchestras performed not even with a single one<sup>76</sup>. 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 »<sup>77</sup>. 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”<sup>78</sup>.

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

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

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

<sup>78</sup> 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 »<sup>79</sup>. 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”<sup>80</sup>.

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 entries<sup>81</sup>. 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

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

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem p.379

<sup>81</sup> 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 him<sup>82</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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”<sup>83</sup>, the violin was in a good position to be a indispensable tool to exert leadership in an orchestral context. If the Kapellmeister was in

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

<sup>83</sup> 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 playing<sup>84</sup>. 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"<sup>85</sup>. 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,

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<sup>84</sup> Koch, Heinrich Christoph. *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Frankfurt, 1802) "Kapellmeister"

<sup>85</sup> 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”<sup>86</sup> 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”<sup>87</sup>, 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”<sup>88</sup> 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”<sup>89</sup>. That is why he also suggests to “frequently direct his eyes and ears both to the performer of the principal part

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

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*. p. 217.

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

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*. p.208

and to the accompanists, in case it is necessary to accommodate the one and keep the others in order”<sup>90</sup>. 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”<sup>91</sup>. 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”<sup>92</sup>. 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

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

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem. p.209

<sup>92</sup> 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”<sup>93</sup>. 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”<sup>94</sup>. 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

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<sup>93</sup> 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

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem. p.380

hall because the audience thus enjoys all the orchestra full face”<sup>95</sup>. He then describes the exact position for each instrument, specifying that the basses should be near the harpsichord if there is one<sup>96</sup>, 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”<sup>97</sup>. 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 confusion<sup>98</sup>, 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”<sup>99</sup>. Indeed, in the church as well as in the theater, the Kapellmeister, being most of the time the composer, had to inform

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<sup>95</sup> 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

<sup>96</sup> Ibidem. p.382

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem. p.383

<sup>98</sup> Ibidem. p.384

<sup>99</sup> Ibidem. p.384

the concertmaster of the different tempos “to which he must exactly conform”<sup>100</sup>. 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

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

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

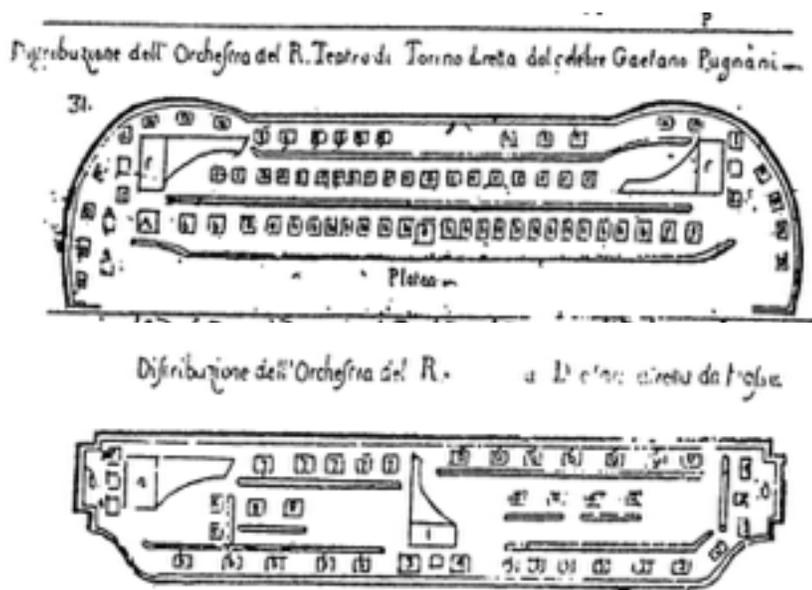


Fig. 12. Above: Royal theater of Turin orchestra seating-plan  
 Fig. 13. Below: Desden opera house orchestra seating plan

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

<sup>100</sup> 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

<sup>101</sup> 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”<sup>102</sup>. 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”<sup>103</sup> 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]”<sup>104</sup>. 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”<sup>105</sup> 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

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

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem. p.394

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

<sup>105</sup> Spitzer, John and Zaslaw, 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”<sup>106</sup>.

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”<sup>107</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

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<sup>106</sup> 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

<sup>107</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 masquerade<sup>108</sup>. 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

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<sup>108</sup> 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*<sup>109</sup> 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 Ragueneau the idea, in his *Parallèle des italiens et des françois*, that Italian opera was played : “without knowing who is the Master who directs it”<sup>110</sup>.

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

<sup>110</sup> Ragueneau. *Parallèle des Italiens et des François en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra*. 1702. pp.91-92

# Part III : Reflections – analysis of historical sources

Taking into account all the information that has been presented, one can acknowledge the significant differences between eighteenth century and today's leadership practices. As the historical sources reveal, eighteenth century musicians thought leadership practices had an important musical impact. They were required to adopt different methods of leadership, from time-beating to leadership from the keyboard or the violin. All depended on the context. The main characteristic of leadership practices in the eighteenth century lies in the fact that a variety of solutions were offered depending on the kind of music that was played or on the performance's context. If nowadays orchestral performances are under the direction of a conductor for all musical contexts (opera, symphonic repertoire, concerto, etc.), eighteenth century musicians were much more flexible in regards to how the music had to be led, finding one method highly more effective for a particular context. Pragmatism was the watchword.

Time-beating was used during the eighteenth century but often as a necessary evil, being unavoidable in certain contexts (large-scale and church choir performances) when the musicians were unable to perform accurately using their ears alone. It was surely not used because musicians didn't know what to play or how to play, but rather not knowing when to play it! Time-beating thus indicated only the rhythmic impulse, not other musical parameters. It is no coincidence that all sources bear witness of simplicity in the practice of time-beating in the eighteenth century, since it should be as efficient as possible, enabling only cohesive

playing in problematic performance contexts. Given that it had a negative effect on the music and on the musicians, the leader had to choose wisely if it was absolutely necessary, because, from these leadership practices, time-beating was by far the one that has been frequently called into question. There has been a lot of criticisms regarding time-beating; musicians were even trying to find alternative solutions to solve the problem. Indeed, time-beating was often a distraction for the musicians preventing them from listening to the soloists or the singers. Indeed, with the presence of time-beating, the dynamic within the orchestra changed drastically. Involving at times noisy sounds made by the stick or the hand of the Kapellmeister hitting the floor, the rim of the stage or his music stand, time-beating was seen as an enemy of the music, destroying the enchantment of the theater. It had also a negative effect on the psychology of musicians, some considering this method humiliating.

In contrast, the process of leading while playing enabled the leader the possibility to participate actively, giving acoustic signals that had clear meanings for the performers. Eighteenth century musicians were convinced that playing was far more useful in conveying musical ideas and keeping a steady tempo, then by long explanations and visual signs. By playing along with their colleagues, leaders could be involved in the actual performance and could invite them to be more involved themselves. In fact, every musicians had different responsibilities according to their role in the orchestra. As I mentioned in the second part, the high-string players had to work as a team, same as with the continuo group. The winds, often responsible as soloist, had to exert leadership within their small sections and perhaps would have also led the orchestra when playing a solo. It is this team work that is representative of eighteenth century orchestral leadership, not time-beating. Thus, the liberty accorded to the

musicians was part of the musical spirit of the time. All musicians had weight in the performance. The composer, an intrinsic leader, didn't feel obliged to exert leadership constantly, demonstrating a great deal of faith towards the musicians, sometimes even leaving his position at the first keyboard and walking away to listen. In addition, if musicians gained more freedom in this orchestral playing dynamic, this liberty was exacerbated in regards to the soloist. Actually, at the opera, the leader should have been at the service of the singing actor, without imposing anything to him. In instrumental contexts, it was completely normal for the soloist to be most of the time the leader, since you are never as well served as when you serve yourself!

Historical sources reveal one essential aspect of leadership in the eighteenth century, the leader's competence. In fact, eighteenth century orchestras needed someone with the proper expertise. Before seeking for a leading position, a musician had to acquire a professional experience by playing for many years in great orchestras and should gain the respect of its peers. It may be the reason also why composer were leaders *par excellence*, since they were the most knowledgeable musicians. Leaders had to have insights in every aspects of music : among other things they had to know all the different kinds of musical styles, be able to improvise in different genres, have great sight-reading skills and be convincing players.

Finally, we observe that even if time-beating practices have been criticized for their negative impact on music for centuries around Europe, there are places like the *Académie Royale de musique* or the *Concert spirituel* in France that conscientiously chose time-beating as the ultimate way to control the orchestra. Inevitably, the way a monarchy treats his

population is reflected in the manner a dictatorial *maître de musique* deals with his orchestral musicians. Today, luckily, we have the luxury to choose, living in a democratic society: do we desire the music to suffer from the conductor's yoke ?

The question that would interest players of today is certainly : are eighteenth century historical leadership practices relevant for today's performance practice? If these practices were so meaningful for them, why would it be different for us? Thus, historical leadership practices lead us to reconsider our ways of exerting leadership in musical contexts today and inspire us more convincing ways of performing music of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

# Conclusion

The most fascinating aspect of leadership in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is that musicians were questioning this aspect of performance, were far from indifferent in this regard. This research encourages musicians to take musical leadership more into account when playing orchestral music because it has a great impact on the music itself, but also on the dynamic within the orchestra. In the twentieth century, the conductor grew up to become an artistically more important figure, enjoying more popularity than the composer. Would the exercise of power be more fascinating than the actual creative act of composing or playing? In eighteenth century, all the glory was given to the composer or to the player. Nobody has been praised for his extraordinary skills of beating-time...

Some would argue today (a lot of early music conductors do, in fact) that conducting is the most efficient way to achieve an orchestral performance. An historical-informed musician saying that conducting is the most efficient way to achieve a satisfactory musical result cannot but go against his own convictions, since, according to this argument, historical-informed players shouldn't be using historical instruments since it is much more easier with modern instruments to attain an acceptable musical outcome, these instruments being built to ease the accuracy of intonation, agility, homogeneity and projection. Nowadays, we want to recreate as precisely as possible an orchestral sound universe that in fact never existed. A conductor might help to achieve a performance in which all the musicians play together in an even way, controlling every aspects of the musical discourse, searching for a "vision", an "interpretation". But, was it the case in the eighteenth century? Leadership was more about

articulating a dialogue between musicians, allowing a creative process that opened doors to spontaneousness in every moment, making each performance absolutely unique. Indeed, a leadership practice exerted without or with very little visual signs allowed a more flexible musical discourse by making the orchestral musicians more aware of their role within the ensemble.

To finish in a more practical way, it would be wise to recommend to musical institutions wishing to immerse their students in historically-informed performance to dedicate more energy on experimenting with period leadership practices in order to increase awareness to all musicians. In fact, students should develop their autonomy by playing in orchestral contexts without a conductor, especially if they study historically-informed performance. Indeed, they would naturally gain more flexibility in their orchestral playing skills, listening more to each other and feel more the necessity of taking the reins of the performance, because if there is no conductor involved in a performance, it doesn't mean that nobody is exerting leadership. Of course, keyboard players and violin players should learn the basics of leadership, in Quantz's, Mattheson's and Galeazzi's meanings.

Coming back to our first question that has been asked at the beginning, “Do we really need a conductor?”, one could answer, without any shame : “no, in fact, not really”.

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# Iconographies

Fig.1. W. A. Mozart (Tom Hulce) conducting his music in Forman's movie *Amadeus*, 1984

Fig.2. Example of cheironomy as practice in ancient Egypt. Accessed through : [http://www.ancientlyre.com/the\\_original\\_3000\\_year\\_old\\_music\\_of\\_the\\_bible\\_\\_revealed/](http://www.ancientlyre.com/the_original_3000_year_old_music_of_the_bible__revealed/)

Fig.3. Cover page of Ornithoparchus, Andreas. *Micrologus*. (English translation by John Dowland, original from 1519). London, 1609

Fig.4. Bowles, Edmund A. *Musical Ensemble in Festival Books, 1500-1800*. UMI Research Press. London, 1989 - Figure 192 (The Imperial Banquet Table at the Ritter Stuben)

Fig. 5. Fux's opera *Costanza e Fortezza* in 1723, Prague.

Fig.6. A performance of Rameau's *La Princesse de Navarre*, Versailles, 1745; sketch by C. N. Cochin *frs*. Paris, Musée de l'Opéra.

Fig.7. Diagram of Orchestra seating-plan for Handel commemoration at Westminster Abbey, London, May-June 1784. Found in *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>; and June the 3<sup>d</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1784, in Commemoration of Handel*. London, T. Payne and Son, 1785.

Fig. 8. Ghezzi, Pier Leone. Nicola Logroscino leading his own opera, 1753.

Fig. 9. Count Basie's band, with singer Jimmy Rushing, 1943. Accessed through : <http://bjazz.unblog.fr/2012/10/08/kansas-city-the-big-band-era-count-basie/>

Fig. 10. Peter Haas, "Friderich der Grosse in seinen Erholungs Stunden", c. 1786. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin.

Fig. 11. Jena collegium musicum, Jena collegium musicum, c.1740. Watercolor on parchment. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg - Birth of the orchestra

Fig. 12. Royal theater of Turin orchestra seating-plan.  
Galeazzi, *Elementi Teorico Pratici di Musica (Edizione seconda)*. Ascoli, 1817

Fig. 13. Desden opera house orchestra seating plan  
Galeazzi, *Elementi Teorico Pratici di Musica (Edizione seconda)*. Ascoli, 1817

Fig.14. Zoffany, Johann. *The Cowper and Gore Families*. 1775

Fig. 15. Bowles, Edmund A. *Musical Ensemble in Festival Books, 1500-1800*. UMI Research Press. London, 1989 - Figure 235 (Performance of Giuseppe de Maio's Serenade. *Il Sogno d'olympia*, in the Royal Opera House, 6 November 1747

Fig. 16. Ricci, Marco. *Rehearsal of an Opera*, c1709. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Coll.)

## Appendix



Fig. 17. Smith, C Lorrain. *A Sunday Concert at the home of Charles Burney*, 1782



Fig. 18. Chodowiecki, Daniel Nikolaus. *Chamber music in Germany*. Kunstammlungen Veste Coburg.



Fig. 19. Performance of an opera, possibly at the Eszterhaza opera house. unknown artist.



Fig. 20. Attributed to Giovanni Michele Graneri, Interno del Teatro Regio di Torino, 1740. Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Turin.