

The Cambridge Companion to Conducting

In this wide-ranging inside view of the history and practice of conducting, analysis and advice come directly from working conductors, including Sir Charles Mackerras on opera, Bramwell Tovey on being an artistic director, Martyn Brabbins on modern music, Leon Botstein on programming, and Vance George on choral conducting, and from those who work closely with conductors: a leading violinist describes working as a soloist with Stokowski, Ormandy, and Barbirolli, while Solti and Abbado's studio producer explains orchestral recording, and one of the world's most powerful managers tells all.

The book includes advice on how to conduct different types of groups (choral, opera, symphony, early music) and provides a substantial history of conducting as a study of national traditions. It is an unusually honest book about a secretive industry, and managers, artistic directors, soloists, players, and conductors openly discuss their different perspectives for the first time.

The Cambridge Companion to

CONDUCTING

.....

EDITED BY

José Antonio Bowen

Georgetown University



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Notes on the contributors

Charles F. Barber is a conductor active in concert, opera, and recording, and received a DMA in conducting from Stanford University. He has conducted for Stan Getz, Weslia Whitfield, Sarah Vaughn, and Francis Ford Coppola. With Marty Paich he worked on recording projects with Mel Tormé, Linda Ronstadt, Carly Simon, and on the films *Prince of Tides*, *Alive*, and *Grand Canyon*. In classical music he has co-produced CDs for Naxos/Marco Polo, led over forty works of musical theatre and opera, and guest-conducted in the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Morocco. In 1992 he established the “Conductors on Film Collection” at Stanford. Barber is author of *Lost in the Stars: The Forgotten Musical Life of Alexander Siloti* (Scarecrow Press, 2002). “I never write letters of recommendation, so this is an exception. Charles Barber is a scholar and a conductor who adores and understands music. We have become friends, and he pretends to believe that I have taught him something” – Carlos Kleiber.

Leon Botstein is the President and Leon Levy Professor in the Arts and Humanities at Bard College. He is music director of the American Symphony Orchestra, as well as co-artistic director of the Bard Music Festival. His international conducting engagements have included performances in London, Prague, Budapest, São Paulo, Bucharest, Manila, Seoul, Vienna, Edinburgh, and Hong Kong. He has worked with Rudolf Firkusny, Benny Goodman, Yo-Yo Ma, Blanca Uribe, Leon Fleischer, Yefim Bronfmann, and Janos Starker. A champion of new music, Leon Botstein has performed works by Richard Wilson, Robert Moevs, Peter Schickele, Joan Tower, Sofia Gubaidulina, and many others. His recordings include a series on CRI featuring works by Richard Wilson, Robert Starer, Richard Wernick, and Meyer Kupferman, and two recordings with the London Philharmonic on the Telarc label. Dr. Botstein is also editor of *The Musical Quarterly*. He has published books in both English and German. He was a National Arts Club Gold Medal recipient in 1995, and in 1996 he was awarded the Centennial Medal of the Harvard Graduate School of the Arts and Sciences.

José Antonio Bowen is the Caestecker Chair and Director of Music at Georgetown University. He founded the Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) at the University of Southampton, and his articles have appeared in many books and journals and in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship to work on his forthcoming book, *The Conductor and the Score: A History of the Relationship between Interpreter and Text from Beethoven to Wagner*, and he is the editor of *A Guide to Discography* (University of California Press, forthcoming). His compositions and playing are featured on numerous recordings, and in over twenty-five years as a conductor and jazz performer, he has appeared with Stan Getz, Dave Brubeck, Liberace, and many others. He is a

fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA) in England and Founding Member of the National Recordings Preservation Board at the Library of Congress.

Martyn Brabbins studied in London and with Ilya Musin in Leningrad. He has since conducted most of the major symphony orchestras in Britain: he has been Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Principal Conductor of Sinfonia 21 since 1994 and is the conductor for the Philharmonia Orchestra's "Music of Today" Series. He conducts at the BBC Proms every year, and his international experience ranges from the orchestras of Bayerischer Rundfunk and St. Petersburg, to the Ensemble InterContemporain. In recent years he has championed the music of James Dillon, Jonathan Lloyd, Harrison Birtwistle, Steve Reich, James MacMillan, Minna Keal, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Robin Holloway. Known for his performances of British concert music, he is equally at home at the Kirov Opera or English National Opera; he recently conducted the world premiere of Alexander Knaifel's *Alice in Wonderland* with the Netherlands Opera. He records for Hyperion with the BBC Scottish and has also recorded works by Birtwistle, David Bedford, and Finnissey for NMC. His recording of Korngold's *Die Kathrin* with the BBC Concert Orchestra for CPO won the Opera Award at the Cannes International Music Festival.

David Cairns CBE was music critic of the *Sunday Times* from 1983 to 2002, having previously written for the *Spectator*, the *Financial Times*, and the *New Statesman*. From 1967 to 1972 he worked as classical program co-ordinator for Philips Records and was involved in some of the company's major recording projects, including operas by Mozart, Berlioz, and Tippett. He has always been actively involved in music-making: he was co-founder of the Chelsea Opera Group in 1950, and sang solo roles under the group's first conductor, Colin Davis. He is conductor of the Thorington Players, an amateur orchestra which gives regular concerts for charity. He has written several books including a prize-winning two-volume biography of Berlioz (University of California Press).

J. Michele Edwards, conductor and musicologist, is professor emerita of music at Macalester College and was Director of the Macalester Festival Chorale (1992–9) and programmed innovative repertoire including *Mass in D* by Ethyl Smyth, commissioned and premiered Libby Larsen's *Like a Needle Guide Us in our Weaving*, prepared a backup chorus for Rosemary Clooney's holiday show at Orchestra Hall, and recorded Marta Ptaszyńska's *Holocaust Memorial Cantata*. She has appeared as guest conductor of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Shreveport Symphony and conducts the Calliope Women's Chorus. Her many publications include the book *Women and Music: A History* (second edn., 2001).

Harold Farberman graduated from Juilliard before joining the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a percussionist/timpanist. He moved to full-time conducting in 1963, becoming Principal Guest Conductor of the Denver Symphony Orchestra in 1963, Music Director of the Colorado Springs Symphony in 1967 and of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra from 1971–9. He has conducted the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the BBC Symphony, the Stockholm Philharmonic, the Danish Radio Orchestra, the RAI in Rome, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Seoul Philharmonic, the Sydney and Melbourne Symphonies,

and was Principal Guest Conductor of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta. He is the founder and director of the Conductors' Institute at Bard College. He is a prolific composer and in addition to acclaimed versions of Mahler symphonies he has recorded most of Charles Ives's works, and was awarded the Ives Medal.

Vance George is internationally recognized as one of America's leading choral conductors. Under his direction the San Francisco Symphony Chorus has been hailed as one of the finest in the world. On their behalf he has accepted three Grammy awards: for Best Performance of a Choral Work (Orff's *Carmina Burana*, 1993, and Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, 1996) and Best Classical Album of the Year (Stravinsky's *Perséphone*, 2000). He has also conducted them in works ranging from Bach's Mass in B minor to *Carmina Burana*. TV and film credits include an Emmy (*Sweeney Todd*, 2002) and soundtracks for *Amadeus*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *Godfather III*. Vance George's work embodies the legacy of the great maestros he has known as protégé and colleague, especially Robert Shaw, Julius Herford, Margaret Hillis, Robert Page, Otto Werner-Mueller, and Mary Oyer. He has received great acclaim for his unique knowledge of musical styles, languages, vocal colors, and his synthesis of the choral–orchestral tradition. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Kent State University, and a Lifetime Achievement Award by Chorus America.

Raymond Holden studied in Sydney, Cologne, and London. After a period of study with Sir John Pritchard CBE, he was invited to act as his assistant. In this role, he performed with Sir John throughout the UK and Europe, working as his associate conductor at the Royal Festival Hall (BBCSO Winter Season, 1980–9), the Royal Albert Hall (Proms, 1981–9), the City of London Festival (Philharmonia Orchestra, 1980), and the Edinburgh Festival (BBCSO, 1986). He has also conducted many leading British and European ensembles and was the Australian representative at the Seventh Malko International Conducting Competition (Copenhagen) with the Danish Radio Orchestra. He later conducted an all-Beethoven concert with the Philharmonia Orchestra, and a concert with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Since completing his Ph.D. at the University of London, Dr. Holden has investigated the performing activities of Richard Strauss. He is writing a book on conducting and its traditions for Yale University Press.

Michael Haas has more than twenty years' experience as producer for both Decca/London and the Sony Classical labels. He has won a number of Grammys and was producer for Sir Georg Solti for over ten years, before leaving to work with Claudio Abbado and the Berlin Philharmonic; in 1994 he was Vice President of A&R for Sony Classical in New York. He now runs his own production company, Coralfox Ltd. Since 1978, he has produced prize-winning recordings with many important conductors, including Christoph von Dohnányi, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Chailly, David Zinman, Charles Dutoit, Sir Charles Mackerras, Bernard Haitink, Mstislav Rostropovich, Valery Gergiev, and Sir Simon Rattle. His most regarded work has been in the rediscovery of music lost during the Nazi years as creator of Decca's series, *Entartete Musik*. This was a groundbreaking project which was the first major attempt to bring a critical examination of many works assumed lost, or dismissed as irrelevant, after 1945.

Stephen Johnson was born in Lancashire in 1955. He studied at the Northern School of Music, Manchester, under Alexander Goehr at Leeds University, then at Manchester University. Since then he has written regularly for *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, and was Chief Music Critic of *The Scotsman* (1998–9). He has also broadcast frequently for BBC Radios 3, 4, and World Service, major projects including a series of fourteen programmes about the music of Bruckner for the centenary of the composer's death (1996). He is the author of *Bruckner Remembered* (Faber, 1998).

David Mermelstein is editorial director of KUSC, a classical radio station in Los Angeles. He regularly writes about music for the Sunday edition of *The New York Times*. His feature articles and criticism have also appeared in *Gramophone*, *ICRC*, *The New Criterion*, *Opera News*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Washington Post*, *LA Weekly* and *Variety*. In addition, he is a contributor to the revised edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

Sir Charles Mackerras studied in Sydney and Prague before making his debut with Sadler's Wells Opera. He has since been Principal Conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra (1954–6), the First Conductor at the Hamburg State Opera (1966–70), Music Director at the Sadler's Wells Opera (1970–77, becoming the English National Opera in 1974), Artistic Director of the Welsh National Opera (1987–92), and a constant Guest Conductor at the Royal Opera House since 1964. His Metropolitan Opera debut was made in 1972 with Gluck's *Orfeo et Euridice*. He continues to conduct at the Met and is Conductor Emeritus with the San Francisco Opera and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, as well as Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. He is President of Trinity College, London.

David Nice is a writer, lecturer, and broadcaster on music. As a regular contributor to monthly publications including the *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone*, he has interviewed all the major living Russian conductors. His many broadcasts in the BBC Radio 3 series *Building a Library* have included detailed comparisons of all the available interpretations of major works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky. He lectures on Russian music for the Music Club of London, the City Literary Institute, and several of the major London orchestras. He has written short studies of Elgar, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, and the history of opera, and is currently working on a biography of Prokofiev for Yale University Press.

Robert L. Ripley was brought up in a musical home, where his mother was a voice teacher and pianist. He started the cello at age nine and attended the Curtis Institute of Music upon finishing high school. After two summers at the Berkshire Music Center (now the Tanglewood Music Center), he became a member of the Cleveland Orchestra in 1942, but this was quickly terminated by World War II, when he found himself in the string section of the Glenn Miller Air Force Band. Following the war, he rejoined the Cleveland Orchestra, playing under George Szell for his first nine years there. In 1955, he moved to the Boston Symphony Orchestra and remained there until his retirement in 1995.

Michael Rose read French and Italian at Oxford and studied composition with Bernard Stevens. With the late Hanns Hammelmann he wrote the radio series *Birth of an Opera* for the BBC Third Programme (1954–76). From 1961 to 1981 he lived in Italy, where he arranged scripts and music for television art documentaries, collaborated with Emanuele Luzzati on a cartoon film of *The Magic Flute*, and contributed articles and advice to *The New Grove*. He provided the music entries for the new *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, contributed to the *Viking* (now New Penguin) *Opera Guide*, and with John Amis compiled an anthology, *Words about Music* (Faber, 1989). He was general editor of the Everyman–EMI Music Companions, wrote the commentary for Erich Auerbach's photographs in *Images of Music*, and has most recently published *Berlioz Remembered* (Faber, 2001).

Bernard D. Sherman is the author of *Inside Early Music* (Oxford University Press, 1997), and co-editor of *Performing Brahms* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). He wrote an essay on "Authenticity in Musical Performance" for *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), and contributes regularly to *The New York Times*. His writings have also appeared in *Early Music*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Historical Performance*, *Schwann/Opus*, *Early Music Quarterly*, and many other publications.

Joseph Silverstein has appeared as both conductor and violin soloist with more than a hundred orchestras in the United States, Europe, Israel, and the Far East. He began his conducting career as assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony in 1971, after having been concertmaster with that orchestra for nine years. In 1983 he became the Music Director of the Utah Symphony Orchestra, becoming Conductor Laureate in 1998. He has conducted the Berlin Symphony in Germany and on tour in North America in the winter of 1998. He remains an active soloist, chamber music performer, and teacher. He organized the Boston Symphony Chamber Players in 1962 and has been on the faculties of Boston University, the Tanglewood Music Center, Susquehanna University, and Yale University. Currently he is on the string faculty of the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has recorded as both conductor and violin soloist with the Utah Symphony on the Pro Arte label and his Telarc recording of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with the Boston Symphony received a Grammy nomination.

Bramwell Tovey is Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony and Chief Conductor and Music Director of L'Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. In 2004 and 2005 he will direct and conduct a new series of concerts at the Lincoln Center for the New York Philharmonic. From 1989 to 2001 he was artistic director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra where he founded the du Maurier New Music Festival in 1992. He has given world or North American premieres by Corigliano, Pärt, Tower, Schafer, Turnage, and many other distinguished composers. He has directed every major British orchestra, including the LSO, CBSO, LPO, and the RSNO. In North America his appearances include the Toronto and Montreal Symphonies and the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He made his Canadian Opera Company debut in

1994 and in 2003 conducted the world premiere of Estacio's *Filumena* for Calgary Opera and the Banff Centre. As a composer his works include concertos for viola and cello. His *Requiem for a Charred Skull* won the 2003 Juno Prize for best classical composition. In 1999 he won the \$25,000 Chalmers Award for artistic direction of a major Canadian arts organization. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music and London University.

Stephen Wright studied law and modern languages at Cambridge University where he co-founded the Oxford and Cambridge Shakespeare Company. In 1971 he set up and ran the European office of an American concert management agency, Shawconcerts Ltd. Then in 1975 he joined Harold Holt Ltd., later becoming joint Managing Director and looking after a group of thirty artists (including Mariss Jansons, Sir Neville Marriner, and Seiji Ozawa) and touring a wide range of international orchestras (including St. Petersburg, Oslo, and the Leipzig Gewandhaus). He left Harold Holt with his division to form IMG Artists Europe in 1991; he took on his current role of Managing Director of IMG Artists in 1995, where he has managed or worked for Seiji Ozawa, Rafael Kubelík, Sergiv Celibidache, Yuri Temirkanov, Antonio Pappano, Michael Tilson Thomas, and many others. IMG has also established a new international television/video arm which has, with the BBC, produced BBC Legends and made *The Art of Conducting* and *The Art of Singing*.

Preface

Every contributor to this book is either a conductor or has had considerable professional experience with conductors. A few are also academics, but many continue to make their livelihood as conductors and most of us had to juggle the task of writing with the daily routines of rehearsals, concerts, recordings and tours. This book was a truly collaborative effort and I am grateful to all of the contributors not only for such probing insights into the art of conducting, but also for being so willing to engage in discussion about who would say what, and how we would manage the various styles and perspectives of contributors. I apologize for taking you away from the music, but it was my privilege to work with such great musicians.

Asking so many professional musicians to contribute, of course, was a risk. Many were first-time writers and nervous about tone, referencing systems, and, most importantly, about what to say. As working conductors, there was little academic detachment. While this resulted in a variety of voices and many disagreements, it has the tremendous advantage of truly illuminating the history and role of the conductor. In the end, I resisted the editor's natural urge to make every chapter sound the same; I could not make the orchestral player, the soloist, the studio producer, the manager, and the choral conductor all speak with the same voice. What remains is not one, but many unique views into the world of conductors and conducting.

Many topics came up repeatedly. Everyone agreed that most of a conductor's work occurs in rehearsal and there was remarkable agreement about best practice, although the regular reminders that conductors should speak up, learn a few names and end on time suggests that none of these is yet common practice. There was little agreement, however, about marking parts for the performers. Positions at the extremes ranged from travelling with your own set of performance parts (including a back-up set) to allowing the orchestra to bow their own parts. These, and all the positions in between, were rooted in practical experience. Arriving with parts for each player which already contain the conductor's preferred bowings and dynamics saves time in a tight schedule. Others, though, questioned the psychology of telling a group of professionals, generally more skilled on their own instrument than the conductor, how to create a sound: individual players (especially when performing in their own hall for a guest conductor) may know best. This issue came up in nine different chapters in all manner of guises and nothing better illuminates how practice can reveal important cultural and historical

differences; recommendations about marking parts intersect with discussions of studio and live recordings, guest conducting, whether the soloist should directly address the orchestra, and how European and American orchestras differ. (American orchestras are more likely to use and keep new sets of parts for each new conductor while many European orchestras still use the parts they used in the nineteenth century – Mengelberg’s blue pencil markings can still be found on Concertgebouw music stands.) I have, in many cases, included cross-references to other chapters where the same topic is discussed, often from a different perspective.

The book is divided into three sections, but all of them mix practical insight with some historical perspective. While the first section deals with practice *per se*, it mixes information about rehearsals and studio seating with discussion of how rehearsal techniques have changed and how different conductors approach studio work. There is plenty of advice, but also discussion of why conductors do the things they do.

The middle historical section is not a who’s who of conducting. While most of the major figures are mentioned, the aim is to tell the stories of how conducting developed in different places and how this influenced national and even individual practice. While it is certainly true that modern jet travel and recordings have gradually homogenized the world’s orchestras, there are still differences in practice and sound and there is little question that through the middle of the twentieth century many orchestras (Berlin, Leningrad, and Philadelphia, for example) played with a sound tied to both the region and the conductor. The aim here is not to define schools, but to analyze the history of conducting in a new way.

The final section concentrates on a range of issues confronting modern conducting, from how to create a coherent concert program to what a manager does. Again the practical is mixed with the historical. While there is disagreement about whether conducting technique has “improved” and whether or not it is easier to conduct an orchestra now than it was for Berlioz, all agree that technique has changed. Should modern conducting technique be used when leading players holding eighteenth-century instruments? While this is a model of the typical academic question (as it is relatively easy to argue either side), conductors, in the end, must make decisions that have interpretative consequences. Academics, pundits, and critics can contemplate various options from the safety of the aisle seat, but a performer can only commit to one approach at a time. Other challenges to modern conducting include a radically different relationship with contemporary music, the job of Artistic Director, and the marginal acceptance of women as conductors.

While there are plenty of textbooks on conducting and biographies of conductors, this book attempts to bridge that gap. It is my hope that the

combination of practical details (how *not* to start a rehearsal with a major orchestra) with a fresh look at the musical, social, and economic history of conducting will together provide students and anyone interested in conducting with new insight.

Despite all of the excellent contributions, I am responsible for all shortcomings and errors, and only hope my efforts have done justice to the work assembled here. I am grateful to Penny Souster and her team at Cambridge and to Dorothy Biondi, at Georgetown, who somehow managed to keep the wolves at bay long enough for me to finish. My thanks to everyone who contributed and supported me during this effort, especially Nancy, Naomi and Molly.

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The Richard-Strauss-Institut, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen: Fig. 1.2

The personal archives of Robert Ripley: Figs. 7.1, 12.2

Meininger Museen: Figs. 9.1, 9.2

British Museum, Prints and Drawings: Fig. 11.1

BBC Research Collection, Written Archives, News Information:
Fig. 15.1

New York Public Library: Fig. 16.2

21C Media Group: Fig. 16.3

Oxford University Press: Ex. 19.2

The music examples were set by Mark Gruen of Enterprise Musical Arts and Sciences, Bethesda, MA, with the exception of chapter 16, where Vance George's annotated examples and figures were created by Dennis Dieterich of Music Publications Technologies in San Francisco.

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