

Leading the Band like Bach:
A Critical Examination of Leadership in
Twenty-First Performances of J. S. Bach

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Introduction

What does leadership mean and what effect do different styles of leadership have? This thesis addresses this question concerning Early Music and, more specifically, performances of Bach's music. Symphonic orchestral performances depend on at least two components: the orchestra that plays and the conductor who leads. This dichotomy has existed around two hundred years and has become fundamental to the conception of classical music.¹ Musicians study their parts and play their lines; conductors study the score and lead the musicians. This division has come to imply that conductors dictate how the orchestra should musically express themselves. Orchestral concerts are a culmination of human effort, which produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts; a whole in which the binding factor, the conductor, seemingly plays an essential role.

This thesis seeks to challenge this commonplace division of labor. The challenge is to reconsider the need for singular leadership, in this case, that of a conductor. To do so, this thesis focusses on Early Music also known as Historically Informed Performance (HIP). Early Music groups seek to reintroduce or rather reinvent historic manners of music performance by replicating the number of musicians, style, instruments, location, and seating that were customary in the era and location where a piece was composed.² Early Music's aim to recreate historical performance settings, means that the movement is closely related to research. I have chosen to focus on this field of performance since (1) before the early nineteenth century, music was not performed with a conductor; (2) compared to modern orchestras Early Music ensembles are small, flexible and willing to experiment - meaning they do not operate in rigid bureaucratic structures; (3) the Early Music movement originated as an anti-establishment trend against modern orchestras and sought to implement democratic ways of music-making. However, despite Early Music's focus on historical research and performance, many groups in this scene still perform with a modern conductor leading them.³

As a case study, I interview the violinist leader of the Netherlands Bach Society (NBV), Shunske Sato. In 2016, the NBV appointed Sato as its artistic director, succeeding the conductor Jos van Veldhoven. Instead of leading like a modern conductor, Sato leads from the position of the concertmaster and plays the violin during concerts. In my interview, Sato is asked to expand on manner in which he leads performances, it benefits, pitfalls, and possibilities for the future. The Netherlands Bach Society is specialized in performing the music of J. S. Bach and as such, this thesis will focus on the performance of Bach's music.

¹ Norman Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2001), 1-2.

² Michael O'Loughlin, "A Brief Polemic about the Early Music Movement," in *Aesthetics and Experience in Music Performance*, ed. Elizabeth Mackinlay (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Press), 49.

³ Peter Holman, *Before the Baton: Musical Direction and Conducting in Stuart and Georgian Britain*, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2020), 348.

This question this thesis aims to answer is: what is the best way to lead Early Music? From its outset, this question is impossible to answer since it assumes a single objective outcome. Realistically, the best way to lead an orchestra is dependent on subjective factors. Therefore, the research question is best dissected. First, it is necessary to define how the 'best' method can be quantified. This thesis does this in three distinct ways. The first chapter explores how Bach's music was led in his own time. The second chapter discusses the views of contemporary scholars on Early Music leadership, ethnographic critiques of conductorship, and scientific examinations of visual cues in music. The third chapter investigates Shunske Sato's practical experiences as an instrumental leader in Early Music. The conclusion will summarize my findings, deliberate the current state of Early Music leadership, and consider possibilities for future research.

As such, this thesis does not attempt to accurately reconstruct how Bach led his orchestra and choir. Rather, this work hopes to act as a point of departure and a polemic surrounding the discussion of conductors in Early Music.

Chapter 1: Conducting in Early Modern Western Europe

Before the nineteenth-century, baton conducting had not yet been invented and multiple other methods were employed. Scholars today are still uncovering new truths about musical leadership in medieval, renaissance, and baroque Europe since many details remain unknown. In 1940, Adam Carse published his book *Music in the XVIIIth Century* wherein he states that there were three methods to lead an orchestra or ensemble in the eighteenth century.⁴ First, in opera, a method of dual control was employed, whereby leadership was split between the *Kapellmeister* – the harpsichordist who led the overall performance and singers – and the *Concertmeister* – the principal violinist who led the orchestra. According to Carse, this method was ubiquitous in Europe, except for Paris, where a time-beater kept tempo by audibly hitting a big stick on another surface. Second, instrumental music would be led by the method of split leadership described above. However, in this case, the harpsichordist played a subordinate role as an accompanist. Last, in unaccompanied choral music, the beat was indicated visually by a time-beater, who held a roll of sheet music. This last method was also used when a performance employed multiple choirs or instrumental sections, often placed at a reasonable distance from one another. Naturally, this strict threefold division of leadership had its exceptions. When an instrumental group was poorly skilled, either a time-beater (visual or audible) would have to be present or the violinist-leader would have to stomp his feet to mark the pulse⁵ or would tap his bow on another object.⁶

Bernard D. Sherman emphasizes these distinctions in conducting in his chapter in the *Cambridge Companion to Conducting*. Sherman outlines manners of musical leadership pre-1800 as time-beating with a roll of music paper, leading from the first violin and shared leadership between the keyboard and the violin – he writes that in opera the *maestro di capella* oversaw the whole performance, while the violinist focused on the orchestra.⁷ Further, he writes that audible time beating, as practiced by Lully, occurred in French opera.⁸ These practices were not standardized and differing forms of musical leadership coexisted in certain periods and regions.

For example, seventeenth-century German music's most conservative conducting practice was the "even beating of metre" with the traditional "strict down-up beat" inherited from Renaissance choral practice. It coexisted, however, with conducting practices that allowed more detailed central control, as when Wolfgang Caspar Printz wrote in 1678 that singers should watch the director when he "directs the

⁴ Adam Carse, *The Orchestra in the XVIIIth Century*, (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1940), 88.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷ Bernard D. Sherman, "Conducting early music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting*, ed. José Antonio Bowen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 237.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

measure faster or slower,” on account of improvised ornamentation, “such as is made by an artistic musician, which lengthens the time of a beat.”⁹

The method described by Printz seems to foreshadow a manner or musical leadership, whereby the leader conveys artistic information. This detail, which I will return to shortly, indicates that musical leadership could, in some cases, entail more than acting as a human metronome during performances.

Sherman writes that J.S. Bach’s music demands a “good deal of centralized leadership”, which the composer would have sought in his performances.¹⁰ Bach led from several positions, including the harpsichord, violin and organ.¹¹ Sherman writes that Bach did not lead from the organ in Leipzig, but may have done so in Weimar. When possible, Bach would have executed his leadership position as much as possible. The evidence thereof comes from Johann Matthias Gesner’s description of a performance where Bach was

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 by 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 his body.¹²

According to Laurence Dreyfus, this involved style of conducting was necessary for Bach, since the musicians were amateurs, – who, according to the writers of Bach’s obituary, were musically inferior to Bach¹³ – rehearsal time was limited and the Thomaskirche at Leipzig had the organist facing away from the ensemble. On the other hand, Andrew Parrott believes that “powerful musical personalities” always had a way of transmitting their musical thoughts to their musicians, regardless of the style of leadership they employed.¹⁴ Through long-term interaction with his musicians, Bach developed an effective directorial style that, while at odds with techniques used today, was best suited to his performances.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid., 238.

¹⁰ Ibid., 238.

¹¹ Ibid., 239.

¹² Ibid., 239-240.; Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 328-329.

¹³ Andreas Glöckner, “On the Performing Forces of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Leipzig church music,” *Early music* 38, no. 2 (May 2010): 215.

¹⁴ Sherman, “Conducting,” 240.

¹⁵ Ibid., 240

Holman on Early Modern Leadership

In his most recent book, *Before the Baton*, Peter Holman gives a brief, yet detailed analysis of musical leadership in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, Italy, and Germany. In doing so, he examines and amends longstanding myths in scholarship on conducting.¹⁶ In light of Holman's findings, the basic model proposed by Carse is wholly outdated and in the writing by Sherman many inaccuracies remain.

Holman found that in all forms of historical leadership, the division of time was seminal. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century, duple meter was beaten up and down with even strokes and triple meter was beaten up and down with one elongated stroke and one shorter stroke.¹⁷ Regardless of how a group of musicians was led, the time beater adhered to this division of time. This means that modern conductors who are conducting in eight or six are using anachronistic methods and are conducting the music too slowly.

A far cry for Carse's threefold division, Holman notes that musical leadership differed much per country and musical style. Instrumental pieces were led by the *maestro*, some groups were led by a musician playing a guitar-like instrument beating time with the neck of their instrument or a singer would beat time while performing with an ensemble. In polychoral performances a singer from each choir would beat for their section while keeping an eye on staying in time with (the) other section(s) or a single musical director would beat time with a roll of sheet music.

Holman supports Sherman's notion that time-beaters would indicate time in a manner that conveyed artistic directions, wherein beats were manipulated according to style, words, or endings of pieces (akin to *ritardando*). However, Holman does not believe that this practice meant that musical directors commanded expression by conducting. Holman further agrees that Bach used three methods of leading his performances – on the violin, harpsichord and organ.¹⁸ While C.P.E. Bach wrote that his father “played the violin cleanly and penetratingly, and thus kept the orchestra in better order than he would have done with the harpsichord,”¹⁹ Holman believes C.P.E. may have been referring to instrumental music when writing this passage. For other passages, Holman believes that Bach played keyboard instruments. A source from 1727 describes Bach playing the harpsichord for his *Trauerode* BWV 198 and Laurence Dreyfus believes that based on a description by Johann Matthias Gesner, Bach played the harpsichord during other performances.²⁰ Furthermore, evidence of Bach playing the organ from a score in 'Geist und Seele wird verwirret' BWV 35 and 'Ich geh' und suche mit Verlangen BWV 49 is presented by Joshua Rifkin.²¹

¹⁶ These include the origin of baton conducting with Pherekydes of Patrae, giver of Rhythm and Lully's audible time-beating.

¹⁷ Holman, *Before the Baton*, 355.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 352.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

However, Holman refutes the idea that Bach – whatever instrument he was playing – would have been able to directly control the performances at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.²² Andrew Parrot has collected images of singers standing at the edge of the organ gallery, and Arnold Schering and Christoph Wolff have made reconstructions of the west end of the Thomaskirche, which led them to agree that the gallery had two levels, one above for the organ and one below for the singers.²³ Assuming that Bach was playing the organ during cantata performances, he would have not been able to give artistic gestures during these performances. This supports Holman’s hypothesis that in performances of his work, Bach did not act as a musical conductor, but rather a *primus inter pares* (a first among equals) similar to Duke Ellington.²⁴ Contrary to staged pictures and video recordings, Ellington often sat at the left fore, from the audience’s perspective, not the center and did not conduct his group. Holman suggests that movement entries could have been easily started by a gesture from the violin or a chord from the continuo group, which Bach led from the organ.²⁵ As for pieces with continuous movements, such as the Matthew Passion BWV 244, Holman suggests that the piece was performed with a *tempo ordinario* throughout the piece, where *allegro* indicated a double speed and sections with separate entries could start from a ‘new’ beat.²⁶

The information presented here leaves aspects of Bach leadership up for questioning and debate, but it does so far exclude the possibility of Bach conducting his performances or beating time. This suggests that nowadays conducted performances of Bach’s music are starkly historically inaccurate. I write starkly because in all modern performances historical inaccuracies will be present. Early Music violinists performing Bach might use a baroque instrument with gut strings and a historical bow, but their instrument could be a French specimen from 1755, their strings from plastic Nylgut, and their bow from an Italian maker in 1671. Such a setup is not historically accurate for performing late North German baroque music, let alone that each musician’s instrument and performance style contains several such inaccuracies, meaning that on a whole, Early Music is not accurate or historical at all.²⁷ While inconsistencies in playing style and instruments exist in relation to the music that is performed, the reality is that Early Music musicians are the ones most knowledgeable about the many inaccuracies surrounding their performances. They are experts on research regarding their music and instrument and have generally read a plethora of original sources on the music they perform. However, in their

²² Ibid., 353.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 349.

²⁵ Ibid., 352.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ In *A Brief Polemic about the Early Music Movement*, Michael O’Loghlin gives a more concrete example of this problem on page 50: “Even today, instruments vary greatly between different countries; for example, the Viennese oboe and F horn are unique to that city, while the French and German clarinets are quite different in sound and technique. Where the instrument is the same, playing techniques vary, for example vibrato on the horn in Eastern Europe and Russia. In the less globalized world of the eighteenth century, this was much more the case. Original instrument players now use different instruments for different periods, but they rarely differentiate between different countries, and rarely learn different techniques appropriate to them.”

performances, they are often restricted by time and budget. While an Early Music violinist may want to learn the intricacies of various styles of playing in Europe from the eighteenth century, studying for a concert of, for example, seventeenth-century English will have to take priority. While this aforementioned violinist might want to own various instruments from each period, reflecting the many innovations from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, they can only afford to purchase a limited number of instruments at a time. Further, as musicologist Andreas Glöckner writes

The quest for historically informed performance models has less to do with the ‘archaeological’ reconstruction of actual circumstances than with the realization of a composition as it could have sounded in optimal conditions at a given location. No interpreter today would be able or willing to reproduce the presumed or documented inaccuracies of earlier performances (such as problems in vocal or instrumental execution, acoustic problems, or deficits in personnel).²⁸

Hiring a conductor, however, is not a restraint of time or budget, but an active choice. Of all the people on stage, the conductor receives the biggest payroll and while employing a conductor in Early Music used to be necessary for rehearsal efficiency, this is no longer the case.²⁹ Rather, as Holman states “I believe that it is unnecessary and pernicious to apply [modern conducting] to earlier music: unnecessary because Early Music specialists do not normally need someone continually beating time; pernicious because interpretative conducting makes it difficult to achieve the sense of freedom and spontaneity within a collective interpretation that is essential for a truly historically informed performance.”³⁰ Why, then, are conductors still often present in Early Music and performances of Bach’s music?³¹ The next chapter will answer this question.

²⁸ Glöckner, “On the Performing forces,” 215.

²⁹ Holman, *Before the Baton*, 349.

³⁰ Peter Holman, “Before the Baton: a preliminary report,” *Early Music* 41, No. 1 (February 2013), 55.

³¹ Nicholas Baumgartner, “Currents in Bach Interpretation in Contemporary Germany,” *Bach* 30, No. 2 (1999): 1-26.

Chapter 2: Scholarship on Conducting Early Music Leadership

Robert Donington's 1963 book *The Interpretation of Early Music* deals with almost every aspect of performing early music. Chapters address stylistic approaches, musical expression, accidentals, embellishments, accompaniment, instruments, and choirs with thorough attention to detail. However, Donington dedicates a mere half a page of the 537 to the role of the conductor in Early Music. In this short passage, he argues that, while conductors in the Baroque led the band from the harpsichord or violin, the modern practice of conducting gives much more satisfying results and should, therefore, be adhered to. The reason being that this is the practice to which modern performers are most accustomed.

Adam Carse supports this notion in *Music in the XVIIIth Century*. At the end of the chapter on musical direction, he discusses the possibilities of reintroducing the old method of leadership. He states that the possibilities of reviving the baroque conducting practices are hindered by the character of modern orchestras. First, orchestras in the eighteenth century were concerned only with playing music from their era, as opposed to the three centuries of music that orchestras performed by the 1940s. Second, he argues that, even when solely considering the performance of eighteenth-century music, the size of orchestras in Carse's time did not lend themselves to the instrumental leadership, as practiced in the baroque. He believes that issues with instrumental leadership quickly arise in large groups, which became evident in the late eighteenth century. Orchestras could often not properly hear and see the *concertmeister* or *maestro di cappella*, due to which the central pulse was lost. To amend this problem, the leader had to resort to ill-received solutions of audible time-beating. Removing the conductor from large orchestras, Carse argues, would cause this issue to arise once again. Nonetheless, he admits conductorless orchestras can only exist when the players are all "equally efficient ... [and are] playing the music of their own time."

The Necessity of Conductors in Early Music

In the HIP scene, anachronisms are everywhere, from musician performing with scores to trumpets with 'tone holes.' In his chapter *Conducting Early Music*, Early Music musicologist Bernard D. Sherman explores these anachronisms by comparing historical musical leadership to modern conducting in Early Music. He found that a cause for the discrepancies between historical and modern conducting stem from changed priorities between the Baroque to the twenty-first century.³² He writes that the performances that Bach led were presumably less refined than modern performances and perhaps inadequate for contemporary tastes. In J. S. Bach's time, flawless performances were not fetishized as they are today and presumably errors were made regularly. Sherman quotes Robert Philip, who noted that the dawn of audio recording made musicians more aware of their errors. This prompted them to perceive flawless playing as a priority since their performance lost their temporal nature.³³ The desire for impeccable

³² Sherman, "Conducting Early Music 241-242.

³³ *Ibid.*, 241.

performances increased over time and with it, musical skill. Conductors helped to sustain this high level of performance. Even for the most ardent Early Music evangelist, Sherman argues, going back to the ‘loose’ Baroque manner of playing is unthinkable and if it were, the audience would surely not accept it. Another reason for the reliance on modern conductors is the decreased rehearsal time – combined with modern performance standards – which demand that high standards are reached in a short amount of time.³⁴ Additionally, the persona of the conductor is an effective marketing tool, even if an ensemble does not need a conductor.

A prevailing argument in Early Music is that by following a conductor an ensemble becomes less tight and less proactive in their performance. Already in 1789, the composer André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry wrote: “The players become cold and indifferent when they do not follow the soloist directly; the stick that directs them humiliates them, takes away their natural wish to excel.”³⁵ However, Sherman emphasizes that critiques by Early Music musicians on modern conducting do not necessarily validate their interpretation. He quotes John Butt, who noted that these musicians characterize the HIP scene as “the venue for democratised [*sic*] music-making, liberated from the hierarchical factory conditions of modern orchestral culture.”³⁶ Sherman aptly notes that this ethos in itself has nothing to do with eighteenth-century music, which was in many ways more classist and hierarchal than the democratic anti-establishment attitude of the HIP groups and even more than modern classical orchestras.³⁷ In this regard, the egalitarian approaches by Early Music groups are equally anachronistic as the practices of modern orchestras performing early music.

Further, Sherman believes that groups led by an instrumentalist only achieve modern standards in small ensembles and even then, this is not a guarantee that the ensemble will play ‘tighter’ or more musically than a conducted group.³⁸ Even then, he sees instrumentally led groups as a compromise between modern and historical practices. He writes that “without the rise in orchestral virtuosity that has taken place in the twentieth century, leaderless performances would not be able to meet the standards of modern recording-centred [*sic*] audiences.”³⁹ Nonetheless, Sherman acknowledges that removing the conductor from the band is a modern compromise that does bring ensembles closer to historical performances.⁴⁰

Conductorless ensembles are sometimes criticized for lacking in personal interpretation, which often is demanded by contemporary critics.⁴¹ This tendency evolved when orchestras began to focus less on new compositions and more on the canon of historical masterworks. Under-interpreted

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 246.

performances by conductorless ensembles will, in this respect, invariably produce performances that are unsatisfying to critics, even though they are more historically justified.⁴²

Sherman concludes by viewing modern conducting as information technology.⁴³ It presents a more efficient method of achieving existing goals – he compares it to riding the train, instead of travelling on foot. Furthermore, new technologies bring new possibilities that fundamentally change the way we practice routine customs. On the other hand, he recognized that historical methods give insights into the inner workings of early music, which present a trove of information for conductors.⁴⁴

Problematization of Conductors in Early Music

In the arguments raised by Donnington, Carse, and Sherman there are a number of critical issues. Donnington writes that musicians should remain with forms of leadership they know, since it produces more satisfying results. He does not prove the latter claim and the former argument is a conservative outlook which goes against the very principle of Early Music. This movement was built on experimenting with styles and instruments that have been forgotten for centuries, in order to produce new, exciting results.

Carse says that the size of orchestras prohibits the possibility of instrumental leadership and this would only be possible when orchestras play music from their own time. The current state of Early Music has rendered these arguments invalid since by following historical sources, Early Music groups have decreased their size and are seated in such a way that they can clearly hear and see each other. Further, the musicians in these groups have often studied at conservatories that offered programs focused on historical performance. Such musicians have made the music of the past their own, just as musicians studying post-Classical music do. Carse's idea that orchestra's lead by an instrumentalist would have to resort to audible time-beating therefore does not apply.

Sherman suggests that without the conductor, Early Music groups will not produce satisfying results, due to restraints of rehearsal time in combination with the expected level of performance. Like Donnington, Sherman never proves that modern performance standards cannot be met by a conductorless groups with little rehearsal time. Again, it is important to emphasize that musicians in Early Music specialize in one field of performance and study this musically and academically throughout their whole life. When a group comes together, they are well versed in the musical language of the piece and are able to grasp the essence of the piece when studying their part at home. Using a conductor could take up more time, since he would be concerned with getting the group to express the musical idea he had in mind, rather than letting them express their own idea. Sherman, writes that even if a group does not need a conductor for performance, they should employ one for marketing purposes. Instead of spending an elaborate sum of money on a conductor who is not strictly necessary and then

⁴² Ibid., 246.

⁴³ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

investing in marketing this persona, a group could just use the money they would have spent on the conductor to improve their marketing. If the marketeers of a group believe that a single person works best for drawing attention to a group, they could always make their leader the focus of the group.

Sherman further argues that the egalitarian approaches that Early Music groups have is not historically accurate, since in Bach's time, for example, society was extremely hierarchical, a notion that would have been reflected in the way groups in the past operated. The egalitarian approach with an instrumental leader an anachronistic approach. Yet, this does not validate the use of conductor in Early Music. It is not desirable to recreate all the social stratifications that existed in the past, instead, Early Music groups strive to recreate the soundscape of previous eras. Given the fact that these musicians are recreating, or perhaps inventing new sounds based on their interpretations of old sources, it is impossible to say that any one of these musicians has the single correct approach. However, some approaches can be ruled out. For instance, using a modern violin in Medieval music is musically anachronistic, since modern violins did not yet exist. In the same way, Early Music groups should not be conducted by a modern conductor, since this is an anachronistic way of performance, which is easily amended. How the groups should organize themselves without a conductor is then another question. Since the original composers are no longer around groups will need to decide if they trust on person to decide the artistic rout they will take or find an interpretation democratically.

Finally, Sherman argued conductors are information technology for producing Early Music in a faster more efficient way. However, this suggests that the conductor is an unbiased catalyst to help Early Music groups perform. As will be further examined below, this is not the case. The conductor is an agent with a dominant voice that gets the sole privilege of deciding how a performance will be expressed artistically. Further, why would Sherman not consider an egalitarian approach as information technology in the same way? For example, a group of experts come together, wherein each can express their idea about the performance, while one acts as the leader and moderates the rehearsals. This could very well produce exciting results, in a manner that was unprecedented in the past. This would be a more revolutionary 'technology,' than the status quo approach of using a conductor.

Holman on Instrumental Leadership

In the conclusion of his recently published book *Before the Baton: conducting and musical direction in Georgian Britain*, Peter Holman writes in favor of omitting conductors in Early Music. He writes that often Early Music conductors become too controlling of a performance. The techniques of the modern orchestra then become imprinted on an Early Music ensemble, which generates a soundscape that is "anachronistic, inappropriate, unnecessary and, most important, musically unconvincing."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Peter Holman, *Before the Baton*, 348.

His first objection to current practices conducting in Early Music is that he deems it unnecessary.⁴⁶ In the past thirty or forty years, it was indispensable since the level of performances were too low in comparison to modern standards. In recent years, however, the level has greatly improved but conductors are still present. A performance by a small group of highly skilled singers and instrumentalists is no longer benefitted by a conductor giving cues and visually expressing the dynamics. Holman is convinced that, in this case, the conductor is hired for the sake of the audience – as a publicity tool, like Sherman suggested – rather than the ensemble. More so, Early Music ensembles are competent at performing on their own and the conductor is merely present to establish a great amount of control over the group, for which he receives an excessive fee. Holman believes this clashes with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music direction, where even Handel – who Holman considers to be extremely controlling – did not exercise control during a performance and instead played along during large scale productions. Holman compares this style of leadership to performance practices in big band jazz. As mentioned before, Duke Ellington was a *primus inter pares* of a highly skilled orchestra and played the piano – placed at the side of the orchestra – during performances, rather than conducting from the centre-front (as his press photos would suggest).⁴⁷ Holman sees similarities to the *maestro al cembalo* in Italian Baroque opera, who was placed at the side of the pit. Holman further thinks that early music comes alive when “excessive control is not exercised.”⁴⁸ The machine-like control of modern conducting is misguided in the sound world of eighteenth-century music, in his opinion.

Another issue is that of assumed authority. Audiences believe that the person leading a group is most knowledgeable regarding the music being performed.⁴⁹ However, so often the musicians in HIP ensembles and orchestras have exceptional knowledge of Early Music and its performance practice. Commonly, these groups are led by an expensive conductor from a mainstream orchestra, who has less knowledge and understanding of this repertoire and how it should be performed. Additionally, there are those conductors who have founded and promoted their group but are lacking in knowledge and have insufficient conducting skills. In both cases, the conductor takes credit for excellent performances, which were made possible by highly specialized musicians.

The alternative Holman suggests is based on his own experience as a leader in Early Music groups, largely made up of amateurs.⁵⁰ He developed a style of directing where he plays the harpsichord and intermittently jumps in to conduct choruses or demanding solos. He only gives the beat at the beginning of a piece and shares aspects of interpretation or musicality during rehearsals. He found that

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ World Music & Drops, “Duke Ellington & His Orchestra live in Tivoli Garden 1969 very rare [Full Concert],” *YouTube* video, 1:23:07, January 12, 2018, <https://youtu.be/MVh6yeCTKm4>.; wasaexpress, “Duke Ellington Live in Norway 1971,” *YouTube* video, 34:55, February 15, 2018, <https://youtu.be/8eUNaE0UIXQ>.

⁴⁸ Holman, *Before the Baton*, 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 350.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 351.

this is an excellent manner to conductor even large-scale works, such as operas by Purcell or J. S. Bach's oratorios.

On the topic of Bach, Holman suggests that when directing a HIP orchestra, leaders should inform themselves about the orchestration and layout of a group in the eighteenth century.⁵¹ "It is now well-established that J. S. Bach worked with a tradition that essentially used one-to-a-part vocal groups rather than choirs in concerted sacred music, and that this tradition involved placing the singers at the front of church galleries with the instrumentalists behind, the director normally playing the keyboard."⁵² Many historical and contemporary sources confirm that Bach worked in this manner, while he would lead from the violin in other cases, perhaps in secular cantatas and instrumental music.⁵³ Bach's music is now sometimes led and performed in a manner resembling his own, but other early repertoires still need their revival of historically informed leadership.⁵⁴

The Conductor as Shaman

Aside from functional analyses of conducting, further accounts of the conductor give critical insights into the employment of conductors in Early Music. In his article, *Music, Time, and Dance in Orchestral Performance: The Conductor as Shaman*, Stephan Cottrell gives a symbolic reading of the conductor in orchestral performances. Concerts, much akin to a ritual, inhabit a designated space as a concert, specific customs as correct moments to clap, which can be further extrapolated to seating arrangements and the ticket purchase. Through this Durkheimian interpretation of the concert, dead composers are conjured up through sonic events, giving these historic figures the status of a mythical forefather or even gods. The one who leads the audience through the dangerous journey between the real and imaginative world of the composer is the conductor. In the words of Christopher Small "His role is that of the powerful and dependable autocrat, who will lead the orchestra and the listeners safely through the tensions and conflicts of the symphonic work." Or differently phrased by Elias Canetti: "his hands decree and prohibit [...] and since, during the performance, nothing is supposed to exist except this work, for so long is the conductor ruler of the world."

Nonetheless, the perspective that the conductor is the sole authority on the music that is produced - a common thought among audiences - is inaccurate. Aside from the fact that the conductor does not produce any sound himself, many orchestra musicians argue that "very few conductors actually impact significantly upon the way the orchestra performs, and that there are many conductors who are simply responding to what the musicians do, rather than being responsible for directing them in any meaningful way." Conductors, at best, should enable the musicians to perform at their best abilities, but many even fail to do this, according to Christopher Warren-Green, a former leader of London's

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 355.

Philharmonia Orchestra. The disparity which arises over the perceived and real function creates a skewed value judgement in favor of the conductor - this is the very thesis that Norman Lebrecht's *The Maestro Myth* is built upon. This is not to say that conductors are useless or unnecessary in orchestral performances. The conductor signals the moment the orchestra begins an entry and indicates the tempo at which they will play. Further, he helps in rubato sections, pointing certain section entries, and guides the orchestra through rubato sections. Despite these key tasks, there remains a staggering ambiguity in his operational functioning:

His power is further reinforced through our perception that it is he who, in Small's words, 'summons up the spirit of the dead composer'. Invested in him, therefore, is also the authority of interpretation, an understanding that, as controller of the performance forces and shaper of the overall sound (shaping that is, of course, kinetically represented by his hand and body movements), he enables the recreation of the composer's intentions on our behalf. It is surely no coincidence that the rise of the conductor as an authoritarian figure over the course of the nineteenth century was accompanied by changes in the practice of concert rituals that in many respects appear to have been designed to enhance further his authority and mystique: the dimming of auditorium lights to focus attention on the stage in which he occupies a central position; the introduction of the baton as an explicit symbol of his authority; the change of position from standing within or to the side of the orchestra, often facing the audience, to one who takes centre stage but – tellingly – turns his back on the audience, so that the manner in which he works is partially obscured from the audience's gaze.

In this light, the necessity of conductors in Early Music seems rather curious. Early Music orchestras are small enough that they can be led properly by one of the musicians and as discussed by Holman, conductors often have less expertise on the music than the musicians. It further emphasizes the claim that conductors' main function in Early Music is to dictate the artistic vision of performances, to signal entries, to be a marketing tool and a dent in the budget of cultural institutions. To put it in political terms, the conductor gained a significantly higher wage to produce a product he could not have brought about without the help of many lower-paid laborers. The conductor "is symbolically responsible for directing the orchestra and, depending on the degree of respect afforded to him by the musicians, he may control the musical proceedings to some extent. But his gestures are only part of what makes the performance possible, and it is because the musicians have a heightened awareness of other, less obvious gestures that they can work together so intensely and with such a high degree of precision."

However, the symbolic function of the conductor is rather important in the profiling of orchestras and understanding this function is a key to transitioning to conductorless Early Music performances, which Holman did not fully discuss. To understand this symbolic characteristic of the conductor, his position must be tied to dance. Western art music has developed in a manner that divorces music from bodily movement, placing its emphasis on intellectual pursuits of compositional complexity over physical or kinetic experience. Audiences are expected to refrain from movement as much as reasonably possible and even from the musicians on stage, there are limits to what is considered an

acceptable amount of movement. This unusually static tradition of Western music-making permits excessive bodily movement to one figure only: the conductor (and sometimes a soloist). The conductor is granted the privilege of ‘dancing’ on stage to his heart’s content.

Visual Cues and Perception of Musicality

The importance of this privilege is in the expressivity that is perceived by audiences. There is a growing body of music psychological studies which indicate that perceived musical expressivity is influenced significantly more by sight than auditory perception. In 2016, Vuoskoski et al. researched whether visual musical cues by musicians significantly impact the audience's emotional reaction to a performance. They conducted two pieces of research: In the first, they measured to what extent visual and auditory performance features impacted emotional responses to a piano performance; in the second, they analyzed the impact of visual cues on the perception of dynamic and tempo variability. They found “that visual performance cues may be just as important as auditory performance cues in terms of the subjective emotional experience of the observer...” Chai-Jung Tsay found evidence to emphasize the importance of the visual component in the judgement of musical performances. In her 2013 article *Sight over Sound in the Judgement of Music Performance*, Tsay argued that while visual cues are often considered peripheral to the judgement of music performance, the visual aspects significantly impact how performances are received. Novices and experts on classical music were asked to identify the winner of a music competition, which had been recorded. Since the competition had already taken place, Tsay argued that the jury had made their choice based on expert opinion. If visual cues are peripheral to judging music, purely auditory perception of the competition should render the musical experts possible of identifying the winner of the competition. Interestingly, however, in Tsay’s tests, this was not the case at all. Participants were asked whether they wanted to compare the musician’s performance based on sound only, sight only, or sight and sound. When novices judged the performance based on sound, they were correct only 25.5% of the time (worse than chance), while participant judging based on sight only guessed correctly 52.5% of the time (better than chance). Surprisingly, the participants with expert knowledge of music did not do much better. While 96.3% of the experts thought sound mattered most when judging a good performance, only 20.5% of the experts guessed correctly which performance won the competition based on sound only. 46.6% of the experts guessed the competition winner correctly when presented with visual-only information. Tsay’s study suggests that regardless of musical expertise, there is a powerful effect of vision-biased preferences on selection processes even at the highest levels of musical performance. Experts and novices alike privilege visuals above sound, the very information that is explicitly valued and reported as core to decision making in the domain of music. Moreover, when sound is made available along with the video, it led people away from the actual (visually based) competition outcomes. Friedrich Platz and Reinhard Kopiez further confirmed the findings above in their 2012 study *When the Eye Listens: A Meta-analysis of How Audio-visual*

Presentation Enhances the Appreciation of Music Performance. Using a meta-data analysis based on earlier research, they found that regardless of genre, visual components had a significant impact on the appreciation of music. Further, seeing people perform the music one hears, acts as a “marker of authenticity,” knowing that what you are hearing is the real deal, as confirmed by the person performing the music.

Knowing that visual information significantly influences musical perception, the conductor’s monopoly on ‘dance’ can be problematized. Since kinetic cues from a performer enhance perceived musical expressivity and act as a marker of authenticity, the person that moves most during a performance may well be the one who gains the audience’s favorability. Put differently, while the conductor does not produce any sound himself, his visual performance ensures that he is credited with expressing the will of the dead composer, whether this credit is due or not. Herein lies an issue with Sherman’s reasoning. He purports that performances without a conductor will be under-interpreted and thus, unsatisfying to critics; but perhaps the notion that conductors lead to more interpreted (read expressive) performances is dependent on their visual dancing. Perhaps it seems extreme to say that professional critics would be significantly impacted by the visual cues of a conductor; yet, as Tsay’s study showed, being an expert on music in no sense makes one impervious to be influenced by the visual components of performances. I believe concert reviewers can move beyond focusing on singular or “personal interpretation” and look at collective performance instead. Even so, if Early Music groups stop working with conductors, they will follow a leader who is part of the orchestra. In the following chapter, I will discuss how a group could operate without a conductor.

Chapter 4: Case Study

Shunske Sato, born 1984, is an American-Japanese modern and historical violinist, who works as “concertmaster, chamber musician, soloist and teacher.”⁵⁵ He began playing at age two and after his studies at the Juilliard School, New York became an internationally renowned musician.⁵⁶ Of interest for this thesis is Sato’s work in the Nederlandse Bachvereniging (NBV, Netherlands Bach Society). He began working in the NBV as concertmaster in 2013.⁵⁷ In 2018, Sato assumed leadership of the NBV, after the resignation of conductor Jos van Veldhoven.⁵⁸ In contrast to his predecessor, Sato does not lead the NBV as a conductor, but as a violinist leader. This means he remains on the concertmaster chair and mostly plays along with the orchestra during performances, while sometimes putting down his violin to give conductorial gestures. The assumption of the NBV’s position of leadership by Sato can be interpreted in several ways: an experiment with leadership, implementation of historical methods of leadership, a marketing asset, etc.

Regardless, Sato’s position offers an interesting case study for this thesis. It offers some new insights into the question of how best to lead Early Music. To better understand his approach and theoretical understanding of his position, I interviewed Sato about it. In seven questions, Sato was asked to reflect on instrumental leadership, his position in the NBV, and the future of instrumental leadership. The questions were as follows:

1. How did you prepare for your position as an instrumental leader?
2. Do you use primary research, and/or did you receive tutoring?
3. How does your interaction with the NBV differ as a leader versus as concertmaster?
4. What challenges did you encounter in this position?
5. Has the setup (positioning, orchestration, etc.) of the NBV changed though the shift from a conductor to an instrumental leader?
6. Is historical accuracy important in your work as a leader?
7. What future do you see for instrumental leadership?

In the section below, I have highlighted and discussed the answers by Sato which are of interest to the thesis of this paper.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ <https://www.shunksesato.com/blank-c1o5>

⁵⁶ <https://www.bachvereniging.nl/shunske-sato>

⁵⁷ <https://www.avrotros.nl/klassiek/item/nieuw-klassiek-vioolconcerten-van-bach-door-violist-shunske-sato/>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The full interview can be found in appendix A, page 18.

Interview with Shunske Sato

When Sato began leading ensembles, he did not prepare by reading treatises or taking conducting classes. Rather, most of the experience he had gained before engaging in instrumental leadership came from sitting next to the concertmaster, in some cases this was his teacher, and later on, Sato sat on the concertmaster chair himself. Later he took modern conducting classes, which he found more helpful than the information gained via historical sources. Sato believes that historical sources give one information on what a leader should concern himself with, but it does not state how one should do this. Sato's clarification for the difficulty of learning leadership is that "it is such a human thing." He later clarifies that the fine details of leadership are part of an embodied learning, not a theoretical one.

Sato's reasoning for learning modern conducting was that "...by learning conducting, I wanted to make sure that if I needed to put my violin aside for any reason, I can still continue to be [useful]." This is related to the benefits and drawbacks of instrumental leadership. What Sato discusses above is a downside to purely instrumental leadership – an answer to question 3. Sato believes it is hard to visually express instructions with a long duration of complex meaning while playing the violin. "If I want to show a really long phrase. It goes on for bars on end and really slow, I want to make sure that the phrase is kept, kept, and kept. I might be able to show that with the violin, possibly by keeping my eyes and shoulders up. But it might be difficult. I will need to sacrifice probably a little bit of my playing for the sake of clarity." The end goal here is clarity; wanting the group to have a clear and perhaps single idea of what is happening.

Part of Sato's interest in clarity comes from his interest in the text expressed by singers. "I really love it. Working with language is something you cannot do just with an instrument; it is just not there." Sato hints that he wants to be involved in shaping the meaning of the piece, through suggesting how singers should convey their lines. "...more and more I have been kind of raising the bar for myself with every project. And I think the last project that I did, I worked very directly with the singers about phrasing or pronunciation or concepts, even facial expression, these things, everything that I could suggest." Before, Sato left these choices up to the singers themselves.

This raises the question of what parts of the performance a leader should be involved with. When asked whether Bach was directly involved with the artistic output of musicians during a performance, Sato answered that Bach would have directly involved himself. He has two reasons for this perspective. First, "he composed things based on a particular musician's ability. There are many cantatas with nothing for the sopranos to do until later the very last chorale, which might suggest that he just simply did not have a soprano at hand. Or suddenly you have a really amazing oboe part or a violin part, which much again then suggests, you know, somebody amazing happened to be there at that time." Second, there is a text in *The New Bach Reader* by H. David, A. Mendel, and C. Wolff of which Sato remembers that "it was written that he [Bach] basically used every limb and facial muscle that was available to him... So clearly, he was somebody who had his ears and eyes everywhere." However, earlier Sato mentioned that Bach may have been playing the organ during certain performances and that

the singers stood at the edge of the organ loft singing down to the audiences. In this setup, Bach would have great difficulties having his eyes on the singers and even hearing them clearly from this position would be a great challenge. When asked about this issue, Sato says that he is unsure how Bach would have acted. In thinking about this issue, the thought arose within him that in Bach's time, everyone who received a formal education was taught about the relationship between pitch and rhetoric. "Controlling the speed or the pitch of voice when you spoke, this was something that is completely understood by people... If you look at the recitative, for example, from that perspective, it totally makes sense. All the important notes are high. The whole thing is there. So, I wonder if a good singer at that time would have needed to be so directed like a singer of today would."

The answer given by Sato indicates an interest in historical information; yet, in response to the question of whether historical accuracy is important in leadership, Sato is conflicted.

It is such a paradox what we do... We will never know whether we are historically accurate. First of all, because we do not have the hard evidence. But also, secondly, because the way we perceive... Let us say that we hypothetically we got it. [...] We got this phrase exactly how it sounded in 1723. [...] We might not perceive it in the same manner, or we might actually hate it. In fact, there is lots of ample evidence to suggest that the singers in Germany quite often kind of seem to scream a lot. [...] Have you listened to old recordings from the turn of the century, pre-war? [...] That's an interesting point because, you take some of these [people] in performance that were... They were the [best of the best], that was the role model for everybody. And you have some lucky cases where you have recordings of these people. You play it for the average musician of today and they'll go: "huh, that's pretty bizarre. Why are they sliding or why are they slowing down? Why are they speeding up? The tempo is wrong. It's not what's written." And that is just a difference of a hundred years. My assumption is that if the further you go with time, the stranger it is going to get. And so, it is a very strange thing that we do. We are trying to create the conditions as best as possible of the music in its time. But then it also somehow has to communicate the same message to an audience of today. And that gap is huge, I think.

Sato prioritizes conveying a message to his audience over historical accuracy, since, in certain cases, performing historically accurate "will actually obscure the music or make it stranger than it needs to be." Instead, Sato chooses to be historically informed in his performance, rather than to "recreate" the way Bach supposedly sounded. When asked about the uniqueness of his position as an instrumental leader, Sato answers in twofold. First, instrumental conducting has come back thanks to the Early Music movement. Second, the time is right for moving away from conducted performances. "It seems to me that we associate that with nineteenth-century Romanticism and of course, early twentieth century. [...] And that definitely is less attractive in our times. The hierarchy, think for the better, is less rigid than it ever was in history."

The disappearance of rigid Romantic hierarchies also follows outside of performance for Sato. He feels an obligation to be concerned with the overall wellbeing of his players. "I think: "Is this person

like health-wise OK? Is she happy? He is feeling good? He seems nervous. Why is that? Can I help or should I step back?" The human side of things, especially since it's my ensemble, I need to look after, to a certain extent, to the well-being of the players as well."

Finally, when asked whether Sato would be interested in teaching anyone instrumental leadership, he said that he "Never really thought about that. I have done a lot of teaching of violinists. [...] If I were given the chance, I would love to because [instrumental leadership] is a very fascinating topic." While Sato would have to have time to teach students, his interest in doing so suggests that he is not interested in moving away from instrumental leadership and that given the opportunity, he would take on one or multiple students, whom he would teach this skill.

Discussion of the Interview

There is one central point that needs to be discussed and this is how Sato's vision compares to the theory that is discussed in the foregoing chapters. It is clear right off the bat, that Sato embraces a style of leadership that is historically informed. While historical accuracy is not the main focus for him, the fact that he leads from the violin, performs in Early Music groups, and reads old sources, indicates that he developed his leadership style with historical sources in mind. Sato's historically informed leadership is apparent through several factors. In performances with the NBV, he uses a historical instrument, bow, and gut strings.⁶⁰ He is positioned at the seat of the concertmaster, while he does occasionally experiment with new setups, such as a circular one. In the interview, Sato mentioned that he moved the solo singers from behind the orchestra to the front, a move that, in part, was inspired by sources on Bach's singers. Bach's singers stood at the edge of the organ loft, singing down to the audience with the orchestra behind them. Sato felt moving the singers made sense, as it resolves a conflict of audibility between the soloists and the orchestra. However, Sato does not mimic historical performance for history's sake; he does so only when it helps convey the concept of a piece to the audience.

At the same time, Sato's distance from historical accuracy seems to betray that he feels free to use modern conducting techniques in the NBV. Sato felt the need to learn conducting, for phrases where it is hard to express what expressively should be happening in the music. This raises two questions for me: first, whether it is necessary for Sato to lead a certain section, using modern conducting techniques, second, who hold authority over the artistic expression. Looking at the former question, Sato mentioned the quote from *The New Bach Reader* that describes Bach having his ears and eyes everywhere and using every part of his body to control the performance, signaling that during a performance, he was ready to adjust or support any erring musician on stage. While this quote may conjure up vivid images of Bach leading his group with authoritative gestures, the quote does not expand on what these gestures were. It is easy to project modern conducting conventions into this quote, but there is no way of knowing

⁶⁰ Netherlands Bach Society, "Shunske Sato on his artistic leadership," *YouTube* video, 1:21, September 13, 2018, <https://youtu.be/642EygmZhLk>.

what being involved in a performance in 1738 Lutheran Germany looked like. In the first chapter, conducting conventions during the baroque were discussed, and as Holman noted, when one leads an ensemble with the hands, it was always to signal the beat with an up and down motion. This practice well sufficed in Bach's time since modern conducting would only arise in the early nineteenth century.⁶¹ If baroque styles of conducting sufficed for Bach, it is possible to perform Bach's music nowadays with a similar leadership style. As Holman stated, compositions became more complex, rhythmically and harmonically, which meant that Baroque leadership did not provide a solid framework for the orchestra to build on. Sato opts for a leadership that is a compromise between Romantic and Baroque praxes.

The latter question, that of authority, ties into this matter. Sato's choice to occasionally lead the NBV with modern conducting is because the group might err during performances or might not express the concept of a piece properly. Sato did not mention the group erring regularly, instead he focusses more on expression. "If I want to show a really long phrase [...] I want to make sure that the phrase is kept, kept, and kept. I might be able to show that with the violin [...] I will need to sacrifice probably a little bit of my playing for the sake of clarity." This implies that the group needs a visual cue from their leader that this phrase is long and drawn out, rather than understanding and musically expressing this principle by themselves. In rehearsals, Sato also is involved with the expression of musicians. "The last project that I did, I worked very directly with the singers about phrasing or pronunciation or concepts, even facial expression, these things, everything that I could suggest." This departs from direct democratic cooperation to a more hierarchical one.

This is the crux of the issue, Sato feels he needs to have control, which is natural for a leader of any group. Yet, is it not possible for Sato to let go more and trust his orchestra and lead in an even more loose way? Before he directly worked with the singers, he let them do as they saw fit. This was possible because the singers of the NBV are of a high level and are well acquainted with Bach's music and framework.

When Bach performed his works, he was most knowledgeable about them since he composed them. I do not have to consider a more post-modern interpretation of works, whereby no single interpretation, not even that of the artist, holds authority. It should be noted, however, that Bach was described by many peers as a highly competent artist and furthermore, often working with musicians below his level of competence. However, since the emergence of Early Music, the level and knowledge of musicians have increased radically. By what standard, other than his appointment as leader, does Sato have the explicit task to be involved with the music-making of his colleagues? His authority is granted by the fact that he bears the responsibility of the group. But when does Sato's involvement in his group stretch beyond that which is necessary and venture into the terrain where he imposes an artistic idea?

⁶¹ Holman, *Before the Baton*, 344.

The approach by Sato is progressive and historically informed, yet even in his leadership, there is room to explore these two qualities further. In an interview Sato did with the NBV, he said “I think it would be a big mistake for leaders, in general, to want to control everything, to say “here look at me.” [...] I think that makes players passive. [...] And that is something I always try to incite, to have everybody play a hundred percent or even more.”⁶² Sato himself referred to Spira Mirabilis in this interview – a symphonic group that rehearses and performs without a conductor. Much like the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, each member of Spira Mirabilis is allowed to make remarks about the artistic direction of a piece they are rehearsing.⁶³ The fact that Spira Mirabilis can perform pieces from the Romantic era without a conductor or an instrumental player using modern conducting gestures, begs the question of whether conductorial gestures and interference are necessary for performing Bach.

⁶² Netherlands Bach Society, “Shunske Sato.”

⁶³ <http://www.spiramirabilis.com/spirit>

Conclusion

While unable to prove that instrumental leadership is the best way to lead Early Music, this thesis has problematized the consensus in English-written scholarship— with the exception of Peter Holman’s work – that conductors are best suited to lead Early Music groups. To do so, this thesis refuted the arguments by Adam Carse, Robert Donnington, and Bernard D. Sherman that conducted Early Music performances lead to more satisfying results than instrumentally led ones. After this, Holman’s arguments in support of instrumental leadership were inspected, as was Stephen Cottrell’s ethnographic interpretation of conductors. Cottrell’s analysis showed that there was a disproportionate amount of authority and privilege vested in the role of conductor. Furthermore, three quantitative researches – by Vuoskoski et al., Chia-Jung Tsay, and Friedrich Platz and Reinhard Kopiez – showed that visual cues positively impact the musicality of musicians, as perceived by an audience, for both experts and novices of music. This supplements the suggestion that the authority bestowed upon a conductor is emphasized by the conductor’s monopoly on grand expressive movements, as suggested by Cottrell.

The very existence of successful conductorless ensembles, such as the Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Spira Mirabilis and Amsterdam Sinfonietta, act as proof in themselves. However, the existence of a number of instrumentally led groups or even their approach to leadership are not the apex of what this movement could offer. For example, in the interview, Sato explained that he tries to work towards expressing the concept of a piece. He works closely with the singers and conducts sections where it is difficult to express his ideas to the orchestra while playing the violin. However, it is also possible to consider a setup wherein the meaning of a piece is decided on collectively during a rehearsal and each musician bears the responsibility of blending with the group themselves, while also have the opportunity to raise points of concern at any moment.

As Early Music becomes more mainstream, there is the risk that the movement will become more rigid and less open to experimentation. After all, the profits of organizations and the livelihoods of employees depend thereon. However, Michael O’Loughlin defined the Early music movement as “musicians who use original instruments and base their performances of European baroque and classical music on some degree of musicological research, rather than on what their teachers told them.”⁶⁴ If Early Music lets go of critical approaches and independent research, the movement loses the key facet on which it was built. While conductors have always been present in Early Music and earlier experiments were unsuccessful or abandoned, this does not mean that conductors are the best way to lead Early Music groups. The artistic level of Early Music musicians is high, and conservatories offer studies in historical performance. There is much experimentation which has not been done and options that wait to be explored. Now – while an economic crisis limits funding for culture and an epidemic limit the amount of people that can be in one space – the time is ripe for groups to conduct themselves in a conductorless manner.

⁶⁴ O’Loughlin, “A Brief Polemic,” 49.

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Appendix: Interview with Shunske Sato

Fransenberg: Basically, the first thing I would like to know: how did you first prepare to become an instrumental leader of the Netherlands Bachvereniging? I guess at some point there was a decision that was going to be made, but I don't know if there was any specific treatises you looked at or people who were doing this before you, who you got tutoring from

Sato: So, the first time I sat... I fell into it; I totally fell into it. Concerto Köln got in touch with me. And my first experience leading was with them. And that was also an interesting story, too, because they had organized a project with a Paganini concerto, and they had engaged the soloists. The soloists initially said, yes, but then there was radio silence. He did not reply to any e-mails. And they got kind of worried and said, you know, maybe he chickened [out]. And the thing is that just about a year before that, I had recorded the Paganini Caprices for solo violin, but on but on gut strings. And so, somebody had found this out. And they said: well, if the soloist does not show up, we will ask you a soloist now. But if he shows up, would you be so kindness as to take the place of concertmaster? That is who I got in touch with them. Before that, I had done a couple of projects like school projects, you know, as concertmaster but not really leading. So I mean, that was kind of my first, let's say, steps before actually leading, like sitting in the concertmaster chair getting the leadership from the conductor, but then learning how to deal with your section leaders and your own group, of course, keeping that in check. So, there was definitely that step. If I am truly honest, there was a step before that and that was sitting totally at the back of the orchestra. Yeah, I was the one... I was the goofball. I was always the goofball. I went from goofball to concertmaster; I just kind of leapt over. To make the whole story complete. I think I started experiencing instrumental leadership only after I got into the Baroque, into Baroque music, because that is where it happens most, of course. And to have such read behind various leaders, to see how they communicated, see how they rehearsed that, of course, was an immense source of information. To see what worked, to see what did not work, their own personality, etc. And then came Concerto Köln.

Fransenberg: Was that the first time where you were leading without a conductor also being there?

Sato: Concerto Köln often does this. They will be led [by a conductor] for an opera project or something. But their default set-up is with no conductor. So, the concertmaster is in effect also the leader. It was it was not easy at the beginning and it certainly... Where can I begin? I mean maybe you have a different question for that, I know? So actually, I should say that Concerto Köln was kind of my baptism of fire. I was just thrown into it. And then I sometimes crashed and burned, or I definitely came out of rehearsal thinking, shit I really should have done that a different way. But sometimes it worked well.

Franenberg: Because for this, you did not have any prior... You did not read up into anything or there was no one who really prepared you for it? It was just more like: “go do it.”

Sato: Yeah. I think around me at that time... I was put in situations where I could experience leadership of others. From that I learned. And also, my own teacher was a concertmaster, often in different settings. In a gig somewhere she would be concertmaster and I would sit next to her and she would tell me, you know, if I am playing good. That is actually important, because we did a number of projects together where she said as concertmaster and I was next to her. And she said: have a look at the choir. She gave me lots of tips. So, I was really learning by doing that. And that is also my personality. I when I get an electronic device, I first just turn it on and see... I do not really read the instruction manual. I think I read the instruction manual, so to speak, in terms of leaders and conductors and, you know, books. I did that afterwards. And also, because I realized that it totally depends on your personality and also on the orchestra and also how much time you have, what is your relationship with the orchestra. So, yeah, there is really no one rule that you can go with.

Franenberg: Between the Concerto Köln and the Netherlands Bachvereniging, were there are a lot of leadership positions you had in this period?

Sato: Yeah, having sat in the concertmaster chair was a very privileged one, because I was able to, to direct...That's because the concertmaster is often sort of the right hand or the go between a conductor and the rest of the orchestra. So, you are really the link almost, you know. And also, at the Netherlands Bachvereniging, Jos [van Veldhoven] was my leader most of the time. And he was also very generous with sharing his knowledge and information as well. And when I led a project, then I also knew how it how certain things would be understood by an ensemble, potentially. And so that was, to have been on both sides of the fence, so to speak, that was extremely... If I had not had that knowledge, I do not think I would... If I am successful at all, it would not have been the same. So, I mean, I was with the Bachvereniging five years as concertmaster.

Franenberg: What year did you start?

Sato: I started in 2012. 2012 was my first gig, and then in 2013 I was more or less official. And yeah, I learned a lot. And then I did a project or two where I led.

Franenberg: What kind of repertoire was that? Were those suites?

Sato: Yeah, suites for sure. There was also one where it was just small... So far, it has only been with

soloists. The cantata that I did very last were again with only a quartet of singers. Although, the last time I did a cantata program I let the singers do... I left it [artistic choices] more or less for them. But more and more I have been kind of raising the bar for myself with every project. And I think the last project that I did, I worked very directly with the singers about phrasing or pronunciation or concepts, even facial expression, these things, everything that I could suggest.

Fransenberg: Do you notice... Of course, when you are playing instrumentally and busy with the group, then I think things become very different when you suddenly have to start concerning with singers. So, does what you play or when you do and do not play change?

Sato: Yeah. Well, I mean everything has its pros and cons. I think the definite pro of being one of the players is that you make your own sound obviously. And that in itself is a way to communicate, right? And also, it is not just the sound itself but how you start the sound. If I am going to start very soft, obviously the bow is going to move in a different way than if I am going to demand a sharp fortissimo. And there is absolutely no ambiguity as to where the sound starts to say, because once my bow hits the string, that is the sound. It is a very direct language. I think that is very well understood, as people know when to come in, how to come in in a very definite way. What I do realize... Let us go back to a question first, about singers and instrumentalists. I think for me the gap used to be a lot bigger than it is now. I think now that I have been given the chance to think about things and to form my own opinions, it really comes down to having a concept about it, about a particular piece, a cantata. To inspire your colleagues about it and to rehearse efficiently about it. And of course, the way you might address an instrumentalist versus the way you might encourage a singer to sing or to do something might be slightly different. It comes from one place and that is the concept. Sometimes you might call a conductor on a choral conductor, he conducts mostly choruses, or he conducts mostly ensembles. I mean that might be true, but I mean, if that person is a very good musician, has a clear concept... For example, Philippe Herreweghe is a great example, because I think he is more perhaps known as a person who works with vocal music, but his ideas are so strong that it does not really matter. I mean, he completely understands, it does not matter. The idea is clear. So, to go back to what was the question again?

Fransenberg: It was about how you interact with the vocalists versus instrumentalists. And whether that affects your playing in a concert.

Sato: I find actually, you know, especially when you are working with good singers like you often do in the Bachvereniging, it is actually really easy. Because good singer will breathe right, will have the right expression. It just takes it to a level of directness. There is nothing so direct as somebody's voice or someone's face or somebody's tone of voice. As humans, that is completely universally understood.

And so, to translate that into instrumental terms, I find that rather easy, actually. If anything, sometimes there is a vagueness in what we do in terms of instruments, which is which can also be exploited, but I sometimes find frustrating because...

Franenberg: I wanted to touch on this as well because a lot of people were writing on conducting in Early Music really seem to be departing from the idea that just leading with hands or a baton is far superior, than leading from an instrument. And I just wonder, because you are a very clear example of someone who is not doing that, who is doing both things. I wonder what your view is on this. Do you see it as superior or not? Do you see leading by hands or baton as superior to leading from an instrument?

Sato: No, not at all. Not at all. I think the situation demands – as far as I can say from my own experience – is that you do what is necessary. I would not say one – at least my experience - one is not superior to the other necessarily like black or white. Sometimes it is very useful to... I have been doing that more and more often where I switch between playing and keeping [time with hands]. It totally depends on the piece of music or the situation. If it is that the parts are simply too diverse; the first violins are doing something completely different than the seconds and the bass and somehow the time needs to be kept. That is a little bit out of... So, I will stop playing and keep the beats. Or something in the second violins is extremely interesting and I want to motivate them even more. In my case, what I am doing on the first violin will not necessarily help them. So, I look to them and do something or playing simply is, you know, it just it depends.

Franenberg: You do play from a score rather than a part?

Sato: I do prefer that, unless I have some serious trouble with page turns or something. But up until now, when I have led, it has usually been from score.

Franenberg: Have you done it from a part?

Sato: Yeah, I have done it from a part, and it is handy to just have that two sheets of paper. But then you will have had to memorize [the piece] which happens fortunately in my case rather naturally after a certain period. I just know what I want to hear. For more complicated pieces I would not like to do that.

Franenberg: Backtracking a bit: when you were getting into this position of instrumental leadership, what were challenges that arose for you?

Sato: I think what my main issue was, I was suddenly forced to consider... Leading from the violin was

something that I was very comfortable with and had done. But now I had to consider the option of bringing singers in and also potentially large groups and had to be confronted with the fact that sometimes just leading by playing is not sufficient. So, I did take some basic conducting lessons, read some books on it. So that was one thing I definitely am still working on and trying out. And you just have to see what works. You just have to go in and try it in the rehearsal. If it does not work, what is not working? You know, why is it not working?

Ffranenberg: What was one of these things that you found that did not work by just playing, like keeping time?

Sato: Well let us say... What is a good example? Here is the thing, so the advantage of playing is, as I said before, that there is the sound and the motion. But you have to keep in mind that once the hands are busy with the violin, then it is stuck with the violin as well. That is, it. Once you put it down, you are much freer to make much larger movements, point to a certain group of people. You have a larger amplitude of possibilities, of movement, which might be helpful in certain situations. I think that is it.

Ffranenberg: So, the communicative ability.

Sato: Yeah, exactly. But then again there is ample room for vagueness just with your hands as well. There are definite advantages to both. Like for example, let us say, let us say this. If I want to show a really long phrase. It goes on for bars on end and really slow, I want to make sure that the phrase is kept, kept, and kept. I might be able to show that with the violin, possibly by keeping my eyes and shoulders up. But it might be difficult. I will need to sacrifice probably a little bit of my playing for the sake of clarity. Let us say that by learning conducting, I wanted to make sure that if I needed to put my violin aside for any reason, I can still continue to be [useful]. The other aspect – and certainly with the Bachvereniging because of our core is vocal-instrumental music – is that of language. Fortunately, I am very good with languages. I have learnt a lot of languages. I have lived in a lot of countries. And language and linguistics, anyway, has always been a fascination of mine.

Ffranenberg: That's a lot of [language] books behind you.

Sato: Yeah, exactly. I did not set it up especially [for this interview]. It has always fascinated me. But then, how to work, how to... Because language is so fun: the sounds and the same word, if you say in a different way becomes completely different. How is the dramatic [t] versus the Latin [t]? You know, things like that. So, I think I had a fascination with it anyway, which I think was then was given the chance to grow even further by being in this position and to really watch out truth for pronunciation and diction. And using language to its utmost expressive level. And I have done a few with the projects that

I have had and sometimes it came with chamber music or with auditions, things will come to me. And it is great fun working with... I really love it. Working with language is something you cannot do just with an instrument; it is just not there.

Ffranenberg: Did you notice... Has the Bachvereniging, as an ensemble in the regular set-up, had to change the way it is setup, [its] positioning or orchestration?

Sato: You know, I almost wish this interview were happening four months from now, because it will be my first big test. We are doing a June project in June now with full choir or vocal ensemble, twelve singers, four cantatas. But what I have been very keen to do – and we will be doing this, and I actually had been already doing this – is putting the singers up front to achieve the directness. It is a matter of fact, we certainly know that with Bach's positioning of musicians, the singers were always in front. So, they were singing at the front, from the gallery into the church. So, they were of course visible to the audience. But funny enough, it seems like the Bach actually had his back to the singers. So, if I were sitting – he was leading from the harpsichord usually – the singers would actually be behind them singing upwards, which is just crazy. No leader that I know does that. They always want to be in touch with the singers somehow. But in most cases, the soloists simply were in front or, in this case, the ensemble was in front of the orchestra. And for me that makes total sense. They did not want to shout over and over... Usually they are behind, no? They are behind orchestra, sing over the orchestra to the audience. So, they [the singers in the Bachvereniging] ha[d] to exaggerate in ways that they might of course not have to. And also, as orchestral players were constantly kind of shrinking every time the singers need to sing. And that is also not nice either.

Ffranenberg: And does that also seemed to suggest to you that during a concert, whoever was leading, let us say a concert by Bach, that he wasn't so busy with dictating the artistic output at that time?

Sato: Well, I am sure he was. He definitely was. What specifically? I do not know. And also, you know, I am sure his... Well, that that opens up a whole can of worms because... Well, lovely worms, very nice worms. Because it seems to me that he composed things based on a particular musician's ability. There are many cantatas with nothing for the sopranos to do until later the very last chorale, which might suggest that he just simply did not have a soprano at hand. Or suddenly you have a really amazing oboe part or a violin part, which much again then suggests, you know, somebody amazing happened to be there at that time. In some cases, you can prove this. But actually, in most cases you cannot. So that is one thing. So, he kind of tailormade certainly based on what he had.

Ffranenberg: But if we then look at how he would have conducted during a concert.

Sato: Well, I mean that we know as a matter of fact, I wish I could pull it out. It is in the Bach reader here. Do you have this book? It is a pretty good one. It is edited by a whole bunch of people. But it is basically his little scraps of text he wrote. But there is this one bit where it describes his leadership. It describes as a leader, and it was written that he basically used every limb and facial muscle that was available to him. He was clearly a very lively leader. So, we know that he directed something from the viola as well, where you could hear the harmony. So clearly, he was somebody who had his ears and eyes everywhere. So that is absolutely clear. Certainly, where the singers are, I am sure. I am sure the same happened to me. I cannot think of a direct example where we know how he worked with a particular singer.

Ffranenberg: I just started to wonder, because if in a certain concert he had his back to the singers, I wonder how he looked around or something.

Sato: I wonder, I do not know. But also, what the conventions of a singer would be, especially if you were a good singer. We talk about a recitative for example. Actually, that might be a very good example. Because now nowadays we have to reconstruct a lot of things, this way of speaking in public, rhetoric. It was common knowledge. Bach had it in school, just as everybody else did. And you heard it all the time, of course, when people spoke. So, it was just something that they fortunately could take for granted. And so, things like controlling the speed or the pitch of voice when you spoke, this was something that is completely understood people. And we have a lot of evidence of that. For example, I have been very interested in historical acting lately. And Jed [Wentz], you must know Jed.

Ffranenberg: Yeah.

Sato: There's a great amount of information about how they use pitch to deliver certain exciting texts. And they would raise their pitch, lower their pitch, keep the same pitch, and drop dead or raise it gradually. All these things. And so, if you look at the recitative, for example, from that perspective, it totally makes sense. All the important notes are high. The whole thing is there. So, I wonder if a good singer at that time, would have needed to be so directed like a singer of today would. It just would have been common knowledge. You know, you have a series of words that stay on a certain pitch for a very long time and it keeps it like this and then it goes up and then it comes down. It would have been understood by them. It is hard to say. But I think certain set of common sense or common knowledge could have been relied upon.

Ffranenberg: Now we are talking about historical accuracy anyway, you said before that you started

playing as the leader first and then you started looking at the manuscripts. Was there anything you looked at later that was illuminating to you? Were there any texts that helped in how you want to lead?

Sato: Oh, how to lead? I think in terms of either actual leading process, let us say I have found more contemporary resources of much better help. Also, because, of course, if you look at Quantz, he tells what a leader should do. He should look after the intonation, the rhythm, the tuning, the distribution, the managing of good parts. But what it does not tell you is how. And that is... It is such a human thing. It is such a human interaction. I have learned much more by just sitting in a rehearsal or looking at a YouTube video of Leonard Bernstein. When I consider information, I like to take it from as many different possible corners as I can, certainly in terms of leadership, because it is so personal. You can theorize about it. And then there are certain basic things. How to rehearse and how most efficiently to rehearse. Many guides to conducting and rehearsing might agree on this. We probably all know it. For example, at the very first rehearsal, do not go into too greater detail. Just let it happen, let the people absorb the music, give it the basic structure, then move it up a notch at the next rehearsal and so on and so forth. But in actual practice, when you are encountered with a problem, how you react to it. Are you a stressy kind of person or you are funny kind of person or a dry, to the point kind of person? How do you deal with that? It is going to be different. So that crucial: how? You can only by doing it, just like being a parent. Until you have had those sleepless nights, you just do not know how you are gonna be. Yeah. You just stand in front of a group of people, it is confronting for sure. It is very confronting to have a whole group of people and to be interacting with them. And at the same time, keeping your focus. "And this is what I need to do, I only have ten more minutes with this piece. I need to keep pace." How you deal with these many, many stimuli; it is very personal.

Fransenberg: Do you then, yourself being a violinist leader, do you see what you are doing with the Netherlands Bachvereniging as inspired by historical accuracy? Do you see it as something historically accurate? Is that something you think about when you are leading?

Sato: No. I think... That is another can of worms there. It is such a paradox what we do. It is really a paradox. Consider the fact that in Bach's case or many composers cases, they would write a piece for a particular location or a particular Sunday. It was really made to measure for that occasion. And then, posterity was not quite a thing in the way that we see it. And so, it was very actual music very contemporary. It was contemporary music through and through. And you also see that people were very practical. They made use of new instruments or new devices or a particular player that was involved in the performance, they would use that. It seems to me, if I can sum it up in one line: there were conventions, of course, of performance. You know, certain things just were done in a certain way, which is something that we do not really have anymore. I think in a way, if you compare it to the current situation of contemporary music, once Schoenberg came around, that just kind of broke everything

down in a good way as well as a very confusing way because, I think you can agree that freedom exists only in relation to rules. [If] there is nothing, there is nothing. And you have to create something in order to, you know... This person does microtonal music or does folk music, takes folk music as inspiration. You still have to find some sort of anchor to hang on to. But how did I get into that? Oh, yeah. So contemporary music. So, for me, they were dealing, it seems, with the here and now very, very much; right? But they've also to give you an example. Bach was very interested in quirky instruments, his fascination towards the fortepiano, which was a new thing at the time, or violono piccolo. He was definitely a very open, it seems to me, a very welcoming in that matter.

Fransenberg: But still, in some sense the leader who is not performing seems not to be a thing.

Sato: Yeah. There was less of a difference. It is like having the composer conduct. He is also the leader because, he has the best overview of the piece. And he is also a fantastic keyboard player or something, you know. And so, to come back to it, this thing of historical accuracy. Number one, we will never know whether we are historically accurate. First of all, because we do not have the hard evidence. But also, secondly, because the way we perceive... Let us say that we hypothetically we got it. We hit the nail. We got this phrase exactly how it sounded in 1723. We might not perceive it in the same way. We might not be perceived in the same manner, or we might actually hate it. In fact, there is lots of ample evidence to suggest that the singers in Germany quite often kind of seem to scream a lot. Lots of harsh things. Or another very demonstrable example is... Have you listened to old recordings from the turn of the century, pre-war?

Fransenberg: I have been meaning to do that.

Sato: That's an interesting point because, you take some of these [people] in performance that were... They were the shit, that was the role model for everybody. And you have some lucky cases where you have recordings of these people. You play it for the average musician of today and they'll go: "huh, that's pretty bizarre. Why are they sliding or why are they slowing down? Why are they speeding up? The tempo is wrong. It's not what's written." And that is just a difference of a hundred years. My assumption is that if the further you go with time, the stranger it is going to get. And so, it is a very strange thing that we do. We are trying to create the conditions as best as possible of the music in its time. But then it also somehow has to communicate the same message to an audience of today. And that gap is huge, I think. I think that is can be huge.

Fransenberg: To address audiences of today?

Sato: Yeah. It still has to be understood and it still has to be welcomed and it still has to be moving to audiences today. There will be cases where, historically, we know that a particular thing was done in a particular way. But we will not do that because we fear that it will actually obscure the music or make it stranger than it needs to be. So that really does happen. So, I do not see authenticity as a goal, but rather what I do see it as, is a great source of inspiration. The thing that really strikes me is, is how broad the palette of expression was. Ornamentation and instrumentation and the devices that people used to express a particular story was very vast and very free. and very freeing, I think. So that that is something that I really take seriously in trying to inspire my fellow musicians and also myself. My goal is not necessarily to recreate it. No.

Fransenberg: How do you see this? Would you say the position you have in the Bachvereniging is unique? I do not know a lot of people who are doing the same kind of thing.

Sato: Well, I think it is unique. There are two things that are definitely unique about the Bachvereniging. One is that it is an instrumental vocal ensemble in one. And most of the time, you have either one or the other. And when there is a cantata project for a couple, there are two that come together. But here the divide is a lot... There is none, we are under one roof and we work together. That creates a, I think, a very unique understanding between what normally can be rather separate camps. What is also unique about the Bachvereniging is certainly its position in the Dutch cultural scene. There is a great authority that comes with our name and if we... We can set a particular course. And the chances are good that people might swallow it better than if we had been a smaller ensemble. And of course, we have to do with a long history.

Fransenberg: And if you look at your position within this context; do you know a lot of people who are leading from the violin or the harpsichord?

Sato: I think that has really come back in the last generation or two. Certainly, thanks to the revival of historical performance. I mean, that for sure. And I think also the time was right. I think the idea of the conductor... It seems to me that we associate that with nineteenth-century romanticism and of course, early twentieth century. The maestro, which was born in the nineteenth century. And that definitely is less attractive in our times. The hierarchy, think for the better, is less rigid than it ever was in history. And that sort of flatter organization is once again... Although again, that's kind of a contradiction because eighteenth-century society was very hierarchical. But somehow that has been kind of almost mistranslated into twenty-first-century terms where, you know, hierarchy is less visible. And that the leader is one of one of the players. So, you take what you want from that.

Ffranenberg: I do get the sense from you that you think this is a trend that could continue?

Sato: I think it is very effective. It is a very effective way of leadership with its pros and cons. So, let us see. Who knows what will be happening in 50 years? It is great to see how that works beautifully. Even a whole symphonic orchestra without a conductor like, you know, [Spira] Mirabilis. And there is one in the U.K. as well. Schumann symphony or Brahms symphony without any conductor whatsoever.

Ffranenberg: Because I think of like of Lars Ulrich Mortensen or Bernardini or Peter Hol[man] who are doing similar things. You seem to be the youngest there.

Sato: One of the youngest for sure.

Ffranenberg: Have you had [a]spirations of teaching other violinists to do what you do yet or not really?

Sato: Well, it is again... Never really thought about that, to be honest. I have done a lot of teaching of violinists. The closest situation that I can think of is one of these conducting lessons, where there is a conducting student and you have like two pianos in front of them. The teacher lets them do it [conducting pianists] and they [the teacher] give comments. But I have never been placed in that particular position. I mean, I can give certain tips. I have been in the position to get certain tips. If you know how you breathe before... You do not have to set your bow to the strings. If I were given the chance, I would love to because it is a very fascinating topic. Really, it is fascinating. Like how to lead a rehearsal. I think I do a pretty good job, but I wish somebody had told me as well. But to be honest, even some of the some of the leaders that I have worked with, you come out of rehearsal thinking: "oh, that was not..." You do not feel good with the piece yet. It is not always successful for sure. And I think it is precisely because there are so many variables involved. You have a group of people, various strengths and weaknesses in yourself and the music and the time. Yeah, it is very tricky. At the end of the day, I really do love it because it really connects me with everything, not just the music, but the people. It embraces everything. And I am completely exhausted. I am out [flat] after a concert and especially, of course, a project, because you are here attentive to everything you know. Even that may not just the playing. I think: "is this person like health-wise OK? Is she happy? He is feeling good? He seems nervous. Why is that? Can I help or should I step back?" The human side of things, especially since it is my ensemble, I need to look after to a certain extent to the well-being of the players as well.

