

Musical Leadership: The Choral Conductor as Sensemaker and Liberator

Dag Jansson
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Norges musikkhøgskole
Postboks 5190 Majorstua
0302 OSLO

Tel.: +47 23 36 70 00

E-post: post@nmh.no

nmh.no

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Research like this depends upon those individuals who share their experiences with the researcher. My deepest gratitude goes to those twenty-two singers who enthusiastically and flexibly responded to my request for an interview. As I worked through the interview material, its immense value became clearer every day. All of the interviewees shared their most personal experiences and innermost thoughts on musical leadership, and they did it with an open-mindedness, depth of reflection, and crispness of expression that far exceeded my expectations. I wish I could name each and every individual, but confidentiality forbids anything of the sort, in the best interests of the people (and situations) that were discussed. It would not have been possible to find such a rewarding selection of interviewees without the help of Tor Sørby, Jon Flydal Blichfeldt and Anne Balsnes Haugland.

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I have had both the pleasure and the challenge of conducting three choirs throughout the project period. They represented a daily, ever-present laboratory for thinking-in-action as my research themes emerged and were shaped into the form of this dissertation. This was both useful and, at times, frustrating. Being in constant contact with singing singers, as opposed to thinking singers (which is how I conceived of the interviewees), made me uncomfortably self-critical in my own conducting practice. I am nevertheless very thankful to the singers in *Vox Humana*, *Indre Østfold Kammerkor*, and *Alle Kan Synge-i-Moss* for (however unintentionally) confronting me with the unbounded set of expectations that it is possible to have for a conductor, and for allowing me to experience the reality that the conductor's role can be meaningful even if the person is less than perfect. Also many thanks go to Nils Olav Aanonsen, founder of *Liedertafel*, our beloved triple quartet of men who sing Schubert and Kjerulf. His credo is that music is its own reward. Despite our

obsession with a highly specific and never-changing repertoire, the *Liedertafel* evenings demonstrated more than anything else that music is not a thing but an interaction and a process, in the same way that the enjoyment of a good wine is indistinguishable from the pleasure taken in sharing it.

My curiosity about my research topic is probably shaped more by my grown-up life as a choral singer than by my position as a conductor. The first conductor to make a deep impact on me as a singer was Joar Rørmark. I cannot remember how he conducted (gesturally speaking), I only remember the flowing musical lines he made and the way he allowed the music to breathe. I don't think I knew what musical phrasing was until I experienced his choral conducting, despite having spent several years in decent amateur symphony orchestras. Conductor, singer and friend Carl Høgset also revealed to me the world of embodied music with his voice-friendly technique, expressive ideals and passion for singing as an existential resource. By his humanistic and aesthetic outlook, he has been a one-man culture university for me. His generosity, commitment and ability to see the potential in every singer also taught me how to build an ensemble. Many other conductors have had an impact of one sort or another on me as a choral singer or conductor (though several of them probably have no idea about it), including Terje Kvam, Tone Bianca Dahl, Grete Pedersen, Ingar Bergby, Per Sigmund Torp, Carl-Andreas Næss and Tore-Erik Mohn. Many co-singers, especially longtime co-tenor Kjell Viig in *Grex Vocalis*, has taught me how good co-workmanship is the twin of good leadership. Gro Shetelig was pivotal as piano teacher in the process to shape up my piano skills prior to auditioning for my music education at the University of Oslo. Without my own lived experience with all of these people and all of this music I've had the pleasure to meet as a choral singer and conductor, I would not have been able to understand the experiences of the singers I have interviewed here.

At an early stage in the project, Associate Professor Jan Ketil Arnulf at the Norwegian School of Management introduced me to the notion of sensemaking in organisations, and to the fact of its neglect in leadership theory. I took a great interest in the topic, and I discovered that meaning making was in fact a powerful lens through which to examine the conductor's role. At an early stage, I was also greatly inspired by Donna Ladkin's article about leading beautifully. It was only much later, of course, when I discovered that my own data provided more proof of her concept. A dialogue with her also led me to

further reading that illuminated both the blessings and the pitfalls of leadership theory in the context of music.

Several people gave me the opportunity to expose and test ideas and preliminary project findings. I am particularly grateful to Kjell-André Engen for his playfulness and risk-taking, as he allowed me to experiment with conducting and singing in business organisations. Other people allowed me to write or talk about ideas coming from this project as well, including Rebekka de Leon at Arts & Business Norway, Associate Professor Iver Bragelien at the Norwegian School of Economics, Associate Professor Beate Elstad at Oslo University College, and Sara Reitan Jacobsen, editor of *Korbladet*. Being able to reflect on musicking in non-musical situations sharpens the eye for what is unique about music, and for the ways in which musicking represents a particularly powerful realisation of human intersubjectivity.

My two children, Maria and Jonas, have let me experience such intersubjectivity in its simplest and most natural forms, through many years of lullabies. I may have overdosed them by singing weird lullabies, like pieces from Brahms's *Liebesliederwaltzer* and Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, but interestingly enough, they permitted me to continue the ritual well beyond the age of ten. In any case, this braid of moments profoundly influenced how I experience and understand a music event. My mother provided a different, but equally important foundation as she let me have piano lessons at the age of seven, with the same teacher as her and at the same time she started to play for the first time.

I must conclude by recognising two old ladies (now long gone, but back then younger than I am now), who more than anyone else laid the ground for me to experience music as an existential joy. Organist Marit Orefellen let me have the keys (and unlimited access) to the organ in Rygge Church as a teenager. My grandmother Bertha taught me basic guitar playing. Both of them let me explore music for itself, free of outward ambition or measurable goals. Maybe this pure, uncontaminated pleasure supplied the necessary foundation for embarking on the rather achievement-oriented journey of a doctoral thesis.

Larkollen, November 2012

Reader's guide

This dissertation consists of four parts, starting with a loose notion of musical leadership and concluding with a model of the conductor's role. Each part can be read separately as a discrete aspect of the study, but they are intended to comprise a compelling whole.

Part I: Ways of understanding musical leadership introduces different perspectives upon musical leadership and the conductor's role. It reviews the disciplines relevant to the topic and the research traditions and literature that have arisen from them. In part I, I present my problem statement and my scientific and philosophical platform. As a stand-alone text, part I constitutes an examination of the conducting phenomenon as a research subject.

Part II: How to explore conducting as lived experience describes the entire research approach, from its scientific and philosophical foundation through the various methodological considerations to the data-gathering process and the acquired data itself. Part II elaborates upon some of the fundamentals of doing a hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry and describes the specific steps taken for this study. As a stand-alone text, part II is a discussion of the interface between description and interpretation, and of the implications of musical experiences as a topic for interpretation.

Part III: Understanding conducting through the choral singer experience presents the acquired interview material. The narrative covers extensively the themes introduced by the interviewed singers, using singer statements coupled

with my interpretations of them. Part III is deliberately lengthy, partly to do justice to the expressive value of the interviews and partly to let the lived experience of choral singers be heard—that is, to enable voices that are rarely accommodated within a scientific frame. As a stand-alone text, part III offers a comprehensive and systematic account of the interviewed singers' descriptions of their experience with conductors and conducting.

Part IV: Towards a model of conducting conceptualises the insights that are revealed in part III. The part presents two models: the legitimacy model (that is, *why* we want a conductor) and the enactment model (that is, the various features that constitute *how* the conductor role is executed). Part IV also contains reflections upon the project findings and process in light of the research question; it also reviews implications beyond this study. As a stand-alone text, part IV can be read as a proposed meta-language for how we talk about conducting and the conductor's role.

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PART I: Ways of understanding musical leadership

In part I, I introduce the phenomenon of conducting and align it with various scholarly disciplines. Among many alternative notions of musical leadership, I focus upon the view of the ensemble singer in this dissertation. I approach this view as lived experience, via a phenomenological methodology. A survey of conducting research and leadership theory reveals, in the end, that there is no single, coherent research tradition with which to align this work or upon which to build.

1. Introduction

Musical leadership as a research topic is presented, and the conductor as both a familiar icon and a mythical figure is introduced. Specific research questions are posed: what is the conducting phenomenon and what makes it work? Musical leadership is placed in the context of various scholarly disciplines in order to demonstrate that there is no single, coherent research tradition upon which to build. Hermeneutic phenomenology is introduced as philosophy-of-science platform.

1.1. Musical leadership and leadership of music

This dissertation is about the conducting phenomenon and specifically the choral conductor's role. This role is familiar to music audiences in many ways, from its prominence in concert programmes to its association with ensembles whenever they are introduced or otherwise credited. Most people even know what conductors do, at least on the outside, having seen the annual televised New Year's concert from Vienna, for example, or a performance by the local school choir. It could even be said that we take the conductor for granted. At the same time, people, and especially outsiders to ensemble performance, might wonder about the relevance of those wavery movements. For some, conducting remains a mystery, or even a triviality. This might be said of leadership in general as well—in fact, leadership is an even slipperier concept, though a pervasive one. The media, on the other hand, is obsessed with leadership, and with leaders, attributing otherwise collective achievements and triumphs to whomever is in charge, whether in business, politics or music.

Conducting's relationship to leadership is evident simply for etymological reasons—*con-ducere* is the Latin verb *to lead with*—but the nature of that relationship is far from clear. Price and Bryo (2002:335) state bluntly that conductors by definition are leaders. But what does it mean that a conductor *leads* the music, or the ensemble? And is conducting simply a specific realisation of a general notion of leadership, or, conversely, is leadership merely one aspect of the conductor's role? Furthermore, what is the relationship between conducting and teaching? Should the conductor be seen as a leader or a teacher, or both? Is it even possible that all of these questions miss the point—that the conductor is in fact nothing more than a co-musician, an ensemble member alongside singers and instrumentalists, a non-sound-producing musician with some special tasks, a specialist like everyone else in the ensemble?

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the conductor's role—to examine what conducting *is* and how we might understand it. The above questions demand both definitions and answers, but they must wait, because this project is an ontological exploration. The research scope, however, needs to be narrowed down and delimited. I will first elaborate upon various ways of looking at musical leadership and the conductor's role. Later, in section 1.3, I will summarise the project's scope.

1.1.1. Leading music

Wherever a group of people sings or plays together, some kind of leadership is exercised, even if only to synchronise the start of the music session. The drum major of a marching band, for example, determines when to start and stop the music (if not much else). It is in fact difficult to pin down musical leadership in terms of specific tasks beyond this. For example, Georges Prêtres, while conducting the Vienna Philharmonic on New Year's Day in 2008, was clearly leading the music, though he did not actually *do* much at all. Even a choral conductor who had broken her leg and was sitting in the first row with the audience, impacted the music by her mere presence, thanks to a history involving minutely rehearsed details. And when conductors apparently are

doing more or less the same thing, the effect might be quite different, as for example when ten different conductors in a conducting competition made the exact same choir sound quite different.¹ In all of their various guises, however, these conductors were leading the musical flow, and it would have flowed differently without them. Even in the Orpheus Orchestra, which is known for having no single designated leader, there is leadership activity going on—in fact, the musicians take pride in leading the ensemble together. Despite the lack of a generally accepted definition of leadership, then, its existence is verifiable by its impact:

It suffices for the moment to say that leadership is an influencing process involving some degree of voluntary compliance by those being influenced. It involves some work- or task-related purpose, and it is seen to benefit the group or the organization. (Alvesson and Spicer, 2010:4)

The range of definitions of leadership has little in common except that some influencing process is going on. Musical leadership may be covert or tacit as well as overt and explicit. Across different musical cultures, ensemble leadership has been exercised from a singing or playing position. The distinct and non-playing role of the Western conductor as we know him or her now is a phenomenon associated with certain genres of music and certain ensembles over the last two centuries (Durrant, 2003; Galkin, 1988; Schonberg, 1967). It is this explicit form of musical leadership that is the subject of the present investigation. Specifically, I have chosen to investigate conducting from the perspective of the ensemble member—that is, those who are being exposed to the leadership, through whom the leadership behaviour is intended to shape a desired sound flow, and those who benefit from excellent leadership and suffer from poor leadership.

Although this study ultimately focuses on choral conducting, at this stage I am deliberately encompassing orchestral conducting as well. Through most of these introductory considerations, it is more useful to wander freely among a wide range of ensemble types and situations. For the same reason, the words

¹ International Competition for Choir Conductors, 'Mariele Ventre', 4th ed., Bologna, Italy, 9–13 October 2007 (Jansson, 2008:77).

singer, musician, and ensemble member are used interchangeably. I also use musical leadership and conducting interchangeably, at least until there is a need to be more specific.

One might wonder whether leading music is actually different from leading something else. Why should the conductor role be researched as anything special? There is an abundance of literature and research on leadership. Does it not apply to music? In many ways, these questions have parallels in the musicology field overall. Is there something about music that requires a certain view and a dedicated approach? A good reason for an affirmative answer, as colloquial as it may be, is the permeation of musical metaphors in our everyday language (I will return to this below). Music has a special grip on us as human beings, and it is worth learning from and being inspired by in other walks of life. A more scientific reason is the whole canon of philosophical thinking devoted to music, one that is well beyond what a merely pleasant pastime would merit.

1.1.2. Leading musically

The connection between music and leadership, then, is uncontroversial, since acts of making music are necessarily led. But the link also goes the other way, in that musicality in everyday language is often used to denote desirable behaviours outside the music domain. Springborg (2010) proposes three different ways in which leadership and the arts (not only music) may be connected. Leadership *like art* implies that there are parallels between exercising leadership and practicing art, though neither the processes nor the products are the same. A metaphor is one expression of this connection—for example, businesspeople talk about ‘orchestrating change’. Leadership *of art* sees art as an activity that is organised in some way, at least to some extent by making use of non-art-specific tools and processes (conducting falls within this category). Leadership *as art* considers leadership as an art form, and its performance, by extension, as an artistic expression. Since the objectives of leadership nearly always are *not* art-like, this is a very particular view that extracts a subset of leadership’s features that may be performed and understood in artistic terms. Leading in an artful way (and behaving in a musical way) assumes a connection that imports aesthetics into a decidedly non-musical domain.

The subject of this study is *music leadership*, as represented by the conductor's role, though I used the term *musical leadership* in the title, although it slightly more ambiguous. This wilful ambiguity forces us to ask questions about the research subject. Does the term musical leadership in fact refer to the leadership of a music activity, or are we speaking metaphorically about a musical way of leading in general? Is there any difference between a musical way of leading and leading a music ensemble? In fact, the two notions capture different aspects of the leadership situation: the first is about the *how* and the second is about the *what* and the *why*. Music metaphors are omnipresent in our daily language, and musicianship often serves as an ideal for good human communication and interaction. Executives *orchestrate* change when large organisations are transformed. Messages are *in harmony* with each other when they are consistent. Colleagues are *out of tune* when they deviate from the accepted. We are in an *upbeat* mode when everything is going well. Politicians act in an *unmusical* way when they fail to understand the people's sentiment. To act musically signifies integrity, coherence, and alignment, which seem to be self-evident in the music domain and desirable, but far from self-evident, in most organisational life. These metaphors are one of the sources of my curiosity about the nature of musical leadership: what it is about the conductor's role and the practice of conducting that is able to inspire well beyond the domain of music itself? Of course, the usefulness (or truthfulness) of music metaphors may be questioned: are they fly by night fads, excessively used, and of any practical value? Columnist Lucy Kellaway is rather critical about the metaphors used to describe business organisations:

Since I started following these things in the early 1990s, there have been three different sorts of metaphors wheeled out by gurus to help explain and prescribe business behaviour, all benign. The first were musical metaphors. There was the idea of a company as an orchestra, with the chief executive as the conductor. Each knowledge worker scraped away at her fiddle or blew his horn, and the maestro waved a thin stick to bring them together in perfect time and harmony. This metaphor was popular for a while but, as the internet grew, gurus got groovier and decided that classical was out and jazz was in. The great leader must not tell his players how to play but let them jam, be creative and let it all hang out.

Presently, even this seemed too square, and in 2002 a Swedish writer said that the CEO should be like a DJ, mixing records to match the mood on the dance floor.²

In my view, such objections do not make musical leadership as a metaphor any less interesting. The ease with which these many parallels are drawn, used, made meaningful or discarded proves the attractiveness of the metaphor overall and the fluidity of the understanding music contributes to these other domains. The non-music world has decided that there is something to be learned from the music world, specifically in terms of organisation and leadership. What those lessons might be, however, is only now coming to occupy the attention of scholars, as we will see in chapter 3 about leadership theory.

1.1.3. Music as material and interaction

One of the longstanding dichotomies within the musicological discourse concerns the relative primacy of the music material in relation to the music act (including its setting). This dichotomy also affects how I approach conducting, and some preliminary clarification is needed. The Pythagorean emphasis on the tonal system is an example of a material view (as opposed to an interactive view), although the importance of numbers and proportions should not be taken as a disavowal of music's experiential significance. Proportions make the interval conceivable, whereas the sounding interval makes proportions perceivable, available to us as lived experience (Sundberg, 2000:25). Pythagorean thinking, of course, assumed a strong relationship between music, human spirituality and nature. A turn in music philosophy took place starting in the Middle Ages and continuing through the Renaissance and into the Baroque period. The weighting of musical significance evolved from structure to content, from the universal to the specific, and from the timeless to the actual, eventually leading to the emergence of music as *the work* of art (Sundberg, 2002:69). This philosophical turn, obviously, reinforced the prevailing notion of

² *Financial Times*, 1 March 2009, available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/040cfe6a-04ed-11de-8166-000077b07658.html#axzz1MRdPbszk> (accessed 15 May 2011, 19:52).

music as material rather than interactive and social. The cultivation of the 'composer genius' and his sublime art has been rarely articulated as succinctly and as forcefully as by Theodor Adorno, in his famous essay (Adorno, 1941). Not only does he provide an elaborate description of what differentiates the great work from the 'trivial' products of the Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley dream factories but also he explicitly dismisses the non-material aspects of music:

The autonomy of music is replaced by a mere socio-psychological function. Music today is largely a social cement. And the meaning listeners attribute to a material, the inherent logic of which is inaccessible to them, is above all a means by which they achieve some psychical adjustment to the mechanisms of present-day life. (Adorno, 1941:14)

A corresponding bias can be observed in the ways in which music analysis throughout the twentieth century made extensive use of rather narrow viewing angles, an example being the popularity of Schenkerian analysis for studying the structure of tonal music.³ In Schenkerian analysis, the entire source of music's meaning is the score (text), and context is seen as irrelevant. Music analysis that encompasses how we experience and extract meaning from music is still an emerging discipline. According to Marc Leman, 'Music is still accessed in terms of metadata such as the name of a composer or the title of a song, but not in terms of how it sounds or how it feels' (Leman, 2008:1). Even if our descriptions of music are incomplete and vague, Leman observes that talk is the only vehicle through which we can communicate *about* musical experiences and make sense of them. One point in talk's favour, of course, is that in the process of sharing the experience of music, we often also share the context in which the music is happening (ibid.).

Context, then, is seen as a key source of signification within disciplines that take a wider musicological view, such as ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists are also generally unconstrained by limitations of musical genre or specific aesthetic judgements.⁴ Music therapy, and to some degree

³ See, for example, www.schenkerguide.com.

⁴ See, for example, Nettl (2008) and Shelemay (2001).

music psychology, also deals with music as a broad and context-contingent phenomenon. Music therapist and pedagogue Even Ruud insists that it is impossible to separate the process with which we derive meaning from music and from our lives (Ruud, 1997:195). He found that music is a strong identity marker, and further that identity is shaped by the narratives we produce about it. A musical experience has no meaning without some kind of reference to lived life. At the same time, the narratives of our musical experiences are made meaningful thanks to specific pieces of music. On the aforementioned axis between music as material and music as interactive process, Christopher Small (1998) joins Ruud in the latter group as well. He has proposed the term *musicking* to denote any process where music is involved, including peripheral engagements such as those of the accidental listener or the concert hall usher. Small's argument is that we relate to and engage with music, actively or passively, in a multitude of ways in everyday life. He even rejects the notion of music as a noun, because he feels so strongly that it cannot exist outside a human process, whether it is composing and playing, listening and dancing, marching or shopping.

Is the dichotomy *music as material* versus *music as interaction* relevant to the exploration of the conducting phenomenon? My first thought is that whatever meaning is associated with the conductor's role is manifested in his or her interaction with the ensemble—a material-only view of music seems rather useless in this case. It would be more plausible, perhaps, to take the other extreme and consider musical leadership only a contextual construct. Can we understand it primarily as a category of human interaction, rather than a negotiation over content, or what the interaction *is about*? Liz Garnett offers an interesting perspective as she reflects on widely differing choral traditions in terms of voice ideals and gestural vocabularies. She poses a series of questions arising from how little we know about these forms of communication:

Do they belong to a pre-cultural realm of primate social bonding, or do they rely on the context and conventions of a particular choral culture? Is kinaesthetic experience and body language an inherent part of performance styles, or does it come afterwards, in response to music?
(Garnett, 2009:1)

The key point here is not so much the possible answers to these questions (which she covers in her book) but the dominance of interactional themes within them. If social bonding, context and conventions, styles and response to

music are important features of musical leadership, then it certainly can be understood as an interactive phenomenon—as something that first and foremost derives from how we collectively engage in the music act.

Studies on conducting (covered in chapter 2) have tended to be biased towards the music material, in the sense that conducting has been closely linked to specific genres of music, to its construction and performance traditions, or even to gestural solutions to the minutiae of the music score. Leadership theory (covered in chapter 3), on the other hand, is relational in its orientation. Some scholars even claim that the leadership act and leadership capabilities transcend what is being led (the particular group or material). Ironically, then, music theory and leadership theory historically occupy opposite endpoints of the material/interaction axis.

For the purposes of this project, it is not necessary *a priori* to take a specific position on how signification in a musical experience happens, beyond the inclusive assumption that a blend of music material and musical interaction is most likely in play. The extremes, on the other hand, miss the crucial point that the music material *must* meet the musical process for music (and the host of studies it engenders) to result. This meeting point is the *musicking moment*—the locus of actual sounding musical experience. I choose to use Small's term *musicking* despite my inclusive assumption above, because there is simply no better English term to evoke the German *musizierung* or the Norwegian *musisering*. In German, the verb *musizieren* and the noun *musizierung* each denote the music process, the performative, enactive aspect of creating sounding music. Throughout this dissertation, *musicking* simply denotes the acts of singing or playing, as opposed to imagining, composing or listening to music (as well as any commercial or industrial involvement in the process). The reason I do not use *making music* is the possible confusion that arises with composition and technical production. I therefore use *musicking* in a narrower sense than Small. Expressions like the *musicking moment* and the *musicking process* here denote a point in time, when sounding music is made by singers or playing instrumentalists.

It is possible to investigate conducting via the beat patterns that are related to a specific music material that has been removed from the performing context. It is equally possible to study musical leadership as a social process, above and beyond any given score. But something will be lost without attending to the blend of the two. According to Robert Faulkner, 'Musicians

have ideas of the possibilities in any piece of music, and beyond that, an idea of the maestro as an agent of their own behaviour' (Faulkner, 1973:149). This statement has several subtle insights. Musicians, not only the conductor, think about the musical meaning that is inherent in any given material. Musicians also have an idea of how the conductor might act as a mediator of meaning in the musicking process. Faulker implies here that all interested parties sense that meaningful musical leadership is a two-way street.

The purpose of the above discussion is to arrive at the following simple premise for this dissertation: the most obvious, and least constraining, place to anchor a study on musical leadership is the musicking moment. This moment is where meaning is created, moulded and mediated. Because ensemble musicking is a concerted endeavour and a collective achievement, the experience must be understood not only as a subjective sensation but also as an intersubjective phenomenon.

1.1.4. Conducting as intersubjective experience

Given the definitions of musicking proposed in the preceding section, we might now view musical leadership as part of an overall musicking experience—as one aspect of musicking in an ensemble. Holgersen (2006) explores the ways in which musical intersubjectivity might be investigated by phenomenology. He defines musical intersubjectivity as the simultaneous intentionality both towards and from music and one another. His elaboration of musical intersubjectivity should be equally applicable to conducting as intersubjective experience. In what follows, I will make use of some of his key points to clarify some implications for the study of conducting.

A phenomenological inquiry into musical intersubjectivity was made possible by a major philosophical breakthrough in the twentieth century: in this *bodily turn*, the relationship between the subject and the world was given ontological status. I am body, it went, therefore my relationship with the world must be understood in a bodily sense. In relation to conducting practice, this point may seem superfluous, as bodily understanding is at play here in its most literal and visual incarnation. Conducting, and musicking in general, for that matter, could be seen to constitute a major rationale for the bodily turn—it is hard to imagine a meaningful relationship between conductor and ensemble without relationship as body. However, the ontological status of this

relationship goes beyond gestures; every aspect of the relationship between conductor and ensemble is corporeal. Holgersen points out that phenomenology abolishes two of the most long-lived dualisms of Western philosophy, between consciousness and the world and between consciousness and body, and what bridges these divides is the body subject. The body subject is always perceptually present, and a purely mindful or 'remote' access to the world is an illusion, because we are bodily present in any perception we have.⁵ Hence, reflection itself is also an integral and constitutive part of the reality we investigate. The world is meaningful for the body subject before the mind understands it. Music is a good example of this, since experiencing music does not require thought in and of itself, although the way we experience music might be coloured by previous experiences and thoughts. Phenomenology would even claim that the subject must be transcended in order to be described; therefore, investigation of the subject necessarily leads to intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity cannot be explained as a plain analogy between subjects (people), because one person does not have access to another as the other person experiences himself. It is the subjects' access to a shared life world that makes intersubjectivity possible. There are several arguments that elucidate this. We have the capacity to perceive sameness alongside otherness, for one thing—when you touch another person's hand, for example, you experience both yourself and the other. Holgersen emphasises how fundamental this human capacity is by referring to Daniel Stern (1998), who has found that even newborn babies possess an emerging recognition of the relationship between self and other (Holgersen, 2006:44). They are more likely to reach out for objects within reach than for objects beyond reach. They have an implicit consciousness of their own body's relationship with the world. Another sign of intersubjectivity is our capacity to sense empathy. Within the musicking domain, singing with our own voice in a choir does not preclude us from following and being moved by other voices. In my experience, even novice singers are able to sense the different roles of the tones in a triad. Singing the

⁵ This line of reasoning derives from the philosophical tradition of Merleau-Ponty (1945).

third tonal step in a major triad contains both the shared experience of jointly producing a chord as well as the individual experience of embodying the sounding distinction between major and minor. We reach out and touch the music, while we are simultaneously being touched by the music. The musicking experience becomes indistinguishable from experiencing human relationships, or from life itself. In Holgersen's words, we become entangled in a common field of experience.

The discovery of mirror neurons (Winerman, 2005) opened up a new avenue for understanding intersubjectivity as well. The notion of a mirror system in humans sheds new light on musical gestures and conducting gestures, as the coupling of the sensory system to the motor system enables us to understand the other's action without actually performing it ourselves. Understanding the other's musical gesture, then, invites the possibility of not only perceiving the sounding now and the sounding past but also anticipating the evolving musical flow. Intersubjectivity comes to represent a type of openness that allows me to hear how the music appears both to me and to you, but it also allows me to imagine and anticipate how you will react to a certain musical expression. Wilson and Knoblich provide a cognitive explanation for how such anticipation is possible. They find that the link between sound and movement is about understanding not only the sound source—that is, the cause of the sound—but also the entire movement trajectory that creates it. The coupling of sensory and motor systems gives rise to an emulation of the other's gesture. They claim that the emulation is not at motor plan that goes nowhere, but that it has a purpose rooted in our evolution, which was useful for survival:

A perceiver who can 'see' where a movement is heading has enormous advantages, both physically and socially. Thus, what originally appeared to be a neurological extravagance—the activation of motor resources when no motor movement is intended—may instead be an elegant solution to a perceptual problem. (Wilson and Knoblich, 2005:469)

This emulation overcomes sensory delay, so that our cognition grasps the now and the immediate future. This has an interesting practical implication for conducting that is also commonly observed in practice: the conductor's movement *between* beats promotes rhythmic precision as much as his or her marking of the discrete beat points. It also appears to be the case that at least some of the mechanisms in play when we respond to conducting gestures are older than musical culture itself, in an evolutionary sense. Hence, there should

be aspects of conducting gestures that will be experienced in a similar way across cultures and musical genres.

Holgersen (2000) points out that the subject both defines and transcends itself through intersubjectivity. Drawing on Stern (2004), he describes three motives that shape the intersubjective field: (1) intersubjective orientation, (2) share experience or be understood and (3) define and redefine oneself. These three motives imply an increasing depth of involvement, from rather unconscious scanning through an extension of the intersubjective field to the consolidation or reshaping of oneself. In the context of children and music education, Holgersen develops the four participation strategies (reception, imitation, identification and elaboration) as qualitatively different types of involvement. In my understanding, greater involvement implies greater consequence for the self, ranging from none to becoming a member, to taking ownership and to possibly taking the lead. In my experience with singers, there is a subtle transition from being a compliant singer (imitation and identification) to becoming a liberated musician. Beatrice, one of the interviewed singers, sees great musical leadership as being able to bring the ensemble from compliance to 'free' musicking (section 13.1.6). She is not suggesting that 'free' means independent or disconnected but rather the opposite—highly and deeply intersubjective. According to Holgersen, intersubjectivity can be understood as a premise for our life world that manifests itself as affective tuning, whereby motives and mutual expectations meet. Intersubjectivity appears as the subjects' experience of shared meaning in lived time.

The notion of musical intersubjectivity and its affinity with phenomenology guides me towards a problem statement for researching musical leadership. The musicking moment, with all of its immediacy and intimacy, seems to offer a promising point of departure—the ways in which this moment is created and shared represent a prime source of data, and intersubjectivity as a deeply embodied phenomenon suggests there may be more to the experience of conducting than language alone can easily grasp. The role of language in research into the conducting phenomenon is therefore a key philosophical and methodological question. In addition, the notion of intersubjectivity reminds us that the conductor is not a solitary agent, raising in turn the fundamental question that heads the following subsection.

1.2. Who owns conducting?

It does not take much study of the history and practices of conducting to realise that the entire phenomenon is ontologically ambiguous. What conducting *is* depends on not only who is trying to understand it but also what angle it is viewed from. Ontological ambiguity therefore leads to epistemological challenges. Conducting's appearance differs greatly across contexts—for example, from rehearsal to performance. While a rehearsal resembles many other types of preparation, musicking in the performing situation is literally speechless, among other things, and musical leadership is corporeal and gestural. According to Wayne Bowman, the nonverbal nature of musicking has consequences for how we may understand the musical experience (and, consequently, the conducting experience). Bowman argues for an enactive/emergent model of cognition rather than a representational one: knowing, he believes, is inseparable from doing—in fact, knowing *is* doing and always bears the body's imprint (Bowman, 2004:46). All human knowledge draws its substance from corporeal roots, then, and the mind is inextricably embodied. Bowman also suggests that music's corporeal basis affords a certain 'genius for ambiguity' (2004:37). Because ambiguity is commonly viewed as slightly negative, Bowman prefers the term multivalence, in order to capture a positive image of polysemy and multiplicity of meaning. Accepting a multivalent ontology of conducting demands great openness to the various ways of understanding it, as well as a critical view towards the types of insight that can be generated.

Colin Durrant (2003:38) observes the facility with which some conductors connect with the ensemble and asks: 'Is this phenomenon just a mystery, as some well-known conductors would have us believe, or is it something we can deconstruct and analyze?' He seems to suspect some sort of veil shrouding this role, or even a wilful cover-up—perhaps conductors see it as in their interest to maintain this mystique. He is also uncomfortable with those singers or musicians who sing or play *despite* the conductor, which is to say that a conductor can even ruin music and inhibit musicking.

It would thus appear that the conductor's role clearly deserves more scrutiny. So how has it evaded systematic study of what it is and why we need it? Are conductors unwilling to be study objects? And more importantly, who has definition power over the concept of conducting in the first place? How

might we begin to understand musical leadership, and what scholarly disciplines can claim ownership of the enterprise? The purpose of the following sections is to present various epistemological foundations and review their various insights into conducting. I will also rationalise my choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as a philosophy-of-science platform for my study.

1.2.1. What is the subject matter of conducting?

My point of departure is the desire to understand what musical leadership is and what makes it work, applying scientific rigour to a notion that I have deliberately kept loosely defined. How might we understand musical leadership in broad terms while positioning the knowledge within existing knowledge domains? The question may be interpreted in two ways. First, *how* can be represented by all of the scholarly disciplines that have some stake in conducting and claim some insight into the topic—that is, the ‘discipline view’. Next, we must ask ‘understood by whom?’ or ‘who owns the experience?’—that is, the ‘epistemological view’. We will begin with the former, which derives from (and centres upon) musicology.

Musicology is itself an ambiguous term, applied in a variety of ways across academic cultures and over a long period of time. Nicolas Cook (1998:86) explores the study of Western music, from its origins in music theory and music history to the present array of social and humanistic disciplines that examine music and its contexts. Christopher Small draws attention to the ongoing territorialism of those who define musicology as the study of great works in the Western tradition, noting that the study of other types of music and music events, including Western popular music as well as the musics of non-Western cultures, are placed within the rubric of ethnomusicology, which ‘does not yet dare to call itself musicology’ (Small, 1998:3).⁶ The broad (and, in my view, proper) view of musicology encompasses the study of music and musicking, of any aspect, in any form and context, and therefore touches upon a

⁶ There are also different scholarly traditions for what is understood by musicology, Musikwissenschaft (German) and musikkvitenskap (Norwegian), a topic that will not be discussed further here.

number of other disciplines, including history, cultural studies, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, acoustics, mathematics and semiotics. It naturally encompasses disciplines like music theory, composition and performance practice, as well as the potentially related disciplines of visual arts, literature and theatre. If we consider musical leadership to be an aspect of musicking, this array of disciplines is also applicable to the study of conducting.

Just as musicology (in the broadest sense) hosts a number of scholarly disciplines, the scientific domain of leadership does the same.⁷ A key question is whether musical leadership should be considered a subset of general leadership or whether it more naturally belongs to musicology, and possibly to more specific disciplines like music pedagogy and performance practice. Musical leadership also could be seen to constitute a discipline in its own right, one with a tenuous relationship to its peers. The various subject-matter disciplines have distinct foci and may offer different types of insights. A subject-matter discipline might not have a connection to music at all but might nevertheless shed light on conducting. Semiotics, for example, deals with signs, signification and communication in ways that are also relevant to the conducting gesture. Neurology might explain why and how singers respond bodily to a conductor's breath and posture. In the rehearsal process, the conductor affects singer learning in ways that fall within the discipline of music pedagogy. Psychology and the social sciences can deal with the power relationship at play in a music ensemble. Despite all of its potential intersections with these disparate areas, however, musical leadership remains a distinct subject of its own. The conductor role, for one thing, represents a unique professional practice with a corresponding educational trajectory. While many of its professional facets are shared with other music skills and activities, some are unique: the predominance of gestural signalling, for example, distinguishes conducting from general leadership as well as singing or playing an instrument, while the leadership aspect of musicking—setting the tempo; deciding what to rehearse—distinguishes conducting from singing or playing as well. Since the conductor is the only non-sound-producing musician,

⁷ Whether leadership even deserves a distinct scholarly domain is debatable; see the discussion in chapter 3.

the rationale for wanting the role must also be different from the rationales of all other ensemble positions. In sum, understanding musical leadership involves transcending the various disciplines that might offer insight into it. The danger with every contributing scholarly perspective, as well, is that it might entail concepts and categories that may or may not serve a holistic understanding of the subject in question.

The search for scholarly identification, then, is not the most fruitful approach with which to frame musical leadership—we cannot expect any given subject-matter discipline to be the primary owner of conducting. Such a complex phenomenon transcends discipline boundaries, especially if we approach conducting with an ontological openness. Discipline boundaries are more useful for the research communities they produce and the focus they bring to the academic exchange than to the production of knowledge as such. It thus seems more fruitful to stay clear of disciplines for a moment and reflect further on knowledge access, taking what was earlier noted to be the epistemological view. The *who owns* question is in fact an epistemological inquiry, evoking alternative avenues of insight. Collin and Köppe (2007:25) emphasise the mutually beneficial interaction between the philosophical sciences and the subject-matter disciplines. In their view, the border between epistemological reflection and subject matter reflection is quite blurred. They also note an increasing scholarly tendency to move the philosophical sciences towards reflection *within* subject-matter disciplines. Jørgensen and Philips (2006:12) point out the packaged nature of methodologies, for example the way in which discourse theory and methodology are chained together, and note that any usage of discourse analysis requires an understanding and acceptance of its philosophical basis. Phenomenology may be even more integrated, because its analyses not only require acceptance of phenomenology's epistemological foundations, but the philosophy colours the entire research process. According to van Manen, the method of phenomenology is really no method but a 'tradition, a body of knowledge and insight, a history of lives of thinkers and authors, which [. . .] constitutes both a source and methodological ground for present human science research practices' (van Manen, 1990:30). The aim to be as free of presupposition as possible itself implies the suspension of all pre-existing concepts and thus reduces the initial value offered by those scholarly disciplines with which the research in question might identify.

Pedagogy researcher Frede Nielsen (1977) has investigated the question of subject-matter boundaries for the closely related field of music pedagogy: what is the territory of music pedagogy as a science? Should we define music pedagogy narrowly or broadly? It is a tricky question: there are problems associated with defining scientific knowledge in relation to practice-based insight, and there is tension between scientific knowledge and aesthetic insight. Musical leadership as a territory shares these concerns, and it is somehow isomorphic with music pedagogy in terms of its key constituents and frame factors. The triangle ‘teacher-student-music’ is parallel to the triangle ‘conductor-musician-music’, and both areas are framed by, among other things, institutions, economics, discourses and external actors. Nielsen’s approach to the territory question is therefore highly applicable to musical leadership. In his investigation, Nielsen attends to the different reality dimensions that the pedagogy discipline may attend to. He proposes four reality dimensions for music pedagogy, three of which are relevant here: intended reality, perceived reality (by someone), and observed reality (by the researcher).⁸ Adapting Nielsen’s categories, musical leadership could be approached from three constituents’ perspectives:

- Conducting as intention: the conductor’s perspective
- Conducting as observed structure: the outsider’s perspective
- Conducting as perceived impact: the singers’ perspective

The *who owns* approach to understanding conducting takes the phenomenon itself as a starting point and explicitly assumes that knowledge access must go through someone. As I will discuss further in chapter 2, writing on conducting has historically been dominated by intended reality—the thinking of the great maestro, for example, or the research of the music pedagogue. A few scholars have attempted to describe the outsider’s structural view of conducting, but this body of research is rather limited. Literature on the perceived impact of conducting is almost nonexistent. One could argue, of course, that the conductor, as well as the audience (including the critics), also has some sense of

⁸ Nielsen’s fourth reality is the possible, which is neither intended nor perceived.

the impact. Yet this impact is primarily perceived through the sounding music, which, though relevant, follows upon the more *immediate* impact on the singers. I therefore choose to let the singers own the perceived impact.

I elaborate upon these three perspectives, *intention*, *structure*, and *impact*, in the following sections. I will not present a literature review as such, but rather reflect on the ways in which various subject matter disciplines might elucidate (or hide) aspects of musical leadership. I present more comprehensive literature reviews in chapter 2 (conducting research) and 3 (leadership theory).

1.2.2. Conducting as intention

Conductors' intentions derive from some sort of link between their actions and the sounding music. If such a link did not exist, the role would be meaningless. The intention perspective makes the conductor the key subject, and his or her inseparable connection to the world is what phenomenology calls the principle of intentionality (van Manen, 1990:5). This intentionality involves the way in which the conductor sees the world and acts on it. I am purposely mixing the colloquial meaning of the word intention and the philosophical term, because, in conducting, they are hard to distinguish. The phenomenological notion of operational intentionality deals with orientation and directedness—consciousness is always directed towards something, so the conductor, then, attends to the ensemble and the music. But intentionality, or being in the world, also has an active element⁹. The key point about conducting as intention is that it derives from the perspective of the conductor—how he or she understands the musicking situation, what the objectives are, and what actions are set forth.

Whether conducting is described by conductors themselves or by writers who have investigated them, all are within an intentional perspective generally centred upon conductors' self-perceptions and motivations. A book title like *Conscience of a profession* (Fowler and Swan, 1987) even extends

⁹ The original meaning of the Latin *intendere* corresponds to operational intentionality: 'to stretch out', 'to turn one's attention to'. Its meaning later expanded to include act intentionality: 'have as a plan'. <http://www.etymonline.com>.

individual intentionality to some shared view of the musical leadership domain in a community of conductors. Given the way in which the modern conductor's role emerged early in the nineteenth century—music leaders literally *stepped up* to it, assumed it, embodied it, and hence defined it—it is no wonder that the intention perspective has dominated the conducting literature. The prescriptive nature of this literature is equally understandable. Conductors themselves have probably been more conscious of the role than anyone else, and some have put themselves into positions to reflect on their practice and articulate what they do and why. The experience base of individual conductors, shared through communities of practice and the literature itself, emerges from a perception of what works, and the literature is full of narratives of experiences, practices and ideas that are only to a limited degree conceptualised in the form of structured theory. In particular, both researchers and conductor-narrators have focused on the rehearsing aspect of conducting, predominantly within the music pedagogy discipline (covered in chapter 2).

One pitfall of the intention perspective is its association with the signalling model of conducting. According to Liz Garnett, a common underlying thread here is the conduit metaphor,¹⁰ which sees conducting as a signalling system and the conductor as the conduit for these signals (Garnett, 2009:20). While this might describe what conductors do, she finds it insufficient as to what conducting actually is, recognising the fallacy of viewing the choir simply as a sound-producing machine that can be manipulated by either score or conductor's gestures alone. Ragnhild Sandberg-Jurström's dissertation takes a comprehensive view of the multi-modal signalling repertoire of conductors using a social-semiotic methodology. Although her perspective could be said to be intentional at the outset, she builds a bridge to the observed structure of musical leadership (Sandberg-Jurström, 2009).

As an epistemological basis for investigating musical leadership, the intention perspective is simultaneously the most obvious and the most biased approach. Historically, conductors have owned conducting, and there is no conducting without the conductor. What conductors think, feel, and do is the

¹⁰ Garnett refers to Lakoff and Johnsen, who consider *conduit* to be one of the fundamental metaphors of our cognitive apparatus (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

most immediate access to the intended effect. While the intended effect is different from the actual effect (no matter what understanding of effect we apply), conductors' intentions will somehow be based on an aggregate understanding, from their own experience and shared experience, of what works. Conducting *impact* is therefore implicit in conducting *intention*: conductors do what they do because they believe it serves the interests of their musical leadership. The aim of this project is to make conducting impact explicit by questioning the dominance of the intention perspective and all of the assumed links between what conductors do and what effects their actions have. After all, conductors may not see the full picture or even understand exactly how they impact singers. For that, we must turn to the second perspective.

1.2.3. Conducting as perceived impact

The impact perspective deals with how conducting actually works, regardless of the conductor's intentions. All leadership depends utterly (by default) on its impact on those being led. According to Alvesson and Spicer (2011:26), attribution theory suggests

that it is followers, not leaders, who are the 'active' ingredients in the leadership process. In the messy, uncertain and ambiguous world of work, followers are the key players in relating possible outcomes to people by labelling them 'leaders'.

It is therefore the full range of expectations, reputations, communications and sensemaking that arises around what a leader is understood to do, mean or want that propels the leadership process. The impact of leadership derives from the interplay between intention, interpretation and meaning, with all of the attendant possibilities for precision and confusion, compliance and clashes, demotivation and mobilisation. This interplay is what Liz Garnett calls the interactive model of conducting (Garnett, 2009:20).

In principle, conducting impact could be studied through observation, during auditions and competitions as well as regular rehearsals and concerts. Impact could also be studied through journalistic reviews and musicologists' critiques. Content-analysis methodologies might turn up patterns in published

material about conductors.¹¹ Argumentation analysis, for example, could assess the evidential reliability of writers' conclusions about conductors' impact (Bergström and Boréus, 2005:91). Discourse analysis could reveal how musical performances are discussed there (ibid.:308). Yet these methodologies would generally gravitate towards how *writers construct* the impact of conductors, rather than what that impact actually is. There is an interesting paradox here. Within a constructionist paradigm, the text, as reality in its own right, is self-sufficient. But then it cannot claim to point to a reality other than or behind itself.

For the purposes of this project, then, we might instead seek the *unmediated* impact—that is, the link between the conductor and the singer or musician. A positivist research strategy (for example, biometric measuring) could possibly find causal relationships between the conductor's gestures and the musician's response. Recent and ongoing technological advancements in measuring and analysing complex gestures open new research avenues into conducting.¹² But even a whole host of such studies would not produce a comprehensive picture of the conducting phenomenon. Colin and Köppe (2007:36) point out that the humanistic disciplines deal with meaningful phenomena, while the natural sciences deal with non-meaningful phenomena. As musical leadership is both deeply human and consummately relational, the most direct avenue to the impact of conducting is *through those who create meaning* from the act: the singer, and specifically the singer's lived experience and means of expressing it, made available for research through verbal dialogue. This emphasis of the perceived impact view is based on the obvious, yet important realisation that the sounding music is created by those who are exposed to the leadership and through whom leadership necessarily will have to take its effect. The singers' life world is centre stage, and their verbalised experience unavoidable. By explicitly privileging the singer's view, I will not capture the comprehensive phenomenon of conducting, but I will benefit from the most immediate and unmediated perspective upon it. I will also

¹¹ As, for example, described by Bergström & Boréus (2005).

¹² See, for example, Godøy and Leman (2010).

compensate for the underrepresentation of this perspective in the conducting literature to date.

It could be argued that a perspective based upon conducting as perceived impact is just as biased as one based upon conducting as intention. Each perspective represents a stakeholder view, after all. But while it is interesting to understand how conductors think about their art and craft, the inevitability of its impact upon singers and the lack of scholarly attention to the singer's experience push that perspective to the fore here.

Lastly, there are philosophical platforms that combine individual agency (on the part of the conductor and singers) with the structures and processes both within and around orchestral and choral institutions. I will now touch briefly upon this collective perspective.

1.2.4. Conducting as observed structure

A 'structural view' approaches conducting (indeed, any form of social organisation) from the outside as a third party (not the conductor or an ensemble member). Nicolas Cook observes that the modern symphony orchestra demonstrates most of the characteristics of an industrial organisation—a team of specialists (instrumentalists) working with a blueprint (the score) in ordered hierarchies with career paths and corresponding remuneration packages sounds as much like a construction company as an orchestra (Cook, 1998:78). According to Christopher Small (1998:11), as well, the music economy endorses the *thingness* of music by associating musical meaning with *the work* alone or economic value with the score as relic. Musicianship may have some particular traits in comparison with other human endeavours, but the structural view remains relevant. Given the premise, then, that conducting represents one kind of leadership structure, the full array of social and organisational sciences might well apply. A good example of a structural view is to be found in sociologist Norman Lebrecht's *Maestro Myth* (1997). Although his methodologies are not explicit, he makes an eloquent case for a structural view of the conducting phenomenon:

Rather than assembling yet another catalogue of conducting 'greats', my aim here has been to delve beneath the mechanics of conducting into the social, psychological, political and economic dynamics of an infinitely fascinating métier—to analyse it in plain language without euphemisms,

technical flummery and honorifics. Taken from start to finish, the story of conducting is a chronicle of individual endeavour and ambition, modulated by violent circumstances in the surrounding society. Conducting, like most forms of heroism, rests on the use and abuse of power for personal benefit. Whether such heroism is desirable in music, or a necessary evil, remains open to debate. (Lebrecht, 1997:11)

Here we can see that an outsider's view allows for the introduction of matters well beyond a conductor's intentions or the musicians' perceptions (including ambition, violent circumstances, heroism, and the abuse of power). Musical leadership, we are meant to see, is not only about music and musicking—Lebrecht's sociological approach may even be said to reduce (or enlarge) it to any other human endeavour, whereby no particular attention is given to the musical experience, or even to the music itself.

On the other hand, Nina Koivunen constructs a structural view that explicitly attributes significance to music and musicking (2003), approaching leadership in symphony orchestras as both a discursive and an aesthetic practice. Her aesthetic-practice approach deals largely with sensuous perception and bodily aspects of conducting. She labels four discourses that emerge from her research: (1) art against business; (2) dislike of authority; (3) heroic leadership; and (4) shared leadership. She builds her study on a notion of *relational constructionism*—a mode of thinking that she sees as constructing daily reality in organisations. It is interesting to note that she chose to discuss the discursive and non-discursive practices separately, which may exemplify the limitations of language in the study of a (partially) speechless practice like conducting.

Musical leadership may be a good example of the agency-structure dichotomy, both because the agent roles are very distinct and because the musicking structures and processes are quite visible. The conductor role is an observable meeting point between subjectivism (conductor will) and objectivism (convention and tradition). The longstanding conflict between objectivism and subjectivism was reconciled towards the end of the 20th

century by several scholars.¹³ Objectivist theories were able to explain structures and forces of society but had little room for individual perception and will. Marxist theory was blind to post-industrial society and postmodernism, and economic theory had mostly failed to cope with human irrationality. A classical structural approach, then, does not capture well the role of the creative agent. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) created a more comprehensive theory, dismissing the Marxist scheme of base and superstructure in favour of a model that included both structures and how people inhabit them. His theory reconciled objectivism and subjectivism, structure and agency, for the first time. Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field* encompass this duality by recognising the individual's comprehensive set of durable predispositions as invisibly given (*habitus*) that are nevertheless changeable within a practice (*field*). The theory also permits a more comprehensive view than phenomenology—it sees the phenomenon via the first person but also considers the fact that the way we think and act is deeply embedded and embodied, only partially available to the first person's consciousness. The concept gives room to the individual agent but contains free will within a structure, which is partly determined by the practice field (and all of its rules and rewards) and partly by the agent's *habitus* (and all of its capabilities and limitations).

Conducting may be seen as a practice field in its own right as well as part of a wider choral-singing practice field, or even a general musicking practice field. Conductors have a number of inclinations and traits that constitute the individual's *habitus*. Although much conducting practice (in the colloquial sense of the word) has quite visible characteristics, individual conductors tend, in my experience with singers' perceptions, only to a limited degree to be aware of their own predispositions. The audience *habitus* is also filled with predispositions, like the ability to fit in and avoid attracting attention from the initiates in a concert hall or jazz club. We can learn a lot about musicking and conducting simply by watching these acts. One of Bourdieu's key notions is the way in which predispositions are embodied and invisible, to the extent that our

¹³ These include but are not limited to Berger and Luckmann (1966), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), Giddens (1984).

compliance with them is not seen as an act of obedience but simply 'the way it is'.

As a highly visible practice, many aspects of conductor behaviour are directly observable predispositions, unlike less ritually oriented practice fields. Westerners are very familiar with the conductor who enters the stage after everyone else, receives the applause on behalf of the ensemble, perhaps carries himself with a certain vanity (which some audiences may in fact expect) and even exhibits unpleasant behaviour during rehearsals and gets away with it (which some musicians may in fact expect). We are also familiar with the big band leader who loudly counts the beats to kick off a tune or the gospel choir conductor who turns around and sings a solo. We find such phenomena to be natural within their respective fields and correspondingly improper outside them. The conducting field, then, is interrelated with a wider concert field, where audiences have a number of expectations regarding how a conductor behaves (and regarding their own behaviour). Even the least musically interested or educated person can mimic a conductor's behaviour, so iconic is this figure in the West. Lebrecht describes how the conductor has come to fulfil audiences' expectations of the sovereign maestro, the genius artist, and the holder of ultimate power (Lebrecht, 1997). The audience's familiarity with the field, conductors included, even distinguishes insiders from outsiders in the concert hall. This notion of taste and distinction is a regulator of group memberships (Bourdieu, 1984). If the field does not allow applause between movements in a symphony concert, it had better be part of your habitus to know this, or you risk condescending looks from the insiders.

While I have chosen to investigate musical leadership via the perceived impact of the singers, thereby focusing uniquely on the agent perspective, I know that I will miss some of the elucidating capacity of a combined structure-agency framework. Clearly, conducting practice, with all of its traditions, written and unwritten rules, ample space for the notion of taste and, not least, conductor ambition, cannot be understood *only* through singer perception. But the rationale for a structure-agency framework most clearly applies to orchestras, with their hierarchies and multitude of roles, rather than singing groups. It also applies to a research project more focussed upon the managerial aspects of a performing group that are outside the realm of music. The opera house, for example, implies complex roles, hierarchies, and processes and is commonly rife with both internal and public squabbles (see, for example,

Mintzberg [1998]). It could hardly be analysed effectively without a systematic look at its structural aspects. It is not a coincidence that phenomenology primarily arose within those scholarly disciplines that deal with the individual and his or her immediate environment, like psychology, pedagogy, and music. While these arenas are not devoid of structure and multiple relationships, they give them less prominence than do larger social arenas.

I have included the preceding discussion of frameworks that will *not* be used for this study for two reasons. First, it clarifies some of the limitations of my chosen approach. Second, it directs attention to the aspects of musical leadership that must be understood as lived experience. Phenomenology may lack not only the structural powers of an agency-structure framework but also discourse theory's revealing spotlight on language. I remain convinced, however, that it is fruitful for the moment to limit the full practice field of conducting to its inner circle of participants, the ensemble members and the conductor him/herself. I will permit my inquiry to be responsive to broader perspectives but only as seen through the eyes of the singer. All in all, the first-person perspective of my interviews, their emphasis on the singer's lived experience, the corporeal-gestural nature of conducting, and the subordinate role of language in musicking lend themselves very well to a phenomenological platform. What's more, given the lack of systematic knowledge regarding the perceived impact of conducting in the existing research base, it would be difficult to construct a credible ethnographic or sociological picture of musical leadership in the first place. As such, this project represents an overdue contribution to a wider and richer domain picture.

1.3. Project scope and research question

My project, again, is to understand musical leadership as lived experience from the point of view of the ensemble member (which is far from self-evident). Most writing and research on conducting takes the conductor's view, the how-I-do-it perspective, or the observer's view, whether the narrative is a biographical account or a sociological study. Historically, the conductor role has been owned by the maestro himself (it has long been overwhelmingly male), in terms of determining its content, reflecting on its practices and articulating its ideals. Even recently, a significant part of the conducting research in the United

States is done by practitioners in the process of earning their PhD, as a onetime research effort, according to Grant (1998). My review of conducting studies (see chapter 2) indicates the teaching-classroom bias of the research base. Conductors and music educators, then, have long defined choral conducting. Chorister's perceptions are rarely studied and their experiences remain unarticulated.

The point of departure for this project is my own curiosity, as a choral singer but also as a conductor, about what is actually going on during those great musical moments where everything comes together and music is successfully made. These moments are difficult to imagine without the contributions of a conductor. My initial curiosity was sharpened by a void in the research space regarding the conductor's impact on singers, as perceived by the singers themselves. The project scope is defined as follows:

- **Research need:** There is a growing population of highly skilled choral singers who have a broad exposure to conductors and conducting styles.¹⁴ These singers represent an untapped source of knowledge about what musical leadership is, how it impacts singers/performers, and what makes a conductor successful. Their experiences fill a void in the existing literature on conducting.
- **Research domain:** This study addresses musical leadership in choral ensembles where there is an established practice of having a single, designated, non-singing leader—that is, a conductor. At the outset, there was no particular genre of music or type of choir that was privileged. However, the research domain is generally kept within the broad choral tradition that has evolved in Scandinavia, as well as in the rest of Europe and elsewhere, over the last two centuries.

¹⁴ This statement is based on the situation in Norway, where there is an ongoing process of professionalisation of choirs around the country, as well as a large (and growing) base of highly skilled amateurs. This may also hold for other countries, though I make no such claim here. See, for example, www.kulturrad.no/presse_og_arkiv/pressemeldinger/profesjonalisering-av-kor-i-hele-landet (accessed 9 June 2012).

- **Research question:** The study aims to understand what musical leadership *is* and how the choral conductor role may be *understood*, drawing upon the perspective of the choral singer. Specifically, the following two questions will be answered: (1) What is the source of legitimacy for the conductor role—that is, why do singers need and want it? (2) What characterises great musical leadership, and what goes on when the conductor’s role is successfully realised?
- **Research approach:** The singer’s viewpoint will be investigated through the lived choral singing experience. Singers’ experiences will be captured through qualitative interviews, which will be interpreted within a hermeneutic-phenomenological framework. Broad exposure to many conductors and choral situations is crucial to ensuring a rich and varied experience base.
- **Research delimitations:** Within the wide domain of choir singing, the study does not, by design, exclude any particular aspect of the choral experience. Nonetheless, the *musicking act* is the starting point here. The extent to which adjacent and more or less strongly related non-music topics appear is determined by the presence of said topics in the actual data. Prioritising informants with extensive exposure to different conductors, of course, favours well-educated or experienced singers, I have accepted this, choosing to capture the experience of choral singers with a college or university degree in music or musicology. The operationalizing of these delimitations into sampling and data collection is described in part II.

Some of my project-scope choices deserve additional commentary. It certainly would have been possible to specify a particular music genre, choir type, or conducting style as a basis for investigating musical leadership. Having already abstained from precise definitions, for reasons of ontological openness (see above), I deemed it more appropriate to let such delimitations of content follow from the actual data. The study simply explores conducting in a domain where conducting exists, and its existence is so ubiquitous and taken for granted that the notion of conducting itself is trivial. With this position, I deliberately adhere to the phenomenological ideal of finding the non-trivial in trivial phenomena. Having said this, my chosen focus does not exclude an exploration of the intersections between my domain and other ensemble types and leadership

without a distinct conductor role. In other words, the study will touch on a number of issues related to musicianship in general as well.

Using the lived experience of choral singers as the only data source could be viewed as unnecessarily constraining; observations of singers and interviews with conductors would surely provide complementary data. Still, the singer's perspective is so painfully absent in the conducting literature that this project contributes best by focusing upon it. Of course, the fact that I am both a choral singer and a conductor makes *me* an implicit data source as well, but I will reserve my own experience for two particular applications. First, I draw upon it as I carry out and interpret the interviews. Second, I use it to evaluate (and, if necessary, negate) the preconceptions that impact my analysis process. These applications are described in more detail in section 5.2. The potential complementary gains of alternative approaches are briefly discussed in the concluding chapter of the dissertation, in section 16.3.3.

The choice of the choir as an ensemble type is based not only on my own experience and interest but also on its availability to the research process. Compared to the orchestra, with its assortment of instruments, the choir represents a relatively unmediated way of making music—singers create their music with one instrument alone (themselves). In addition, the orchestra (and the iconic maestro) likely involves more glamour, power, politics and money than the choir. Hence, it may be more difficult to disentangle orchestral conducting from a host of related issues. My choice of musically educated informants will naturally produce some reflections about orchestral conducting in relation to choral conducting, but a broader discussion of the similarities and differences falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

The Scandinavian choral tradition is characterised by the prevalence of independent community organisations, and these choirs are not predominantly affiliated with schools, churches or other institutions. Such affiliations do exist, but most choirs are entities whose sole purpose is group singing. Institutional frames and extramusical objectives, such as achieving good grades for participation, are therefore less prevalent than in the United States, for example, where choirs are more school and college based. Some Scandinavian choirs do cater to a wide range of social and musical needs, whereas others focus strictly on their musical ambitions. In sum, the semiprofessional choir environment in Norway presents few barriers to knowledge acquisition and few competing perspectives that must be accounted for in the research process.

Hopefully, the chosen project approach enables a broad capture, as well as a clear view, of the musicking process.

1.4. Scientific-philosophical platform

In this section, I will elaborate upon my choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as a scientific-philosophical platform, including its intersections with adjacent platforms. I will also provide background for the literature reviews in the remainder of part I and the methodological implications in part II.

1.4.1. Cornerstones of phenomenology

Phenomenology evolved as a dominant philosophical orientation over the course of the twentieth century. Dan Zahavi points to prominent contributors from Husserl and Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty and Derrida and notes that even phenomenology's critics, including Gadamer, Foucault, and Habermas, have been strongly influenced by it. As a consequence, Zahavi finds phenomenology to be a rather heterogeneous movement that still lacks a unifying definition of the term, despite a notable renaissance in recent years (Zahavi, 2007:122). Its cornerstones remain intact, however, and make phenomenology an attractive basis for the investigation of conducting through the lens of singer experience.

Phenomenology's first cornerstone is that the prime source of knowledge about the world emerges from the first-person perspective. Every phenomenon is an appearance of something to someone—that is, it is perceptually revealed as opposed to objectively given. This contrasts markedly with the third-person perspective assumed by the positivistic sciences, which is, according to Husserl, a 'view from nowhere'. The locus of conducting's impact, of course, is the singer/musician. This is where leadership behaviour is transformed into musical consequence.

The second cornerstone is the immediacy of the phenomenon, which can only be understood by how it appears. In this regard, then, it is the appearance of conducting (and the conductor) that represents the reality, not the structures behind or around it. For the singer, it does not matter what lies behind the conductor's leadership—his or her particular style or struggles with proper posture or whatever. It is how the leadership is perceived that creates

the impact: perception *is* reality. The corporeal, pre-lingual nature of the gesture reinforces the immediacy of the conducting phenomenon as well. This is not to reject that we are also affected by aspects of leadership outside the immediate present moment, like prior knowledge about the conductor's stylistic preferences, reputation, and public image. Of course it is true that the conducting phenomenon could be investigated primarily via social structures and processes, but an inquiry devoted to what musical leadership *is* and how it works must start with what it means for the individual singer in the musicking situation. Phenomenology's interest in the immediacy of a phenomenon does not rule out peripheral aspects of musical leadership, but they will be included only to the extent that they are revealed to be noteworthy features of singers' lived experience.

The third cornerstone is that phenomenological analysis involves an investigation of the various appearances of an object. Given the richness and multivalence of conducting, its study must reckon with a multitude of appearances—not only situations, music genres, ensemble types and competencies but also, at the micro level, breathing, hand movements, musical phrasing, error correction and so on. At first sight, it must be said, the sheer thematic richness of the impact of conducting makes it appear to be unapproachable. Phenomenological thinking, thankfully, copes well with—even favours—complexity and richness over simplicity and unity. The notion of ambiguity is not a problem here but an inherent characteristic of the phenomenon itself, and it is therefore a research principle and research topic in its own right. The methodological principle of creative variation even uses changing appearances and a lack of unity as a means of uncovering the essential features of the phenomenon. When a conductor is described by one singer as pompous and by another as sincere, they are together introducing a tension that may in fact characterise the conductor role. This apparent affordance of phenomenology as a philosophical stance does not translate into methodological facility, however. There are a number of challenges involved when conducting a phenomenological inquiry that are covered systematically in part II.

In sum, the three epistemological cornerstones of phenomenology suit the present research question. The singers' life world is revealed through human consciousness, to which the primary access is human conversation, or, in a scientific setting, the qualitative research interview. In fact, this interview

as a methodology is to a large extent based on and shaped by phenomenological thinking (see, for example, Kvale's interview model [Kvale, 2001:40]). Through this type of interview, qualitative descriptions of the person's life world and interpretations of its meaning are both captured. The interview welcomes the interviewee's own experience, seeking precise descriptions and key significances while suspending the relevance of the researcher's prior knowledge. The subsequent tension between uncontaminated description and reflection involving prior knowledge is at the very heart of the phenomenological method (and other theories of practice).

From the beginning, phenomenological thinking has evolved along several disparate paths to its present, rather heterogeneous philosophical platform. It has even been criticized for being pointless, because a pure phenomenological inquiry is virtually impossible to carry out in practice. Hence the evolution of phenomenology is partly about pragmatic adaptations. Kvale reviews a number of elements in qualitative methods that are faithful to phenomenological principles, without explicitly labelling them as *phenomenological method*. It is probably easier to agree on how phenomenology has influenced the evolution of philosophy than on the platform itself.

1.4.2. Wrestling with hermeneutics

There are important intersections between phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy, thanks to commonalities in basic assumptions and evolution. In one important sense, however, phenomenology and hermeneutics compete. Regarding the role of interpretation, hermeneutics recognises that we are always in an interpretive mode, whereas phenomenology's view on interpretation varies, especially as to whether (and where) description meets interpretation (van Manen, 1990:25). In its most fundamental and original form, phenomenology assumes a strict division between description and interpretation. Phenomenological description is pure description; the mere notion of interpretation, the thinking goes, implies distortion). Thus a phenomenon should be understood through insightful description and remain uncontaminated by interpretation, conceptualisation, explanation and prediction. Hermeneutics falls outside of this particular reading of phenomenology.

Several thinkers have sought to bridge this divide. Max van Manen insists that description and interpretation are interwoven. He uses Sartre's famous blushing example, where description is mediated by expression, and expression is in itself close to, or involves, interpretation. When someone describes himself blushing, he describes a state, an expression, which derives from the way in which he interprets his appearance to others in the room. When we are blushing, in other words, we see ourselves through the eyes of another. This state can be described, but not as an uncontaminated expression—this expression is an effect of how we interpret ourselves in the world. When investigating the blushing phenomenon, we are in fact describing something in which interpretation is already imbedded (1990:25). In the musicking situation, as a shared activity, a continuous exchange goes on as the singer tries to understand the conductor's state of mind. If, as the singer, I were to phenomenologically describe how I perceive the conductor's hand movements, my description will be intertwined with my interpretation of that state of mind. These two examples demonstrate that it is not always possible to keep description and interpretation apart, especially in relatively complex social situations.

It may further be useful to reflect on the two types of interpretation introduced by Gadamer (also discussed by van Manen [1990:26]). Pointing *to* something reveals what is already pointed to but does not read meaning into it, as opposed to pointing *out* the meaning of something. The first type (pointing *to*) evokes a phenomenological description in the Husserlian sense. But how do we distinguish between pointing-to interpretation and pointing-out-meaning interpretation? Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that it is impossible to avoid interpretation, since language is filled with metaphors—that is, pointers from one domain to another that carry interpretation and meaning. In fact, metaphors represent the very means through which language is given meaning, which is relevant to both musicking and conducting. The notion of a 'higher' note (pitch), for example, makes use of the body's fundamental and immediate experience of up and down, or gravity. The link enabling the metaphor is the greater energy level or frequency associated with the higher note, which suggests the altitude metaphor. Does this metaphor represent a pointing-to interpretation only, or does it also involve pointing out meaning? Let us take another example. The notion of a 'soft' (*dolce*) sound draws on our tactile experience with concrete objects and materials, but this is not only a reference

to a physical reality but also an indicator of pleasantness or desirability. Although it seems reasonable to accept that some metaphors only *point to* something, in lived life it may be impossible to rule out associated meanings, whether implicit or explicitly *pointed out*. These examples suggest that lived life is already meaningfully experienced, even as it is being described, as opposed to a literary text of unknown origin, waiting to be made meaningful by its reader. These examples therefore also demonstrate why we cannot rely on the uninterpreted phenomenological description but rather must rely on a phenomenological platform that explicitly allows us to deal with the *understanding* of lived experience.

As a platform, hermeneutic philosophy also has some limitations when studying the meaningful in human experience and expression. For example, human life involves experience and expression beyond the conscious, which in turn influences the individual's meaning and will. Whereas a psychoanalytical approach seeks to uncover the subconscious, hermeneutic philosophy is not sufficient to access it, because uncovering the unconscious implies a combination of interpretation and explanation (Pahuus, 2007:162). As a pragmatic approach, hermeneutics does not necessarily exclude causal explanations, nor does it have to claim that interpretation is more important. It merely accepts that an interpretive understanding (with its shortcomings) is the most fruitful way to understand the meaningful for the time being (ibid.). In short, hermeneutic philosophy has been acclaimed for being robust (because of its pragmatism) rather than powerful, whereas phenomenology has been acclaimed for its philosophical integrity. A combined approach should therefore offer some advantages when researching lived experience.

1.4.3. Lived life and social construction

The evolution of phenomenology is closely connected to the so-called bodily turn in twentieth-century philosophy. Another major turn involved the role of language in philosophy and led to various genres of constructionism, including discourse theory. The language turn implies a decentred view of the self, where the self relates to the world via language, granting epistemological status to the relationship between the subject and the world. We may access knowledge about this relationship through language, and the facets, layers and roles of language all affect how we construct knowledge in turn. This describes the

influential philosophical position that scientific knowledge is determined by the social process through which it is created. Even more radically, some have taken the position that social reality itself is created by cognitive processes (Collin, 2007:252). Discourse theory, then, deals with how language shapes reality through its regulation of the speakable and unspeakable. We may see discourse theory (and constructionism in general) and phenomenology as opposite positions. Phenomenologically, the subject cannot be merely a lingual self-reference, because the self is constituted by language only as secondary step. Musicking may be one of the most striking examples of a pre-lingual experience, where language limits the fullness of meaning of the lived body. Musical intersubjectivity is not enabled by language itself but is a shared experience field to which language points. Obviously, we use language to reflect on our experiences, but the musicking experience itself can hardly be said to depend on a lingual construct, and even less to be constructed by or through language. We experience the unique features of musicking as prelingual or extralingual phenomena, and when we describe or interpret music, we must remember that there are aspects of it that elude us, as for example stated by Kjerschow (1991:131):

It is of course tempting when doing science work in music and seeking tangible results, to speak as if one has spoken about it all, when one has spoken about the speakable.¹⁵

The prelingual aspect of musicking tests the capacity of language in scientific processes involving music. Dialogue and experience-sharing about musicking necessarily involve language, even if musical practice itself does not, but there is a difference between seeing words as a vehicle, with all of its shortcomings and ambiguities, and seeing the discourse as reality itself. Collin (2007:125) points out that if the world could be seen as a construction of the mind, it would, in principle, be fully transparent. In other words, constructionism

¹⁵ My translation. Original text: Det er selvsagt fristende når man driver vitenskap innen musikk og søker de håndgripelige resultater, å tale som om man har omtalt det hele, når man har omtalt det omtalelige.

removes some of the obscurity and transcendence from the world. Wayne Bowman wants to restore it, though he acknowledges that this sounds strange:

So deeply entrenched are our assumptions about mind's ideality and rightful governance over things vaguely sensed, felt, or intuited (and indeed, over things done or enacted) that the suggestion that ambiguity may be more important to humankind than certainty probably strikes most of us as nonsense. (Bowman, 2004:30)

Bowman considers music to be a precious instance of bodily constituted knowledge, one that is equally valid as mindful knowledge. But is the singer even able to recognise this bodily knowledge? Are there aspects of musical (gestural) leadership that the body understands and responds to but the mind does not consciously note? If the answer is affirmative, discourse analysis will come up short, even when discourse theory allows for a distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices.¹⁶ On the other hand, the notion of bodily knowledge also entails methodological problems in a phenomenological approach. Although a singer might be aware of it, he or she might not be able to articulate it effectively or completely in words. This introduces the possibility of shallow or incomplete interviews that do not capture the combined mind and body experience base. There may yet be a good fit between the research question and phenomenology, but the methodological problem with language remains, although the philosophical principle is clear.

Phenomenology does not assume that the self and its relationship to the world is lingual, however, the role of language in phenomenology is complex. On the one hand, phenomenology's quest for essential themes as the invariant aspects of a phenomenon is at odds with the constructionist view that the world, as we understand it, is always being constructed via the knowledge process. Merleau-Ponty, who greatly expanded the foundations of phenomenology, demonstrated the primacy of perception and bodily experience for the human consciousness and thought of corporeal knowledge as legitimate and valid. On the other hand, phenomenological inquiry is a process of conversation, writing and rewriting—language is its tool for

¹⁶ For a discussion of discursive and non-discursive practices, see, for example, Jørgensen and Phillips (2006:77).

articulation, processing and exchange of insight. What then is the difference between conducting as discourse and conducting as phenomenon? At the risk of oversimplification, language might be viewed as a tool in phenomenology and as building material in social constructionism. Although phenomenological research does make use of language, the text does not equal the phenomenon. If phenomenology is an appropriate platform for studying the impact of conducting, the reason may be that it allows for a series of methodological approaches that are faithful to this philosophical basis, and gives a key role to the qualitative interview, while not allowing the text to take the place of the phenomenon.

Finally, metaphors may be seen to constitute a bridge between the different views of language in phenomenology and social constructionism. In cognitive semantics, the embodied nature of language is crucial; language is built by metaphors whose meanings can be traced back to embodied origins. We do, in fact, construct reality with an infinite web of metaphors, but they are themselves grounded in our bodies and lived experience. Reconciling phenomenology and constructionism extends the applicability of the results of a phenomenological study, in terms of how the researcher may (or may not) conceptualise its findings. This point underlies some of the modelling thoughts in part IV. The bridge offered by metaphors (as described by Lakoff and Johnson [1980]) is further a premise for how we create meaning from our experience—they are central to very notion of meaning itself—and I will expand on this topic theoretically in chapter 3.

1.4.4. The case for hermeneutic phenomenology

Two important arguments have been put forward in the preceding section. The first is that the research question of this dissertation lends itself well to a phenomenological platform. The second is that a purely descriptive phenomenological account is not possible, and that descriptions of musical leadership provided by choral singers will need to be interpreted. I have therefore chosen hermeneutic phenomenology as the philosophy-of-science platform upon which to carry out this research project, based on the philosophy and approach outlined by Max van Manen (1990). I have deemed this approach to be the most reliable and practical for this purpose, bearing in

mind its limitations as well as the alternatives. Van Manen is rather humble as to what can be achieved by researching lived experience:

To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the life world, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. (van Manen, 1990:18)

Exploring leadership through hermeneutic phenomenology involves uncovering and describing the structures (and the meanings of those structures) behind how choral singers experience conducting and conductors. The essence of musical leadership can only be grasped through the study of particulars or instances as encountered by singers. This study, then, will be less concerned with the factual aspects of the various instances (frequency of occurrence, whether they actually happened, how they interrelate) and more concerned with their experiential qualities. According to van Manen,

The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner. (Ibid.:10)

Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to encompass both terms of its methodology. It is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear; it wants to let things speak for themselves. It is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it recognises that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. This apparent contradiction is resolved through the acknowledgement that the phenomenological facts of lived experience are always already meaningfully experienced. Moreover, even when the facts of lived experience must be captured in language, it is inevitably an interpretive process that does so. Van Manen therefore redefines description as such to include both phenomenological description and interpretation. I would only add that, in an evolving life world, yesterday's interpretation embeds itself in today's. Lived experience and experienced meaning must be cumulative, because my life world today is filled with past interpretation, and, more importantly, I can no longer track where those interpretations rest. A side reflection here is that such accumulated interpretation seems to parallel Bourdieu's notion of habitus. My current habitus consists of predispositions, but they work as predispositions

only because they are embodied as my 'free' will—that is, they represent meaning created by past predispositions in turn modulated by encounters within the practice field in question. An example from a conductor-singer situation is the guiding aspect of the conductor role in the rehearsing situation (called 'mentorship' by Morten, one of the interviewed singers, in section 11.3). The singer previously experienced a situation of perfect guidance, when he received exactly the help he needed to solve an intonation problem. This singer's testimony reflected (and rejoiced over) the value of relevant leadership guidance. Another time, however, the singer describes how the conductor failed to give a particular cue when it was expected. This phenomenological description of this cue (as an opportunity for guidance) will be coloured by the singer's past experience of, and meaning attributed to, conducting as guidance. Lived experience of leadership is contingent on past interpretations of leadership behaviours. For van Manen, then, the descriptive aspect and the interpretive aspect are both present in the phenomenological inquiry. However, the weight of each aspect will vary, depending on the phenomenon as well as the stage of the investigative process.

If we accept this infinite and evolving relay of interpretation, re-embedded and re-embodied in our descriptions, is it even possible to revert to the pure, uninterpreted phenomenon itself? And therefore, are we not, for all practical purposes, in a pure (and perpetual) interpretive mode? Is this then a justification for hermeneutics as a stand-alone platform, with no need for phenomenology? Another example may answer the question. When investigating conducting, I can disregard some of the most superficial aspects of the phenomenon, such as the conductor's stage entry, bow tie, and baton; I can even suspend gestural conventions of conducting related to beat patterns, tempo changes, fermatas and dynamics. But it is probably impossible to erase the musicking experience, the musical meaning created there, and the perception of a leadership impact within the music event. The more embodied the experience is, the less I can hope to escape my own interpretations, and the less I can hope to access my embodied interpretations through conscious reflection and articulation. The paradox, then, is that although life is an eternal chain of interpretation, what has become embodied is no more accessible to hermeneutic inquiry than to phenomenological inquiry. The case for hermeneutics disconnected from phenomenology may depend on what constitutes the *text*—that is, what it is we are interpreting. If the text is not an

account of lived experience but another type of description, the rationale for hermeneutics is clear enough. If the text is an articulation of lived experience, there is an interpretive element of understanding but only and always as vehicle for uncovering and understanding the phenomenon we are investigating.

The fact that hermeneutic phenomenology is fundamentally a writing and rewriting process may seem straightforward enough. But the unfinished nature of the research and the evolving production of insight raise questions about the traceability of the thinking. How transparent is the creative hermeneutic process? What triggered a revised formulation in the re-writing process? What makes a linguistic transformation phenomenologically more sensitive? When creating a text from phenomenological analysis, such a text also represents a discourse. Is it possible (or necessary) to be conscious of one's own research as a discursive practice? At the end of the day, communicative validity may be the only protection against unintended biases and vagueness. Van Manen (1990:17) offers some comfort here: 'It is a naïve rationalism that believes that the phenomena of life can be made intellectually crystal clear and theoretically perfectly transparent'.

2. Choral conducting research

The following review of research and other literature pertinent to musical leadership encompasses a selection of conducting handbooks, various types of choir studies, and examples of research into specific aspects of the conductor's role.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a broad (but not exhaustive) summary of choral conducting research. In the process, I will put my own research focus in perspective and clarify my choices with regard to the knowledge space I am attempting to fill. Choral conducting research is a heterogeneous knowledge field, the unifying element of which is the ensemble type: a group of people singing together with a designated leader. There are three fuzzy boundaries with adjacent domains: (1) choral conducting versus orchestral conducting; (2) research-based versus non-research-based writing on conducting; and (3) research on choirs as an ensemble type (with more or less specific attention to the conductor). While I will not attempt to clarify these boundaries here, there is relevant insight to be drawn both from the pool of strictly defined choral conducting research and some of this related writing.

2.1. From maestro magic to singer identity

2.1.1. Maestro writing

All modern conducting, according to Schonberg (1967:107), rests on three prominent composer-conductors: Berlioz, Mendelssohn and Wagner, among which Berlioz (1843) and Wagner (1869) were the first to also *write* about the emerging profession. Schonberg also points to a major difference between Berlioz's and Wagner's writing. Berlioz privileged technique and practice. This does not imply that he lacked a sense for the music or a taste for conducting's enthusiasm and radiation of energy, but, for him, successful music arose from solid craftsmanship. Wagner, on the other hand, was dogmatic and filled his narratives with imagery and metaphysics. His conducting technique was not particularly good and to a degree even incomprehensible to musicians who were not accustomed to it. In addition, ideological differences influenced thinking about conducting even when it was new. Still, Wagner constantly wrote sketches and recommendations for changes in the orchestra, new work routines, and strategies to turn entire opera houses upside-down. In the mid-1800s, Wagner was undisputedly the most famous and controversial conductor in Europe, though considered to be vain, condescending, pretentious and expensive. Still, he made quite an impression and was, more than anyone, responsible for the cult around the conductor as mystical genius. In his famous essay from 1869, he attempts to articulate a general principle for musical interpretation around the work's melos, or singable phrases. Tempo was also crucial, but the right tempo could only be determined from a proper understanding of the melos. And even more important than tempo was *fluctuation* in tempo—a sort of super rubato. Schonberg (1967:137) finds Wagner's thinking (and writing) rather 'muddy' here, and notes that his ambitions for his writing largely failed. Still, he recognises that basing accentuation on the phrase rather than the bar line was Wagner's greatest contribution to the conducting literature.

Conducting arose in perfect accordance with the romantic myth of the genius artist, and literature about conducting in the nineteenth century was largely written by the maestro himself. Berlioz and Wagner began a tradition we might label 'maestro writing': the master sharing his own practice and ideals. Twentieth-century examples include Sir Adrian Boult's (1949) short

handbook on conducting technique, Joseph Lewis's (1945) book on rehearsal practices (which encompasses choral conducting), and Inghelbrecht's (1949) contemporary-flavoured and rather anecdotal *Le chef d'orchestre et son équipe*. Nicolai Malko's (1950) book is probably the most comprehensive account, and he was the first to focus seriously on the gestural aspects of conducting as well.

There is an interesting tension between the tutorial flavour of maestro writing and the stereotypical conductor's view that conducting is magic and unteachable. Colin Durrant highlights some examples of the latter: Georg Solti called conducting 'mystical'; Otto Klemperer claimed that marking three or four beats is the only thing about it that can be taught; Ricardo Muti referred to conducting as a combination of very mysterious things and easily explicable things; Arthur Nikish and Eugene Ormandy said that conductors are born, not made (Durrant, 1994:59). Conducting may be teachable—at least, some maestro writing attempts to communicate aspects of what conductors need to do. The mystery underpins all, however, not least because no coherent or settled concept of what should be taught exists. The lack of underlying research and theory makes maestro writing largely blind to what conducting *is*, and few of these writers recognise any scientific knowledge about what constitutes the features of effective musical leadership.

Maestro writing is prescriptive—the great master sharing experience from his horn of plenty—but is also situational and anecdotal. This literature is biased in its very nature; conductors write about what they know, they emphasise their own preferences, they promote themselves, and they clearly avoid topics they do not understand. While maestro writing is (obviously) not research based, it can certainly be considered researchable text, especially with regard to the conductor's perception of self. There is also plenty to be learned from it about conducting. It is even possible to view it as data. The chain of maestro writing constitutes a quite comprehensive resource, in fact, that could be researched through a variety of methodologies, including narrative analysis, discourse analysis and historicism.

A historicist approach would serve well to capture the parallels between music and society. The conductor role may in fact represent a concise icon for how Western societies have evolved over the last two centuries (Cook, 1998:78). Conducting may be seen to reflect the industrial revolution, with its larger organisations, increased specialisation and distinct leadership roles. It would then be a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that post-industrial society

and postmodernism have changed the conductor's role even further. If we pick three key figures from three eras—Wagner, Karajan and Dudamel, perhaps—it is virtually impossible not to see them as exponents of the ideals and structures of their contemporary societies. As we will see in chapter 3, every leadership theory has tended to work with those aspects of leadership that were needed to understand leadership practice of its era. While prominent orchestral conductors shaped the concept and the profession, they were all creatures of their times, and scientific scrutiny must look beyond maestro writing, or even present-day maestro thinking. Maestro writing cannot be expected to capture the full meaning of musical leadership, just as leadership theory traditionally has failed to understand how organisations really work (chapter 3).

2.1.2. Choir handbooks

The focus was almost entirely on orchestral conducting for a century after the emergence of modern-day conducting, but in the mid-nineteenth century, some conductor-writers did include the choir in their scope. Joseph Lewis (1945) even had *choral* in his book title. Inghelbrecht (1949:15) highlights features of choral conducting that should inspire the orchestra conductor as well. He urges the orchestra conductor to 'rediscover the true expression of the simple chapel choir master',¹⁷ encouraging him to 'at times abandon the monotony of the indicated meter'¹⁸ and to 'avoid breaking up melodic lines [. . .] by the influence of bar lines and time beating'.¹⁹

One of the earliest comprehensive treatises about choral conducting was written by Russian composer and conductor Pavel Chesnokov between 1910 and 1930. However, Chesnokov met with severe difficulties from the Bolshevik regime after 1917, and his book was not published in Russian until 1940

¹⁷ My translation. Original text: 'retrouver la vérité d'expression du simple maître de chapelle'.

¹⁸ My translation. Original text: 'abandonnant parfois la monotonie des temps indiqués'.

¹⁹ My translation. Original text: 'éviter la hachure des lignes mélodiques [. . .] par influence des barres de mesure et des temps battus'.

(Rommereim, 1998). It was only published in English in 2010 (Chesnokov, 2010). This comprehensive guidebook on choral organisation and conducting technique also looks at the development of Russian choral music, contributes to the formation of a progressive scientific methodology for analysing conducting, and offers an insider's perspective on performing traditions that were nearly lost due to the Bolshevik Revolution.

Kurt Thomas's *Lehrbuch der Chorleitung* constitutes not only the earliest systematic publications on modern choral conducting but also some of the most comprehensive coverage of the conducting profession (Thomas, 1935). Volume 1 covers a range of topics, from gesture, vocal technique and intonation to rehearsal organisation and the proper composition of the choral ensemble. The text is strictly matter-of-fact in tone, save for a few exceptional remarks on idiosyncrasies such as the importance of beginning the rehearsal on time and expectations for singer's attire. Interestingly, Thomas prefers a skilled amateur choir over a professional choir (Thomas and Wagner, 2009:85). Volume 2 is dedicated to conducting technique related to different musical styles and eras, as well as certain specific works. Volume 3 addresses specific issues related to various ensemble types, from the orchestra to the children's choir, and the implications of the voicing of different types of music for conducting technique.

After Thomas and Chesnokov, a writing tradition specifically dedicated to choral conducting came about, with highlights including Ehmann (1949), Åhlen (1949), Lindeman (1957), Ericsson (1974) and Ugglå (1979). With some variation, these publications were of the handbook style, quite narrow in scope and technically focused. A Scandinavian writing tradition has in recent years cultivated a more holistic view of choral leadership—for example Bengtsson (1982), Caplin (1997), Dahl (2002) and Hagenes (2006). Fowler and Swan's (1987) book represents a wide outlook on the conductor role in the United States as well. Along the lines of maestro writing on orchestral conducting, most educational writing for choral conductors has been practice based rather than research based; Thomas and Chesnokov, seventy years later, remain among the most comprehensive and monumental surveys of the profession. However, these works are clear reflections of their era and require some filtering for practical use today.

Durrant (2003) is a rare example of a holistic view of the choral conductor role that is based on a combination of research and personal conducting practice. Like me, he also suggests that conducting should be

approached with a phenomenological mindset that is aware of potentially unidentified features that are central to the role. He acknowledges that there is an element of mystique in the craft that deserves to be investigated, and he wonders how conductors decide what works (2003:81). He ultimately outlines a model for the ideal conductor, structured around philosophical principles, musical-technical skills, and interpersonal skills, a simplified view of which is shown in figure 1.

Philosophical principles	Musical-technical skills	Interpersonal skills
Repertoire knowledge	Aural skills and error-detection skills	Ability to build a good environment
Human voice knowledge	Gestural skills	Communication skills
Pre-rehearsal image of music to be heard	Demonstration/modelling skills	Ability to promote healthy singing
Understanding aesthetic potential of the music	Warming-up skills	Ability to promote choral and vocal development
Understanding the conductor role	Strategies for establishing the character of the music	Ability to make singers confident and comfortable
		Pace rehearsals effectively
		Set highest possible standards

Figure 1: A 'super-model' conductor. Simplified from Durrant (2003:100).

The value of Durrant's model is first and foremost its holistic view of how a conductor affects the choir. He elaborates upon each of the elements in the table above, drawing upon various research references and providing practical advice. This is useful background for the present study, but it must be applied with caution, lest it begin to guide interpretation of singer statements. The main structure of Durrant's model does not necessarily indicate how singers themselves encounter and experience musical leadership.

During the last few decades, the body of conducting research has been growing. Most of the research is United States based and predominantly quantitative, as well as oriented towards very specific subtopics or angles on choral leadership. In the remainder of this chapter, I will review some of the main categories of research, including the role itself, the conductor's self-perception and motivation, and the leadership aspect of conducting. Another research domain is dedicated to rehearsal strategy and effective pedagogy on the part of the conductor. Research is also being carried out specifically on

various skills and competences that conductors are expected to exhibit, including especially gestural skills. Some of this work does not explicitly address the conductor's role but may be relevant to musical leadership. I have therefore included the following section on choir research, whether it refers to conducting or not.

2.1.3. Choir research

Choir research does not represent a research discipline as such but rather an application domain for a series of scholarly disciplines. Its tradition is fairly short, with a point of departure that varies significantly across various geographies. Gonzo (1973) completed one of the earliest reviews of research on U.S. choral education. Hylton (1983) did a similar survey for the period 1972–81 and included categories of research ranging from rehearsal techniques and teacher training to psychoacoustics. Like Gonzo, Hylton found choir research to be fragmented, narrow in scope and generally lacking originality; few authors, in fact, seemed to pursue research activity beyond the requirements of the doctoral degree. Furthermore, half of the articles found in the *Journal of Research in Music Education* were summaries of dissertations. Grant and Norris (1998) followed up Hylton's survey and found that some progress had been made in the period 1982–95. The largest number of studies was in the category of curriculum; there were also studies on teacher and conductor behaviour, but few of them related this behaviour to *effects on the ensemble* and singer performance or attitude. Furthermore, they found an emerging strand of research on rehearsal organisation and techniques. Most research was based on surveys, correlation studies and, to some degree, quasi-experimental designs. Only four studies in the period were based on qualitative methods. Grant and Norris confirmed the fairly low competence level of the researchers:

The most persistent problem remaining is that relatively few choral music educators continue any form of research beyond their doctoral dissertation. Thus, ongoing patterns of research employing any level of sophistication of method are extremely scarce. (Grant and Norris, 1998:48)

The contrast between American and Scandinavian choir research is striking. Whereas American choir research is predominantly pedagogical in its outlook

and mostly quantitative, Scandinavian choir research falls more within the discipline of sociology and tends to be qualitative. This difference may reflect the dominance of school choirs in the United States as opposed to the independent, community-based institutions in Scandinavia. Bell (2000) is one of the few American researchers who has studied the community choir, and he describes the five most important conducting behaviours: (1) give clear and easy-to-understand directions; (2) show enthusiasm during rehearsal; (3) detect a problem area and correct the errors; (4) selects music to match the group's ability; and (5) instil confidence in the singers.

Related to the last of Bell's points, Ryan (2009) studied performance anxiety in semi-professional choirs and found that the conductor emerged as one of the primary factors in the choral singer's experience of performance anxiety. Although Kraus (2003) studied the occurrence of peak psychological states during rehearsals of a wind ensemble, some of these insights resonate with choir research. The case study, based on qualitative methodology, revealed that 'flow experiences' tended to occur late in the rehearsal, after longer periods of performance activity, and that frequent rehearsal stops tended to disrupt them.

Langston and Barret (2008) examined the creation and exchange of social capital in an Australian community choir. They found that expected social capital indicators, like shared norms and values, trust, community involvement and knowledge resources were in fact present. In addition, they found that the previously unemphasised social capital indicator of *fellowship* was a key component of the community choir. It seems as though qualitative approaches like this generate more non-trivial insights than, for example, the study by Sharlow (2006), who surveyed conductor behaviours based on a series of preset categories (psychological, sociological and anthropological) that were analysed statistically.

Durrant (2005) has compared perceptions of the conductor's role and of singing in the shaping of the singer's identity. The study focused on the choral folk music traditions of Finland and Sweden and used a qualitative methodology. It confirmed that singers identify musically as well as socially with a group, and that the singer's sense of identity was enhanced through choral practice. A combination of the conductor's musical and interpersonal skills was found to be vital to the motivation of the singers.

Balsnes (2009) has explored the choir as a community of practice. Her focus was the interplay between musical and social communication and the ways in which participation affects learning and identity development. The study was designed as a qualitative case study of one particular choir, using the concept of situated learning as its theoretical basis. There was no particular attention given to the conductor's role—in fact, being the conductor herself, the role was largely unresearchable. What makes this study interesting in relation to my own project is the extent to which a host of things that goes on in a choir has little or nothing to do with leadership. This reminds me to avoid the potential bias of understanding *every* choral phenomenon in light of leadership. Parker (2009) also did a study on identity development in choirs, using grounded theory, one of the few examples of qualitative methods in American choir research. She found that the core phenomenon of identity development was the *team*, constituted by three supporting categories: being there for a reason, in it together, and musical family.

In recent years, a number of master's theses in Norway have addressed psychological, sociological and organisational aspects of choirs and singing, including Bergesen (1998), Imerslund (2000), Baalsrud (2003), Knudsen (2003), Breistein (2004), Persen (2005), and Schjelderup (2005).

2.2. The conductor role

The research referenced in the preceding section touches upon the role of the conductor to varying degrees. Next I will look at research that explicitly deals with conducting, and not only choral conducting. First of all, Bowen (2003) presents comprehensive coverage of the orchestra conductor role within a variety of contextual frames, including opera conducting, film studio conducting, conducting early music, conducting as a business, traditions by country, and the dual composer-conductor role. The book constructs a taxonomy rather than pursues an analysis of what makes conducting work, however, whereas most other writing asks questions about what characterises effective conducting and what needs to be mastered to be an effective conductor. A common subtheme is whether conductors are born or bred—that is, can conducting be taught or is it something a few talented individuals simply know how to do? This question is important, because conducting research seems

more valuable if conducting is teachable, according to Durrant (1994:57). For conducting to be teachable, in turn, we need an overall view of the role, an idea of what it comprises, and a proposal for how these features relate to each other and contribute to the success of the individual conductor.

The body of research on conducting as a holistic phenomenon is rather scarce and disparate in approach. Several researchers focus upon the conductor's self-perception and motivation, including Slack (1977), Fowler and Swan (1987), Sandberg Jurström (2000), Øhrn (1990; 2006), Butke (2006), and Durrant (2009). Empirical data for these studies are typically interviews with conductors.

Colin Durrant has pointed out that most present-day method books on conducting are American. While they deal with a number of aspects, they tend towards a fairly atomistic approach to conducting:

The American style of methodology provides as complete a picture as possible of all the technical aspects of conducting—the gesture in its minute detail, how to deal with poor intonation, effect dynamic variation, etc.—and often leaves little for the gestalt conductor. (Durrant, 1994:65)

The picture of quality conducting remains in many ways partial and inadequate, despite a growing inventory of anecdotal evidence, conducting methodologies, and research findings. Durrant concludes that musical knowledge, gesture, ability to communicate and personality are all important, in some mysterious combination. Certain behaviours are more effective than others. Rehearsal pacing is crucial, gesture is more efficient than speech, and positive feedback is better than negative. Lastly, the effective choral conductor must display a whole range of musical and vocal skills.

Moore (1995) investigated various components of conducting but focuses upon what works in relation to the rehearsal process. His empirical sources were active conductors and other sources he considered authoritative, and he based his study on telephone interviews and quantitative analysis of predefined categories. The researched components included tempo, phrasing, enunciation, articulation, dynamics, blend, balance, timbre, breathing, pitch, rhythm, text, harmony and melody. Expressivity was found to be the ultimate goal of shaping an ensemble. A dichotomy between technical and expressive aspects arose consistently, and the successful communication of musical ideas was an overriding factor in creating a successful choral ensemble.

Vallo (1990) reviewed a selection of research on the education of conductors that fell into five different categories, reflecting various educational approaches: (1) behavioural, (2) competency based, (3) experiential, (4) social-psychological and (5) academic/musical achievement. Vallo drew meta-conclusions based on the reviewed studies that ranged from the importance of self-reflection to the most effective way to detect errors when rehearsing.

Even forty years after its publication, Robert Faulkner's article still stands as one of the pillars of research on the *effect* of conductors (Faulkner, 1973). Faulkner's study was based on observations and interviews with fifty musicians in the top symphony orchestras in the United States. His starting point was the fact that the authority of conductors is both socially constructed and sustained, according to the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). He observes that the conductor role represents an extreme case in the study of authority, since its formal structures and processes are stable but the incumbency of the role changes frequently and the conductor's abilities are constantly under scrutiny by the musicians. Faulkner found two things that undermined the authoritativeness of conducting communications: ambiguous directives and unpredictable directives. Ambiguity was found to lower a player's sense of control over his or her own performance, because it hampered the ability to anticipate and adjust to the contributions of one's fellow musicians. Equally damaging, unpredictability could arise from both not knowing what was wanted and knowing it but being unable to communicate it. Faulkner's study is also interesting because it was based on qualitative methodology, in contrast with later American studies that were focused on narrower topics using quantitative methods.

The epistemological and methodological difficulties with such 'reductionistic' approaches appear in a study by Van Weelden (2002). She investigated the link between perceptions of conductor effectiveness and the ensemble's performance, by having observers assess video clips of conductors. In particular, she sought to determine the significance of the visual appearance of the conductor, including body type, gender, posture and eye contact, and found little to no correlation between these characteristics and the ensemble's success. This study presents interesting contrasts in epistemology with my own project. Somehow, Van Weelden is also looking at conducting impact in her approach, but by observing the conductor as a third party, not as a singer. But we see that this notion of impact is not the immediate impact of lived

experience but an *assumed* impact on singers measured by a non-singing singer. The audio part of Van Weelden's video excerpts of conductors (recorded by professional singers) was the *same* for all conductors. In other words, the conductors did not conduct the audible sound. When we are exposed to a visible conductor who is 'conducted by' a soundtrack in the guise of an integrated performance, what phenomenon are we in fact exposed to? To what extent can the conducting role be deconstructed and still represent the conducting phenomenon? Van Weelden's study is interesting, not so much because of its finding, but by the ontological and epistemological questions it raises, questions that she, however, do not address explicitly.

In contrast, Sandberg Jurström's dissertation research (2009) examined how conductors communicate with the choir in real situations over a longer period of time. Starting with the premise that conductor-singer communication is multimodal, she based her empirical study on social semiotics and approached the various modes of communication she encountered as a social process of transformative sign-making. Her empirical material consisted primarily of video of six professional conductors and their choirs, rehearsing and performing, and with it she introduced the concept of the *conductor repertoire of action*, the six qualities of which are pantomimic, performative, prototypic, associative, conceptual and evaluative action. Conductors give form to and realise their semiotic resources in what Sandberg Jurström calls *designs for musical interpretation and performance*. While this dissertation is noteworthy for its combination of a holistic view and theoretical rigour, its limited scope leaves many features of the role outside the model. It is, however, also one of few examples of the use of qualitative methodology to understand specific aspects of conducting.

Durrant (2000) also explored the role by making use of qualitative methods—that is, what might be called grounded theory. This study was based on a series of *encounters*, from which he extracted salient points about the role of the conductors in relation to their ensembles, including observations upon the interpersonal skills of the conductor, the music selected for performance, and the rehearsal strategies. This research constitutes a rare example of the explicit acknowledgment of music material and selection as features of effective musical leadership.

Garnett (2009), which I referred to several times in chapter 1, is another example of a holistic and qualitative approach to conducting. She insists on

interaction (as opposed to transmission) as the basis of her model of conducting, recognising that the conductor and ensemble form a web of relationships and context is an integral part of the conducting practice. Her research method focuses on the rehearsal, because

This is the primary setting in which meanings and values are negotiated and maintained. [...] Performances can demonstrate a relationship between conductor gesture and choral sound, but they cannot show us how those gestures became meaningful. (Garnett, 2009:33)

She insists on researching the conducting practice in a naturalistic setting and therefore chooses an ethnographic methodology, because ethnography ‘values the richness and texture of the cultures it studies’ (ibid.). Her book offers a detailed look at various choral styles and cultures, as well as the meta-languages we use when we examine the conducting phenomenon.

2.3. Leadership

General leadership theory is covered in chapter 3. The present section deals explicitly with conducting research that takes a leadership view, in the sense that it draws on concepts that do not have music as their point of departure. Koivunen (2003) explored leadership aspects of the symphony conductor’s role as a discursive practice and as an aesthetic practice. Her research data consisted of ethnographic observations and interviews with musicians in two symphony orchestras, one in Finland and one in the United States, and her epistemological basis was relational constructionism—that is, she viewed reality as socially constructed via her interaction with her informants. Koivunen uncovered four fundamental discourses in her material: (1) art against business; (2) dislike of authority; (3) heroic leadership; and (4) shared leadership. There were few differences between the musicians in the two orchestras, but some competing discourses stood out within each orchestra. These discourses, she found, not only reflected reality but were shaped and negotiated as the musicians generated meaning out of their lives and professions. They evolved over time and could be complementary as well as competitive, even for a single musician. Koivunen’s study also made an attempt to introduce an aesthetic perspective to the leadership concept. Her findings

highlighted the role of *hearing*—that is, the impact of sensuous perception upon knowledge formation—in contrast to leadership literature’s embrace of the characteristics of visual culture: ‘Visual culture promotes individuality, distance and endurance while the auditive culture cherishes collectivity, exposure, unity and temporality’ (Koivunen, 2006:218). Koivunen’s dissertation is an interesting complement to my own project, first of all as one of the few studies that views the conductor’s leadership from the perspective of the musician. Yet the research question is different nevertheless: understanding conducting as a discursive practice constructs conducting by how it is talked about, whereas a phenomenological inquiry exposes conducting by how we understand the experience.

Koivunen and Wennes reviewed existing research on the leadership of orchestra conductors and they conclude:

The research on the conductor’s leadership activities is very limited and most of this research has adopted an individualistic notion of leadership in which the leader, his or her skills, behaviour and actions are essential. (Koivunen and Wennes, 2011:54)

They believe that researching conductors as leaders will enrich our understanding of what happens between the leader and the led. They further propose a *post-heroic* view of leadership as a relational and processual phenomenon that arises from both leaders and followers. The aesthetic leadership of a conductor involves relational listening, aesthetic judgement, and kinaesthetic empathy. One of the significant implications of their work is the realisation that leadership is a process, not a possession held by the conductor, which is in stark contrast to most maestro writing.

There have been several attempts by researchers of choral conducting to apply leadership theory and concepts from non-music organisations. Allen (1988) and Davidson (1995) used the concept of situational leadership to determine effective leadership styles for choral conductors. This concept, which distinguishes between task orientation and relationship orientation, revealed that effective conductors scored high on both axes. Armstrong and Armstrong (1996) found parallels between the conductor and the transformational leader. In transformational leadership, effectiveness is indicated by the degree to which the conductor and the ensemble become one in their mission. Key characteristics of the transformational leader include shared vision, charisma, enthusiasm, positive modelling and the ability to empower people.

Wis (2007) approached the leadership aspects of conducting via the concept of servant leadership, which is based on a series of attitudes and behaviours, including listening, empathy and awareness, but also foresight, vision and persuasion. Patman (1987) investigated the way power can be used positively to create and maintain rapport between conductor and singer or negatively to destroy it. In a similar study, Guise (2001) also looked at power relationships in a choir in terms of the conductor's responsibility to acknowledge, cultivate or adapt to intermember relationships.

2.4. Rehearsing and pedagogy

Ensemble preparation and musical performance are inextricably linked, so conductor-led rehearsing and conducting in the concert hall are linked as well. Price and Byo (2002) argue that although rehearsing and conducting could be viewed as separate acts, they are certainly complementary and, when done well, potentially indistinguishable. They also suggest that rehearsing and teaching are analogous: 'One might argue that everything involved in rehearsing and conducting can be characterized via a teaching paradigm, even in a professional ensemble environment' (2002:336). It should come as no surprise that much research on conducting engages with rehearsing and takes place within the pedagogy disciplines. Still, we ought not to allow a teaching paradigm to dominate our understanding of conducting; such a bias might steer us away from other, equally valid aspects the conducting phenomenon, like peer musicking and conducting as artistic practice. Some of the studies described below illustrate this point in different ways.

Cox (1989) has reviewed research that deals with the organisation of rehearsals and notes that most scholars agree that a deliberate rehearsal structure is good, though it is not clear which structure is preferable. High school conductors, Cox found, prefer a rehearsal design within which familiar and enjoyable musical activities both begin and end the rehearsal, while the middle portion is devoted to detailed work on music in the development stage. To his surprise, however, the students' attitude was not nearly as affected by this design as it was by the conductor's enthusiasm for music and teaching in general. This leads to two important observations in relation to the present project. First, choral research on classroom situations seems to be occupied

with wider educational themes, like motivation, attentiveness and achievement. In choirs where singers actively and consistently participate over multiple semesters and even years, such issues are less relevant. Second, the teacher/conducting-student/singer relationship is quite different in choirs where the singer's competence level is high and even as high as the conductor's. The notion of peer musicking is not very prominent in classroom research.

Gumm (1993) identified choral-music teaching styles based on an examination of teacher-conductors' perceptions of their own teaching. The model was generated through statistical analysis of a number of teaching behaviours designed to accommodate student-centricity, interaction orientation, musicianship focus and task orientation.

Dunn (1997) investigated how the performance improvement of two high school choirs was affected by a structured rehearsal hierarchy and how student attentiveness, achievement and attitude was affected by various teacher interventions, including task presentations, direction and student reinforcement (or feedback). The latter was found to have the most impact on performance and attitude.

Carvalho (1997) studied the relationship between the conductor's use or non-use of a score and the choral student's attentiveness and attitude, given that the use of a score would appear to affect the conductor's ability to make eye contact with the singers. For the two pieces of music and two choirs involved in the project, no differences in attentiveness resulted from various combinations of score usage and eye contact, and singer behaviour seemed generally more conditioned by the structure of the music than anything else. In this case, the researcher realised that factors outside the scope of the study were ultimately more important than the intended study objects. This is, in my view, a useful reminder about how complex a musicking situation is and how a narrow approach will easily miss the intended target.

Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) studied effective teacher-conductor behaviours, based on seven videotaped rehearsals over a semester. University music majors participated in the assessment, using ten categories of behaviour, ranging from accuracy of conductor task presentation and student attentiveness to intensity and pacing. The highest-rated rehearsal excerpts contained less off-task singer behaviour, more approvals, more eye contact and more activity changes.

Other research topics in the rehearsal and pedagogical domain include the use of verbal imagery (for example, Funk [1982] and Jacobsen [2004]), the sequencing and pacing of activities (for example, Sogin [2006]), the mixture of various types of conductor interventions (Skadsem [1997]), the use of memorisation as a rehearsal and performance technique (Shanklin [2000]), and conductor modelling. Grimland (2005) studied the characteristics of teacher-directed modelling in high school performing groups, whether it involved singing, rhythmic demonstration, verbal imagery or gesture.

Most of the American pedagogically oriented research on conducting has used quantitative methods, though Wis (1998) seemed to apply qualitative methodologies as she developed her whole-part-whole approach to rehearsal organisation. In the Anglo-Saxon sphere, Durrant (2000) also explored the use of qualitative methods in studies of choral rehearsing in both Europe and the United States. In contrast to American research, he used descriptions of the encounter between the conductor and the singer to gain insight into the conducting phenomenon.

The teaching orientation of American conducting research was pointed out above. One interesting implication of this appears in the opening paragraph of Kelly's article (1999): 'Conducting is a teaching behaviour that helps bring together all musical activities into a cohesive whole'. Here, then, conducting is not a function or role that only serves the needs of a musicking ensemble but also an aid to teaching music concepts such as pitch, tempo, timbre and articulation. Along these lines, we must remember that conducting research also carries different meanings, not only because the conducting situation varies but also because the goal of the conducting activity could potentially be something else than to lead music.

2.5. Conducting gesture

Conducting gesture has been the most obvious and most visual feature of the single, non-playing, non-singing musical leader since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite being talked about and studied for more than a hundred years, gesture has merited little actual research, as Price (1997) observes. However, a few projects have attempted to fill the gap, with different levels of detail and different approaches.

Scott (1996) looked into basic conducting skills for the ensemble musician with an awareness that visual communication is a vital part of the musicking process. His study focused on visual diagnostic skills as a pedagogical tool by engaging the musician's ability to detect errors in various conducting techniques. In a sense, this study addresses an aspect of conducting impact, which is the focus of the present project. Scott's research approach, however, assumes there are conducting techniques that are 'correct', and moreover that these are uniformly understood, whereas I do not.

Skadsem (1997) investigated the effectiveness of four instructional methods in generating a desired dynamic level: conducting gesture, verbal, written (in the score), and audio model. Empirical data were collected in a controlled set-up with college and high-school singers and conductors; audiotapes of each singer's performance responses were evaluated by three independent judges. Contrary to the expectation that gesture would be more effective than speech, Skadsem found that verbal instruction had a significantly greater influence than the other three modes of instruction. Still, it should be noted that the verbal instructions in this study were very brief and concise, whereas many conductors are not this way. She also found, interestingly, that singers generally responded better to signals for soft dynamics than loud dynamics. Her study design raises some important epistemological questions that are located in the gap between quantitative and qualitative research on conducting. For example, the study associated dynamic level with loudness alone, dismissing perceived intensity and musical character. The study also appeared to make implicit assumptions about the *meaning* of gestures, in that the three dynamic levels (soft, medium and loud) were characterised by specific sizes of right-hand gestures, at four, fourteen and twenty-four inches, respectively. I find it suspect to correlate a certain dynamic level so uniformly with a certain range of movement while disregarding the significance of other gestural features, like one or more of the so-called Laban's Eight Effort Elements (float, wring, glide, press, flick, dab, slash and punch). Billingham (2001), on the other hand, explored gestures based on Laban's movement theory, applied to specific music examples. The gestures were intended to achieve differences in articulation, rhythm and phrase shape, and assessment and adjustments were made with ongoing feedback from a college choir. The Laban elements were also used in a study by Holt (1991).

Wis (1999; 1993) explored the benefits of using physical metaphors (gestures that embody the essence of a musical idea) over verbal metaphors in the musical learning process, based on work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Two premises underlie her work: the embodied nature of cognition and the body as a link between the concrete physical domain and the conceptual domain. Wis is exploring a movement-based choral pedagogy that, to my mind, sees movement as more than leadership gesture. Her study therefore supplies yet an example of how conducting may be used for other purposes than simply leading music. The teaching and learning process is a goal in its own right, and conducting gesture may be one of the tools to achieve it.

Wollner and Auhagen (2008) investigated how orchestra musicians perceive the expressive movements of conductors from different physical angles. Conducting convention assumes that conductor's right hand is the time beater (the artisan), and the left hand indicates expressive qualities, such as dynamics or playing style (the artist). Consequently, violinists and cellists may perceive conducting gestures differently, based on their seating in the orchestra. This study was based on video recordings of conductors, and observers with music training, but not musicians in a live musicking situation, assessed the impact of the gestures from various angles.

Whereas the previous study favoured the left hand (expressive gestures), Luck and Nte (2008) favoured the right hand (temporal gestures), specifically in terms of a musician's ability to synchronise with it. They developed a computer-based environment that allowed for the presentation of conductor gestures and the recording of participant responses to them. The researchers accounted for three factors that would affect this synchronisation: (1) the radius of curvature with which the beat was defined; (2) the experience level of the conductor; and (3) the experience level of the participants. They found that only the last factor affected synchronisation. While we must be cautious about overinterpreting the results of a first experiment, this does suggest that experienced musicians are able to cope with a variety of conductors and conducting gestures. It also suggests that conducting gesture is a wider and richer notion than hand movements alone, so that the joint sensing of a downbeat depends on more than the beat pattern itself. In a related study, Luck and Sloboda (2008) explored several characteristics of conducting hand gestures, including speed, acceleration and curvature. They found that visual beat induction was primarily related to acceleration along the hand trajectory.

More importantly, they found inconsistencies between beat descriptions in the conducting literature and descriptions of biological motion in the human motion literature. They find, then, that the gestural conventions of conducting (to the extent that we may consider them 'conventions') are not as self-evident as is commonly assumed. This may help to explain why such a legendary conductor as Furtwängler, who was known for his completely illegible hand movements (in terms of standard conventions), was still highly effective.

Durrant (2003:147) distinguishes between three kinds of useful gestures—literal, expressive and supporting. To be useful, gestures must be efficient and unambiguous; they must be an aesthetic reflection of the musical idea; and they must be vocally friendly. A number of writing conductors have found that various hand movements and orientations affect sound and pitch differently, but little research has been done on these phenomena. One study (Fuelberth, 2003) examined the effect of six left-hand conducting gestures on an inappropriate level of vocal tension in singers. The study confirmed that fist gestures, stabbing gestures, palm up or down, and phrase-shaping gestures did in fact make a difference to the choral sound. Another study (Fuller, 2000) investigated the minute details of managed preparatory gestures—that is, gestures that are metrically altered to equal the length of the singers' breath. Managed preparatory gestures were found to increase precision of releases, unity of breathing, precision of entrances, and expressiveness at the phrase punctuation point in question. Wollner (2008) remarks that conductors use a variety of different gestures that all achieve comparable expressive goals; few conducting gestures, he concludes, can therefore be seen as emblems with consistent meanings. Caillat (1988), one of the few researchers who takes an aesthetic rather than pedagogical point of departure, suggests that the most appropriate gesture will follow from the musical idea itself as well as the choir and their reactions. Gestures, then, should be modified by what is heard each moment. Caillat's article starts with a particular piece of music (Claude Debussy's *Dieu, ! Qu'il la fait bon regarder!*), applies some theoretical concepts, and then attempts to determine why certain gestures would be appropriate, and what choices might be made. Her work could be categorised as single-case artistic research, an area that falls between unreflective musical practice and the research void of aesthetics.

A review of the research on conducting gesture introduces two problems. First, most of the research into specific aspects of gesture uses

quantitative methods in tandem with an unclear, even questionable epistemological basis. Some of the findings appear to be precise but risk seeming irrelevant or at least piecemeal. Second (but related to the first), there is no overarching theory for conducting gesture, or for the conductor role. Du Quercy Ahrén (2002:226) concludes in his dissertation about orchestra conducting as follows:

I have been able to confirm not only that there is, amongst several of the conducting teachers I have met, a lack of a systematically elaborated theoretical system for the various endeavours related to the topic of this dissertation, but also that there is a relatively well developed scepticism against the thought of such a system.²⁰

Research on conducting gestures, as with several other features of musical leadership, struggles with the potential of irrelevance that accompanies such a narrow focus. Given that the quest for a comprehensive theory of gesture is at minimum challenging, we must wonder: While conducting is highly visual leadership, how important are conducting gestures in the overall execution of the role? Durrant (1994:69) points out that research on conducting gesture has revealed little about the overall effectiveness of the conductor who uses it. Even now, conducting gesture remains an elusive phenomenon, both in terms of understanding exactly what goes on there and how to describe it, and in terms of what it means relative to the other modes of communication available to the conductor and the ensemble. Sandberg Jurström's multimodal view and social semiotic approach, described in section 2.2, constitute one of the few attempts to bridge gestural aspects with a holistic goal.

²⁰ My translation. Original text: 'Jag har kunnat konstatera att det hos flera av de dirigentlärare jag träffat inte bara finns en brist på systematisk genomarbetade teorisystem för olika företeelser som rör ämnet för denna avhandling, utan också att det förekommer en relativt utvecklad skepticism mot tanken på ett sådant system'.

2.6. Music skills

Various music skills may be more or less specifically related to conducting, including score preparation (Wine, 1995; Crowe, 1996), prima-vista singing (Bowers, 1999; Bradley and Floyd, 2006), just intonation and pitch discrimination (Geller, 1999) and highly specialised topics such as string bowings for baroque choral music (Tweed, 2001).

Crowe (1996) investigated the effects of various approaches to score study upon beginning conducting students. His point of departure is that error detection is a basic skill for all conductors that is crucial to ensuring the efficient use of rehearsal time. He points to a number of researchers who have found that aural skills, as taught in universities and academies, are not sufficient to enable conductors to detect errors in musicking situations. Dealing with multiple staves and multiple timbres (in the case of orchestral conducting) makes real-time error detection highly complex. Crowe sees score study as one of the fundamentals of error-detection abilities, and he found that score study with a correct aural example was significantly more effective than score study alone or with a keyboard. In many ways, Crowe's study is typical for research on conducting skills, in that it addresses a specific skill via designed test situations and quantitative analysis. The relationship of the intended subject to other factors and the wider set of role requirements is addressed in passing.

The ability to teach choral singers to sight-read music (prima vista singing) is a skill that a conductor may or may not be expected to master. Bowers (1999) investigated sight-singing instructions in high school choirs, attempting to determine relationships among *teacher* experience, ability and practices. Her respondents were high school choir directors, using a mailed survey to report on their sight-reading teaching practices. A similar study by Bradley and Floyd (2006) looked for common teaching strategies among choral directors whose groups were successful at sight singing. Their surveyed conductors indicated that preparing for a sight-singing *evaluation* had boosted their choir's music-reading skills. These two studies exemplify the teaching orientation of conducting research in the United States and raise two points of caution. First, the roles of the choral conductor (outside the high school/college situation) and the teacher-conductor are not identical. Second, the classroom situation introduces a host of issues not related to choir and choral leadership as such (for example, admission and exams).

The section headlines of the literature review in this chapter were intended only to structure the presentation; the existing research does not necessarily fall neatly within them. For example, aspects of music skills related to conducting are also implicitly part of research other than that mentioned here. The fact that it is not possible to offer a clean presentation structure illustrates one important observation and one dilemma arising from the reviewed literature:

- **Observation:** The research is inconclusive when it comes to determining the importance of conducting gesture versus other features of the conductor's role. Moreover, the applicability of the various features of conducting (including, but not limited to, repertoire knowledge, aural skills and rehearsing skills) across different contexts is not well understood.
- **Dilemma:** Research with a 'reductionistic' approach that addresses only some subset of the conductor's role runs a great risk of irrelevance due to the complexity of the role and the interdependencies of its various features. On the other hand, no broad theory or approach has yet been agreed upon, though some researchers have contributed to its rudiments.

For the purposes of this study's research question, it is neither possible nor necessary to rely extensively on the existing research base. However, this study should be seen to add to the overall understanding of musical leadership and to the progress towards the holistic theory that was initiated by researchers including Durrant (2003) and Garnett (2009). Given the parallels between conducting and leadership, I will next review general leadership theory in the following chapter.

3. Leadership theory

This historic view of the evolution of leadership theory includes a critical assessment of its applicability to the music domain. A simple framework for aesthetic leadership is proposed as a soft set of guidelines for the structuring of interview analysis.

3.1. Abundance and fashion

Leadership is both an everyday word and a proliferous research field. Books about leadership already number in the tens of thousands, and a wide array of related scholarly journals and popular periodicals is published regularly. Leadership is also a recurring topic in the daily press, and not only in the business section. Yet the field of leadership research and theory is bedevilled by problems, including the fact that there is no generally accepted definition of what leadership *is*, and some scholars even contest the notion that leadership deserves its own category, separate from other facets of human behaviour. The field has always been a product of its times (Gill, 2006); in recent decades, it has propelled the innovation and growth of business academia's twin, the consulting services industry. (Of course, business schools have become a booming service industry in their own right.) It is probably fair to say that leadership studies and consulting services have enjoyed a mutually stimulating spiral upward over the last half century. It is probably an exaggeration to see leadership theory as simply a fashionable niche subject, but Alvesson and

Spicer (2011) do observe that individual leaders often use the latest academic thinking as a way to appear updated and timely in their leadership. I have also found, in my work experience²¹ that there is a premium placed upon developing new ways to look at leadership that can be easily modelled, communicated and serviced. An awareness of the latest fad in leadership theory or its next of kin, strategic management concepts, seems to provide a competitive edge. This is not simply a cynical commentary on the times; evolving theories of leadership and organisation reflect a genuine (and perpetual) need to make sense of changing economic and social conditions.

Boden and colleagues (2003) present an overview of leadership theories and frameworks developed over the last seventy years, in the interests of supporting national occupational standards in the United Kingdom. A simplified view of their model is shown in figure 2, with some sample sources of conducting research added from my own review of the conducting literature. Musical leadership scholars also have exploited these schools of thought, to a degree, though much work remains to be done in determining their relative levels of appropriateness to musicking. Bolden and colleagues even question the relevance and usefulness of leadership theories and concepts within the field itself:

Leadership is a complex process and we have serious reservations over the extent to which a set of standards, qualities or competencies can ever fully capture the nature of what makes some leaders/organisations successful and others unsuccessful. (2003:4)

Their reservations centre upon whether normative descriptions of leadership can ever capture the phenomenon and be useful for predicting (or advising upon) good leadership.

²¹ I have a Master of Business Administration degree from INSEAD in France, and fifteen years of work experience in the global consultancy firm Capgemini.

School of thought	Characteristics	Musical leadership sample sources
Great Man theories	Leaders as exceptional people, destined to lead	Lebrecht (1997)
Trait theories	Endless list of virtuous human attributes	Lutz (1963)
Behavioural theories	Styles of leadership, based on what leaders do rather than their qualities	Goldstein (1987) *
Situational Leadership	Different situations require different leadership styles	Davidson (1995) * Allen (1989) *
Contingency Theory	Refinement of the situational viewpoint, identifying the most predictive variables	Cox (1989)
Transactional Theory	Importance of relationship between leader and followers	Wis (2007)
Transformational Theory	Envisioning and implementing organisational change	Amstrong and Armstrong (1996) * Durrant (2005)

Figure 2: Overview of leadership theories. Adapted from Bolden et al. (2003). The musical-leadership sample sources marked with an asterisk have explicitly referred to the corresponding school of thought. Those not marked with an asterisk are derived from my own associations. Wis (2007) explicitly identifies with Servant Leadership, which I have chosen to include in Transactional Theory, though this is certainly debatable.

Gill (2006) also observes that the leadership concept is in fact highly elusive and has seldom suggested any common platform for scholarship:

No theory or model of leadership so far has provided a satisfactory explanation of leadership; indeed there is no consensus on the meaning of leadership in the first place. Many theories are partisan or partial, reflecting particular philosophical or ideological points of view. [. . .] The theories that emerge are often self-fulfilling prophecies and at best explain only some aspects of leadership. (2006:60)

Partisan or partial theories can be useful, but they present two major problems as well. First of all, the dearth of holism makes it very dangerous to export any given theory to another domain such as conducting, especially since the level of self-reflection of said theories is so low. The second problem is more ironic: a theory may be useful for a specific purpose because it helps to create *meaning in that situation*. In other words, understanding leadership as something

meaningful then suggests the notion that *leadership is about perception*—that is, it is either a social construction or an individually perceived experience. Pfeffer (1977) concludes that leadership is primarily phenomenological, and we invent new versions of leadership in the ways we draw upon our assumptions, expectations and selective perceptions. Alvesson and Spicer (2011) also point out that leadership is not a physical object that can be carefully measured. Instead, they observe:

Leadership is something that requires human understanding and interpretation. Indeed, how we understand and interpret leadership is absolutely central to whether we actually respond to it. Leadership is all about meaning, understanding, performances, and communication (2011:3).

Alvesson and Spicer, importantly, link how we *understand* leadership, as a concept as well as in its execution, with the *impact* of leadership. In other words, we can only study the effect of leadership via those who respond to it, or those who must make sense out of it. This, of course, is one of the premises of this project. From a theoretical point of view, then, I find it puzzling that the ever more obvious piecemeal nature and contextual bias of leadership theory has not given rise to more extensive research efforts upon a phenomenological or constructionist platform.

3.2. Theory pitfalls when applied to conducting

A number of leadership academics are highly critical towards the relevance of the ruling paradigms and the research that has accumulated around them—Weick (1995), Mintzberg (2004) and Gill (2006) are three prominent examples. These shortcomings apply *within* the core application domain—that is, within the organisational scope that the theory was developed from and for—making the application of leadership theory to musicking and conducting appear to be even more questionable. A musicking situation is an *integral* experience, and a fragmented theory cannot hope to cope with it. Five major pitfalls of the transfer of leadership theory to musicking, and their implications for the theoretical prospects of musical leadership, will be discussed in the following sections.

3.2.1. Engineering change

One way to deal with leadership has been to contrast it with management, and most theorists have weighed in on the distinction. Gill writes, 'Management is about achieving efficiency and stability; leadership is about increasing effectiveness through change and transformation' (2006:208). In popular parlance, the difference is between *doing things right* (management) and *doing the right things* (leadership). Various popular notions of 'scientific' management evolved as an extension of the engineering disciplines in industrial society. The constantly increasing need to manage profound and rapid change has given rise to a number of techniques and models, such as Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Economic Value Added (EVA) and Balanced Scorecard. These techniques, though popular, seldom yield the intended results, either because the leadership element itself was missing or something about how it was conceptualised was wrong. Management is commonly seen as administrative and bureaucratic, whereas leadership is seen as symbolic, somehow, and therefore glamorous, challenging and mystical. However, Alvesson and Spicer (2011:11) question the distinction altogether, since leadership is frequently intertwined with management. They see leadership as involving the management of meaning, including ideas, values, perceptions and feelings, but also the harnessing of coercive elements. Whatever the nature of the theoretical relationship between leadership and management, however, the two are related through practice (and through a shared research tradition). Hence, to the extent that a given management theory emerges from an engineering mindset or is excessively instrumental (utility oriented) in its outlook, its accompanying leadership theory will be similarly inclined.

Simply enhancing the 'people side' of management and leadership theory does not, in my view, fundamentally change its engineering bias. Still, with the emergence of Transformational Leadership, more attention was given to the need to mobilise people. Gouillart and Kelly's (1995) model of business transformation was in fact biological: the body-mind duality was used as a metaphor for the organisation as well as the human being's place within it. The need to reframe people's minds and renew people's spirits was an explicit component of this model. The irony here is that while the model is a human one

(with the Leonardo da Vinci man as its icon), the organisation is still seen as a system.

Along these lines, then, Gill describes four tracks of leadership research: cognitive, emotional, spiritual and behavioural. Each track has enjoyed varying levels of attention in recent decades, but they have yet to be integrated into a clear, coherent theory (Gill, 2006:61). In addition, the spiritual track has long remained dormant, so that theorists have generally neglected people's need for meaning, the processes through which meaning is created and the ways in which making meaning affects organisational life. Gill therefore considers leadership theory to be at best a 'fragmented and disparate body of knowledge of reduced value'.

The key implication of this section for the application of leadership theory to musicking and conducting revolves around the role of meaning, how meaning is created, and the kinds of goals meaning entails. While musicking takes place in an enormous number of contexts and with every imaginable purpose, its goals are existential—making music is its own reward—rather than instrumental—that is, aimed at goals outside the music itself. Existential goals, however, seem largely to fall outside the realm of leadership theory.

3.2.2. Mind without body

One of the major Western philosophical developments of the twentieth century was the 'bodily turn', which denotes the growing realisation that perception is reality and that our relationship with the world is through the body subject. According to Holgersen, Merleau-Ponty's major work *La phénoménologie de la perception* opened up a middle ground between understanding the objective world and understanding the individual. Merleau-Ponty thought that we must rediscover every object in our perception of it; the core of our experience is perception, and we are at all times installed in a perceptive way of being (Holgersen, 2006). Bowman summarises the bodily turn: 'All human knowledge draws its substance from corporeal roots—mind is inextricably biological and embodied' (Bowman, 2004:30).

Although the bodily turn took place in parallel with, and to some degree prior to, most of the leadership research of the twentieth century, the leader 'as body' has only recently begun to receive attention. According to Bowman, mindfulness has always been seen as the source of humankind's superior

achievements, and the body has been reduced to a sensorium; thinkers in the West have long accepted the mind's rightful governance over things vaguely sensed, felt, or intuited. Given that the Great Man Theory was the first leadership theory and further presented a figure who was naturally gifted, destined to lead, and above the weaknesses of the body, there would have been little apparent need to build bridges to the bodily turn. On the other hand, Bowman proposes that bodily constituted knowledge, of which music is a prime and precious example, is not different in kind from intellectual ways of knowing (2004:30). Hence, there is no reason to keep the body outside the realm of leadership. Leadership research, then, is ripe for growth in this regard. Sinclair (2005) sees most leadership research as degendered and disembodied, despite the fact that leadership accomplishment is often highly dramatic and full-bodied, involving performance, intimacy and even seduction. The bodies of followers and audiences, after all, are key to power relations and especially the exercise of leadership. She suggests that leadership writing has ignored bodies because leaders are seen to be above other men and portrayed as able to defy their bodies in what they do. The taboo around leadership bodies is limiting. It is also not neutral, as it reflects ideologies and economic agendas:

Leadership is a field of study that marginalizes the kind of inspection that focuses on structural causes or limitations and privileges the great heroic tale. [...] The construct and the discourse shaped to elucidate the construct work hand in hand here. Leadership and leadership scholarship has a vested interest in constructing leadership as a bold, individual, agentic and disembodied performance. (Sinclair, 2005:390)

As was discussed in chapter 2, several writers have noted that conductors are reluctant to serve as research subjects, a throwback sentiment from the heroic era of leadership. This resonates with Sinclair's statement—there is something about the leadership construct that will tend to evade scrutiny, especially the leader as a mortal body.

Ladkin points out that leadership happens through the engagement of and interactions with human bodies. Both art and leadership, then, are experienced through the processes that create them, processes that are about making sense of the world: 'Artists do this in an embodied way by lingering with the perceptions received through their senses, rather than collecting data and cognitively analysing it' (Ladkin, 2010:237). The absence of the body in leadership theory must be considered an absolutely disqualifying flaw when it

comes to conducting. While a conductor may make use of a whole range of expressive means, including influencing the ensemble even when absent, conducting is possibly the signature case of corporeal leadership, to the extent that the concept becomes virtually meaningless if we disembodify the conductor.

3.2.3. Leader without followers

One of the most fundamental objections against leadership theory is its excessive focus on the individual rather than the organisation. Although some theories, including transformational leadership, do recognise leadership's impact on human behaviour and followership, the bias towards the leader always prevails. According to Alvesson and Spicer (2011:18), we bias our understanding of leadership from the outset by focusing on the concept at all. In fact, 'leadership' per se may not be the best way to understand the direction of a complex or ambiguous organisational event. We tend to identify too many organisational processes and outcomes as effects of leadership, whereas attribution theory would suggest an alternative:

It is followers, not leaders, who are the 'active' ingredients in the leadership process. In the messy, uncertain and ambiguous world of work, followers are the key players in relating possible outcomes to people by labelling them 'leaders'. (2011:26)

The leadership process is about much more than the leader: it is about expectations, sensemaking and communications around what the leader is understood to do, mean or want. Leadership therefore plays out in a minefield of meaning, intention and interpretation, always with the potential of clashes and misunderstandings among followers, as well as between leader and followers.

Raelin (2011) observes that individualistic accounts of leadership are sustained by cultural environments that honour independence, then points out that this view misses the learning aspect of (and leader self-correction in) leadership. As an alternative, he proposes that leadership is directly tied to the social practices to which people are dedicated, and that is itself a practice that constitutes the term leadership: 'Leadership in this sense is returned to the group doing the work rather than solidified around an individual who is making decision for others' (2011:207).

Obsession with a leader figure at the expense of the organisation is not unique to the business domain but also characterises conducting research as well. According to Koivunen and Wennes (2011:52), most conducting research has focused on individual leadership skills and styles and views musicians as an amorphous mass. They propose a constructionist view instead, where leadership is socially constructed through relational activities.

3.2.4. Unpredictability and ambiguity

A common theme within every scholarly discipline that deals with organisations, including business strategy, economics and politics, is the way in which the world has become ever more complex and integrated, in turn placing new demands upon its leaders. The new world alters old conceptions of influence and control, and leaders are judged harshly if they cannot keep up, according to Woodward and Funk:

Our leaders must operate effectively in a world of ambiguity, unpredictability and complexity, and yet they are expected to make enough sense of the situation to take effective action. (2010:296)

The important point here is that leadership theory arose early in the industrial revolution in a philosophical context of rational positivism. Mintzberg (2004) has criticised current leadership theory and teaching for their unbroken loyalty to outdated notions of predictability and control that stem from that long-ago era.

According to Gill, many organisations currently face a range of 'big' issues, from ecological crisis to poverty, from shrinking product life cycles to the diversity and global nature of the staff. Not least, organisations face increasing expectations of social responsibility and 'a yearning for meaning and balance in life, uniting body, mind, heart and spirit' (Gill, 2006:293). In short, the world in which leadership is presently exercised is vastly more complex, less predictable and more open to interpretation than leadership theory has been able to accommodate. As long as theorists addressed only a specific context, this general insufficiency may not have presented a problem. But as a result, leadership theory is now laden with hidden or implicit assumptions, many of which are so self-evident that they have until recently avoided critical attention. According to Kanter (2010), for example, as management theory was

taken over by economists, it was burdened with a series of simplifying assumptions about stability, simple structures, homogeneous cultures, and controllable information. Because management seeks efficiency within boundaries, whereas leadership seeks to break bonds, leadership theory may have suffered more than management theory in an era of uncertainty, complexity, diversity and transparency. Interestingly, Kanter suggests that organisational theory has recognised this state of affairs, but practice is still ahead of theory—that is, the doers have adapted more readily than the thinkers. Kanter further remarks that uncertainty cannot be wished away but instead must be dealt with through institutional work; complexity must be addressed through integrative work; and diversity must be dealt with through identity work.

In classical leadership theory, uncertainty is equated with not knowing, not having precise information, or not being able to come up with the rational decision. Certainty—the clear thought or logically inferred decision—represents the unquestioned ideal. Bowman describes this paradigm:

So deeply entrenched are our assumptions about mind's ideality and rightful governance over things vaguely sensed, felt, or intuited (and indeed, over things done or enacted) that the suggestion that ambiguity may be more important to humankind than certainty probably strikes most of us as nonsense. (2004:30)

Bowman hints that ambiguity, not certainty, holds the most prominent place in human life and represents the most promising source of insight—that vague sensation and the spark of intuition might rather represent the rightful governance of human endeavour. Since the word ambiguity often carries negative associations, he proposes 'multivalence' to convey a positive image of polysemy and its simultaneous multiplicity of meaning.

As old assumptions become explicit, existing leadership theory grows weaker while leadership itself grows ever more suggestive and even provocative. When uncertainty and ambiguity are acknowledged to characterise the leadership environment, the leadership concept itself must enlarge into a complex cultural phenomenon that demands not measurement but interpretation. Alvesson and Spicer (2011) elaborate upon this point:

The real world is messy, ambiguous, and often falls short of delivering the heroic examples of leadership or clear-cut styles that we like to read about in popular management books and business magazines. [..]

Understanding leadership involves acknowledging that any insights that we come up with will always be uncertain and preliminary. Eternal and robust truths are almost impossible to come by in a complex, situation-specific and dynamic area like leadership. (2011:4–5)

They even attribute the attractiveness of the concept of leadership to its very ambiguity, especially in light of its inherent grandiosity and seductiveness:

It is precisely because leadership is so difficult to pin down that people have become so enamoured with it. This is because its illusiveness and slipperiness make it into a kind of sublime idea without form or shape that can almost become anything to anyone. (2011:195)

Because leadership is such a slippery concept, many scholars investigate it via metaphors. These devices involve the transfer of information via a phrase or term from a familiar domain (the source) to a less familiar one (the target), where it gains a new meaning, illuminating some aspects of its former self and shrouding others. These scholars argue that metaphors add more than rhetorical charm—they clarify complex phenomena by transmitting loads of information from the source domain that is cognitive, behavioural and emotional (2011:34). The metaphor can therefore be used as an analytical tool, and Alvesson and Spicer introduce six different leadership metaphors, summarised here:

Leadership metaphor	Variants of main category
Leaders as saints	Inner moral super(wo)man, martyr, champion of the great cause, 'good guy'
Leaders as gardeners	Landscaper, pruner, crop-rotator, harvester
Leaders as buddies	Party host, pseudo-shrink, an equal (or 'one of the guys'), ombudsman
Leaders as commanders	Leader of the charge, ass-kicker, antagonist, rule-breaker
Leaders as cyborgs	The 'charisborg', the perfectionist—qualities include tireless energy, self-confidence, seductive persuasiveness, self-control
Leaders as bullies	Qualities include malice, intimidation

Figure 3: Leadership metaphors. Based on Alvesson and Spicer (2011).

If we deploy a metaphor such as the bully, a whole set of images and interpretations arises, whether we nuance them or not; the metaphor is useful precisely because a host of implicit terms and relations are instantly shared. A lack of definition or formal precision is probably outweighed by the richness of

these associations. Though some metaphors carry more positive associations than others, there are few, if any, that are unambiguous—even the ‘darker’ metaphors have positive aspects: ‘Even bullies can help to hold the group together and inspire commitment through firmly dealing with deviance and poor performance’ (2011:198).

The metaphor approach draws attention to the multitude of leadership’s guises in the real world while simultaneously enhancing our perspective upon a particular guise. It would be very difficult, in other words, to analytically capture all of the aspects of the leader as bully. It would be equally difficult to predict or prescribe when we would prefer the bully over the buddy. The fact that any single leader may suggest several of these metaphors only adds richness to our understanding.

Unpredictability and ambiguity appear in two very different ways in the conducting situation; being at the very core of the artistic process *and also* absent in terms of the appearance of the conductor as visible ritual. The physical and corporeal presence of the conductor’s leadership is far more predictable and unambiguous than in most leadership situations—there is usually no doubt as to who is leading and when leadership is being exercised in the musicking moment. Nevertheless, when it comes to understanding what musical leadership is and how it works, unpredictability and ambiguity cannot be neglected, and any leadership theory that cannot accommodate them is of limited value as research platform.

3.2.5. What is the subject matter?

We have now met up with the definitional problems surrounding the leadership concept. Alvesson and Spicer find it to be so multifaceted in its content and fuzzy at its boundaries that they propose to approach it through metaphors. But there is a further tension as well, between leadership as something everyone does everywhere and something only the few ‘real’ leaders do. How are we to define the subject matter of something so utterly various? We might even argue that for something as ontologically diverse as leadership, the search for a unified theory is not only futile but wrong. Musical leadership might be seen to be less diverse than general leadership, as it exists within a particular domain and the conductor’s role boasts a familiar ritual appearance,

among other things. Yet the phenomenon itself is equally as challenging, given the ambiguity of its processes.

Leadership theory, then, is in a crisis of sorts, lacking first and foremost the surety of a clear subject. For the musical leadership domain, there would appear to be little hope for a reasonably coherent research tradition with which to fall in line. This realisation derives from my interest in what conducting *is*, in its legitimacy, and in what makes it work. Such ontological goals can hardly be met with theory developed upon a 'definitional quagmire', but some opportunities present themselves, the most evocative of which is that a number of researchers now acknowledge leadership to be an elusive notion, and their reflections are quite telling. Another opportunity, of course, is that the lack of a reliable model allows for freer interpretation of interviews with followers.

The question of subject matter may also be understood in light of Habermas's philosophy of science, with its different notions of truth and knowledge across discipline areas. In brief, knowledge in the natural sciences is about explaining cause and effects; knowledge in social sciences is about social change and the improvement of the human condition; and knowledge in the humanities is about understanding the human condition (Pahuus, 2007:159). Musical leadership may be investigated within each of these areas. There are natural-science aspects of conducting—for example, the neurological characteristics of singers who are responding to gestures. There are social-science aspects—for example, the impact of gender in orchestra conductor appointments. The investigation of what makes an individual singer want to follow a conductor falls within the humanities, as it is about understanding the human being and deals with how people create meaning in the musicking situation. Knowledge about a single topic such as conducting impact, then, can be extracted via widely different disciplines, including neurology, pedagogy and phenomenology. If we try to apply leadership theory to conducting, we might conclude, we must remain conscious of the scholarly discipline from which we have borrowed it.

If the search for a research tradition for conducting is difficult, it is also because the limited research that does exist is scattered across many disciplines. In addition, leadership in general has seldom been investigated within the ontological frame of the humanities. In the following sections, I will investigate elements of a theoretical platform that will be suitable for musical leadership by looking at (1) elements of leadership theory that have recognised

and addressed the pitfalls outlined in this section, and (2) concepts from scholars who have explicitly introduced aesthetics into the leadership concept. These two angles in fact overlap considerably, which is a hopeful sign regarding a renewed perspective upon leadership in the arts.

3.3. A renewed perspective upon leadership

3.3.1. Business coming to their senses

The critique of the leadership theory canon comes from within leadership academia as well as from related disciplines with a strong interest in leadership. Gill (2006), coming from leadership academia, recognises the shortcomings of past theories and proposes a series of measures to accommodate a more holistic view of leadership that integrates four forms of intelligence: the intellectual or cognitive, the emotional, the spiritual and the behavioural (2006:65). Traditionally, few characteristics have been valued more highly than intellectual capacity, and most scholars agree that effective leadership demands the ability to perceive and process information, imagine possibilities and make judgements and decisions. In addition, intellectual/cognitive resources include conceptual skills, such as the ability to relate a problem to its context and at the same time attend to it in detail, and goal-setting and strategizing skills. Gill also celebrates intuition, the ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning.

While psychology has studied emotion for decades, Gill observes that the emotional impact of leaders has only attracted attention recently. By favouring cool thought over 'messy emotions', leadership theory neglects the impact of real people in an organisation, with their contagious enthusiasm, satisfaction from teamwork or reluctance to deliver bad news to the boss. The concept of emotional intelligence—the ability to recognise emotions and reason on the basis of them—was developed during the 1990s and provided a way to understand and deal with relationships including those in an organisation. Among other things, emotional intelligence evoked themes like self-awareness, self-confidence, self-control, humility, and personal vision, all of which are hugely relevant to the exercise of leadership, according to Zohar:

The emotional and interpersonal dimension of leadership concerns values, strategy, empowerment, and inspiration and motivation. The leader's self-concept and emotional intelligence are the key. [. . .] Emotion is a powerful moderator of intellectual understanding and reasoning and behaviour, in both leader and follower. (Zohar, 1997:80)

Cognitive and emotional intelligences must also be complemented by a spiritual dimension of leadership. Spirituality concerns how human beings create value and meaning in their lives and endeavours, and is therefore closely connecting to the notion of sensemaking. Weick (1995) proposes that organisations must be seen as sensemaking entities, as the people within them interpret threats and opportunities and act upon them. Leadership involves providing meaning to followers through appropriate behaviours and messages. According to Gill, spiritual leadership recognises that 'human beings have an animated need for meaning, value and a sense of worth in what they seek and do' (2006:82).

Lastly, behavioural theories are a longstanding element of the leadership theory canon. Beyond what is captured by the cognitive, emotional and spiritual intelligences, an awareness of the behavioural repertoire, its potential and its consequences, is a 'fourth dimension' of the phenomenon of leadership. In relation to conducting, gesture is a behaviour, and gestural skill is more a *doing* skill than a *knowing* skill—that is, mastery of the gestural apparatus is clearly not guaranteed by cognitive, emotional or spiritual ability. The interaction between thinking, feeling and behaviour, however, is complicated, and it is no wonder that leadership theory has had a hard time integrating them.

Towards this end, Gill proposes a renewed, holistic model of effective leadership derived from the five defining functions summarised in figure 4. The model outlines what leaders need to attend to within the organisation. Yet it raises as many questions as it answers. First of all, is that all there is to it? Are these five functions sufficient and/or equally necessary? Is it possible that if one or more of these functions are neglected, a leader might still be perceived as great by the organisation? How 'complete' do musicians expect a conductor to be with regard to these functions? Are there trade-offs among these leadership features that followers would be willing to make that in turn disrupt the model? On the other hand, even if a leader covered all five functions, might he or she nevertheless be perceived as lacking? Are there aspects of leadership

Function	What leaders do	In the music domain
Vision and mission	Define and communicate	Conceive musical idea and ensemble idea
Shared values	Identify, display, reinforce	Establish expressive ideals, performance practice and work ethics
Strategy	Develop, ensure commitment to	Set rehearsal plan, choose programming, ensemble casting, ensemble recruiting
Empowerment	Enable people to do	Liberate musicianship
Influence, motivation and inspiration	Make people want to do	Harness ensemble to a concerted effort

Figure 4: Leadership functions. Adapted from Gill (2006).

as lived and perceived experience that do not surface in the model? These questions are not meant to undermine Gill's model but to elaborate upon it, and to indicate both the complexity and the ubiquity of the leadership concept. Alvesson and Spicer likewise reflect on whether leaders must have it all. If the answer is yes, then true leadership is rare. If the answer is no, then leadership is very common: 'The terms easily oscillate between what everybody does and what only an exceptional group of 'real leaders' do' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011:9). Even if Gill's model, or other models, for that matter, does comprehensively capture the features of leadership, it does not address the questions of necessity, sufficiency, balance and trade-offs. There seems to be good reason, then, to stay open to the possibility of unexpected features of leadership when exploring musicking and conducting.

3.3.2. The significance of the present now

One particular aspect of conducting that requires some discussion is the time horizon, or time bracket, within which we perceive leadership. If we think about how a permanently installed artistic leader develops an ensemble, whether in one single season or over many years, there are obvious parallels to other organisations, including vision, values, strategy, empowerment and motivation. This person exercises leadership outside the musicking situation itself, in relation to repertoire selection, business planning and casting/recruitment, and these aspects are most applicable to other leadership situations. Within the musicking situation, on the other hand, non-music

models are less relevant, for one main reason: even a single moment, the 'present now', can accommodate a rich perception of leadership among the performers. It is thus the *simultaneity of leadership action and its impact* that distinguishes music ensembles from most other organisations, and this is quite significant for leadership theory, in terms of what we need from it and what it might provide.

Bathurst and colleagues (2010) explore how leadership in times of uncertainty or even crisis can benefit from an aesthetic approach, because, for example, 'an aesthetically aware leader will be cognizant of timing' (2010:317). This might include a sense of when to take control and when to let events unfold without intervention. When the researcher encounters aesthetically aware leaders deploying a range of intellectual and emotional skills beyond rational-instrumental decision making, he or she must attend to the present now. Musical awareness, of course, has always operated in real time and space, but this also presents us with a heretofore-unrecognised aspect of (all) leadership as well. Might there be other links between the art domain and the leadership phenomenon?

3.3.3. Art and leadership

Although it is not explicit in Gill's model, outlined in the previous section, he has recognised that leadership has a spiritual dimension—that it matters how leaders sense the organisation and its environment and how they *make sense* out of situations therein. This role of meaning and meaning making is another link between leadership and art, at least as a loose rhetorical notion and, often, a catchy book title—see Cleary (2004), Denhart and Denhart (2006), Manning and Curtis (2007) and Beach (2006). The conductor, in these cases, becomes a metaphor for good leadership. Springborg (2010), for example, distinguishes between leadership *like* art and leadership *as* art. The former is a metaphor, through which phrases from the arts are applied to the world of leadership to enrich the conversation. Leadership *as* art goes beyond the metaphor, on the other hand: it assumes that art is the general category and leadership is (at least potentially) a specific form of it. The notion of leadership as art hopes to reveal aspects of leadership that are not available to more traditional organisational frames. One problem with the leadership-art parallel is that most leaders do not have the skills to work with artistic media such as music,

painting or poetry, but this does not slow Springborg: 'The medium that is most obvious for leaders to work in is the same medium that conceptual artists work in; that is, anything that can convey the idea of the work of art' (2010:254). Much more relevant to the parallel, Springborg appears to assert, is the mode of operating or overall process. In this regard, leadership as art demands, among other things, that leaders stay with their senses longer and wait to jump to ideas about what is happening. Leaders can benefit from how the artist makes sense of the world by lingering with perceptions rather than cognitively processing data right away.

Ladkin and Taylor (2010) have also explored what the arts can contribute to leadership by reconceptualising it according to three themes that are central to the creation and experience of art: embodiment, holding contradictions, and artistic sensibilities. Woodward and Funk (2010) propose a creative, hermeneutic approach to leadership development, as an alternative to behaviourist or competency-based approaches:

The hermeneutic approach views leading as a constantly emergent, interpretive act—as continually seeing with new eyes. [. . .] The development approach focuses much more on the act of personal experience, learning itself, on discovering questions, and on the constant creation of meaning. (2010:301)

While staying with the senses is intuitively embedded in the experience of art, it represents a deliberate, even disruptive act in organisational life. When leadership researchers seek inspiration from the arts, the primary driver seems to be that leaders are seen to increasingly face sensemaking problems in relation to their organisations and their environments. Within arts organisations, some researchers recognise, sensemaking is an inherent condition rather than an extraordinary development. Such connections have an important implication: we must be careful not to import a failing leadership theory into conducting research, because, as we have seen, it is likely missing exactly what it (and we) is seeking from the arts. Such connections raise a question as well: are these sought and found elements in fact on target when it comes to understanding musical leadership? I would say yes. Ladkin and Taylor's reflections on art in the context of leadership demonstrate this relevance and in fact may provide a framework for approaching musical leadership altogether.

Koivunen and Wennes (2011) have also looked into the link between art and leadership, by reflecting on the symphony orchestra conductor, whom they identify with a specific form of leadership defined by relational, aesthetic and embodied processes—in particular, relational listening, aesthetic judgement and kinaesthetic empathy. With regard to the first, the conductor listens to the sound produced by the musicians and helps them to play together by demonstrating phrasing and articulation and balancing different instrument sections. The conductor does not force him/herself upon the ensemble and *always* listens first. This principle of relational listening implies a continuous contact and negotiation with the ensemble that in turn affects the self. With regard to the second, hearing the score is obviously an aesthetic skill. With regard to the third, kinaesthetic empathy points to the two-way impact of gesture: how singers react to the conducting gesture, and how the conductor reads the musicians and their prospective reaction to the gesture. It is interesting to note that Chatman and Kennedy (2010), without reference to musical leadership, also identify the following three key elements of leadership: diagnostic abilities, behavioural flexibility and the unambiguous signalling of intentions. We might apply them to conducting as well. Diagnostic abilities suggest some combination of ‘hearing’ the score and hearing the sounding music, which couples aesthetic judgement and listening skills from the list of Koivunen and Wennes. The clear signalling of intentions demands kinaesthetic empathy but also aesthetic judgement, since it involves choice of gesture. Behavioural flexibility, of course, comes into play across all three elements. The two models are compatible, with Koivunen and Wennes prioritising the specific nature of the conductor’s involvement with the ensemble, and Chatman and Kennedy prioritising the general leadership work process, from determining what’s wrong via behavioural options to giving directions towards a solution.

Applying leadership theory to musical leadership is at once frustrating and promising. The frustration arises when prominent leadership scholars abandon their old platforms, leaving little firm ground on which to stand. But the fact that they are attempting to renew their theory using the arts, and especially music, is inspiring, even suggesting in turn that research on music and musicking (including musical leadership) could contribute to this renewal process. Rather than simply importing or harvesting theory and insight from general leadership research into the conducting domain, we might pursue an exchange on more equal terms.

Springborg, again, concludes that one of the key differences between business and artistic modes of working is the role of sensemaking, the process that creates personal experience:

The sense-making can happen in an instant, and in a way it leaves nothing to explain. All the information is in the sensations we have received in that instant. [...] It might take a long time for the conceptual mind to catch up with what has happened. But, this catching up and putting the experience into words, math, ideas, concepts, theories, or works of art is the process of description-making—not sense-making. When the process of description-making starts the sense-making has already happened. Sense-making is the epiphany. The eureka. It comes through the senses. It can come with words, but often it is wordless. (Springborg, 2010:249)

Sensemaking moments are slippery, but they are worth holding on to. As I discussed in section 3.3.2, the present now is extremely relevant to the music experience—it allows for the instantaneous perception of the sounding music, and for sensemaking. Scholars, as mentioned, are increasingly investigating sensemaking in organisations (for example, Weick [1995]), because as leaders face more unpredictability and ambiguity, they also face more possibilities and more options. In order to cope with this, Springborg insists, ‘leaders cannot rely on their conceptual mind producing sense-making, but need to engage in artistic appreciation-receiving sense-making’ (2011:256). At this point, it is important to bear in mind that attention to sensemaking is an import from the art world to the business world—more importantly for the present project, *sensemaking is a key aspect of musical leadership*. In fact, its importance is doubled, as it is both an already recognised aspect of musicking and now a growing aspect of leadership in general.

3.3.4. Leading beautifully: Bringing aesthetics into the picture

As mentioned previously, the conductor is a popular metaphor for leadership, due most likely to the figure’s very visible appearance. Another reason might be the conductor’s ritual, almost iconic manifestation of the act of leadership. Conducting represents leadership in a concentrated guise. But there may be more to the parallel than an iconic surface. As I have searched for general leadership theory that is applicable to conducting, I have repeatedly run across a parallel search by scholars in the opposite direction, seeking inspiration from

the arts to rejuvenate the struggling leadership theory discipline. Some scholars have recently begun to explore what aesthetics brings to the realm of leadership, and specifically what musical leadership might say about leadership in other domains. By looking at these efforts in the context of this project, we may discover important features of musical leadership that we would have missed by starting with the established leadership theory canon.

Ladkin (2008), begins her aesthetic approach to leadership with the argument that most leadership theory has failed to grasp *the how*. She wants to return focus to what takes place in the encounter between leader and followers—that is, to the enactment of leadership. Ladkin then makes a connection between the how and the beautiful:

When we appreciate something as beautiful, we are apprehending something of the essence of the act which they are performing. Similarly, by noticing what constitutes a beautiful leadership performance, perhaps we can be informed of the essence of leading itself. (2008:40)

Based on a case study of multi-artist Bobby McFerrin, she reconceptualises leadership as an embodied practice in which artistic sensibilities are in play and the leader is able to hold the possibilities, ambiguities and contradictions inherent in every leadership moment. Ladkin proposes that when mastery, congruence and purposefulness come together, it is possible to lead beautifully. Mastery, first of all, is about understanding and mastering the domain as well as oneself: 'To be masterful requires attention to the here-and-now possibilities inherent within any given moment' (2008:33). Ladkin observed the unobtrusive way McFerrin mastered his ensemble situations with a gentle charisma, blending his own virtuosity with his ability to mobilise musicians (and the audience) with the flick of a wrist, while barely speaking at all. Leading beautifully clearly demands expertise, but the scope of this expertise extends beyond subject-matter competences to a mastery of the context and its potential, surprises and interruptions.

The notion of congruence captures that quality of a leader who is able to express the self in ways that are consistent with his or her overall message and purpose—not only what is said but also how it is said, as well as what is genuinely meant and bodily shown. Leading beautifully incorporates the leader's authenticity, and congruence privileges the embodied, well-rounded leader who directs both clearly and credibly. Followers perceive (and profit

from) consistency between goal and intention, between intention and message, and among all of the various expressive means at the leader's disposal.

Lastly, purposefulness is about attending to the goals towards which one is leading. But it also includes a concern for the goal itself, and for the extent to which it serves the interests of the human condition. In the expectation that the goal itself is beautiful, Ladkin also includes the ethical dimension of leadership. Purposefulness applies both to how leaders create meaning and how the goal is determined to be meaningful, not only in and of itself but in relation to the followers' lives.

It should be noted that Ladkin defines beauty in a way that transcends (but does not discount) its colloquial meaning. She draws extensively on Plato's concept of beauty as comprising form as well as measure—it is beyond appearance and derives as well from appropriateness and perspective. This kind of mastery, for example, begins with knowing what to do in a given situation but also asks that this knowledge be applied appropriately, timed well, and balanced against other such interventions. Judgement is therefore a key ingredient in beautiful leadership as well. When good judgement is exercised and the facets of leadership all come together, our perception of it will bear resemblance to the appreciation of art. It is interesting to note that an early leadership scholar named Chester Barnard argued already in 1938 that the executive process transcended the purview of merely intellectual methods:

The terms pertinent to it are 'feeling', 'judgement', 'sense', 'proportion', 'balance', 'appropriateness'. It is a matter of art rather than science, and is aesthetic rather than logical. For this reason it is recognized rather than described and is known by its effects rather than by analysis. (Barnard, 1938:233)

Barnard's statement is particularly noteworthy when we take into consideration the industrial environment in which he operated and researched. Barnard recognised the sensemaking and aesthetics features of leadership *prior* to post-industrialism and postmodernism, and his highly system-oriented view, remarkably, still allows for a spiritual side to its population. Sadly, this perspective remained largely outside the scope of most leadership research for half a century or more. Barnard's celebration of proportion, balance and appropriateness echoes Ladkin: to be masterful means to know not only what is needed but also how much and when.

Barnard's statement also reinforces Ladkin's notion of holding contradictions. If there were no ambiguities or contradictions in the organisation, this kind of judgement would be less important, but this is obviously not the case, as Barnard makes clear:

The strategic factor in coöperation [*sic*] generally is leadership, which is the name for relatively high personal capacity for both technological attainments and moral complexity, combined with propensity for consistency in conformance to moral factors of the individual. (1938:288)

Despite the moral and literal complexity with which they are faced, good leaders must remain both informed and consistent in the choices they make.

Ladkin argues that the concept of beautiful leadership builds on but goes beyond previous notions of leadership as a performing art, of charismatic leadership and of authentic leadership. The value she adds resides in the concept's attention to *how* leadership is enacted. Furthermore, whereas charismatic leaders may lead towards self-serving, even harmful ends, beautiful leaders must serve only the most noble of human purposes. While leadership researchers generally view authenticity as something that is demonstrated over time, Ladkin argues that authenticity operates aesthetically and as such is realised very quickly (2008:37).

In the following sections, I will elaborate further upon Ladkin's three premises for beautiful leadership: leadership as coping with ambiguity and contradiction, leadership as embodiment and leadership as sensemaking.

3.4. Leadership as coping with ambiguity and contradiction

The problematic state of affairs in leadership theory, and not least the growing realisation of its limitations, may in itself shed new light on musical leadership. For example, fragmentation, unclear pictures and unresolvable ambiguities may simply indicate that some aspects of leadership will never be explained by a single theory but must instead be understood via these tensions among theoretical perspectives. Some scholars, in fact, use these tensions as an organising principle when taking stock of leadership research as it stands today, as we will see in this section. Traditionally, unpredictability and risk are

thought to be unattractive feature of business, though they can be coupled with opportunity. One positivistic variant of uncertainty involves not knowing which of a set of possible events will happen or when a certain event will happen. Another variant involves not knowing how to understand a situation or make sense of events as they unfold. Of course, both containing and working with contradictions and paradox are central features of most artistic endeavours, according to Ladkin and Taylor (2010:238), who suggest, in turn, that coping with inherent tensions and ambiguities is also part of leadership. Another interesting demonstration of a core feature of artistic practice that is perceived as a problem in leadership can be found in the *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice* (Nohria and Khurana, 2010). Published as part of the centennial celebrations of the Harvard Business School, this volume is comprised of a number of articles by leading researchers of leadership around the world. Aside from the excellence of the individual articles, the organisation of the book itself is evocative. The editors divided it into five sections that correspond to dualities or tensions that they observe to be at the heart of research on leadership.

Producing superior *performance* versus making *meaning*

A special *person* versus a social *role*

Universal leadership versus *domain-specific* leadership

Ability to exercise *agency* versus coping with *constraints*

Thinking and doing versus *becoming and being*

Applied to musical leadership, these five dualities raise specific issues about how we might understand the conducting phenomenon and role. In what follows, I will make some initial observations and assumptions about what each duality might mean for researching musical leadership.

3.4.1. Achievement versus meaning

Critics of the leadership concept claim that, contrary to the literature, the significance of leadership is best assessed by its *impact* on organisational

performance.²² If this link in a given theory is weak, then the notion of leadership it generates will be of little use. It is also an unfortunate axiom of the literature in general that a single individual's impact on organisational performance is of necessity so limited that there is really no need to attend to those behaviours that are unique to leadership. Organisational actions, the literature says, should be seen more as responses to external events and expectations than as the results of individual agency. Nohria and Khurana (2010:9) lament, 'The dominant organizational scholarship of the past thirty years does not see a substantial role for leadership and hence little need for leadership research'. Other scholars insist on a broader view of organisations that accounts for the endemic loss of meaning they ascribe to 'modernity'. In this perspective, a failure of leadership should not be analysed primarily in terms of the economic collapse that might follow it but the moral collapse, confusion, and loss of meaning it engenders. Nohria and Khurana note:

These scholars were not concerned with leadership because of the concept's ability to explain economic performance, but because of its importance for infusing purpose and meaning into the lives of individuals. (2010:11)

The issue is the directness and strength of leadership's impact. The duality between the leader as producer of results and the leader as maker of meaning strikes at the very heart of musicking and musical leadership. But it is also clear that the conductor produces no sound, and his or her impact, whatever it might be (results and/or meaning), must be realised via the singers or musicians. Therefore, the question would not be whether the conductor has an impact but whether this impact is significant in relation to the sounding music when compared to ensemble competence, acquired performance practices, audience expectations and other situational constraints. If the relative impact appears to be small, the subsequent question would be whether the conductor still makes a unique contribution by infusing purpose and meaning into the music event. In

²² The term *performance* is used within business academia to denote organisational outcomes, achievements and results rather than a rehearsed presentation or live event of some sort.

either case, the duality pinpoints the legitimacy of the conductor role as an important theme.

3.4.2. Person versus role

Leadership research spans a number of disciplines, including organisation behaviour, psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, economics, history and political science, and focal points range from the personality of the leader and specific leadership processes to the impact of leadership. Nohria and Khurana refer to a 'definitional quagmire' in the research field, as the list of leadership traits identified by psychologists seems endless, and wonder if the whole search for the distinctive characteristics of leaders may even be misguided:

What makes someone a leader is not that they have special or exemplary attributes relative to others, but that they are able to fulfill vital functions that help meet their follower's needs for meaning, social order group identity, and goal accomplishment. (2010:15)

This suggests that leadership is more about the relationship between followers and leader, and about how the followers' needs are met within the organisation, than about the personality traits of the leader. This view is not new—Barnard (1938) long ago proposed that a leader must establish a system of communication that secures voluntary coordination, and Selznick (1957) described how leaders create meaning for the members of the organisation and ensure the institutionalisation of its practices. Within these perspectives, exercising leadership is largely about filling roles and fulfilling role expectations. However, as leadership is also closely connected to followership, power (given or earned) and charisma play vital parts. While the duality of functions/relationships versus leader attributes remains tendentious, Nohria and Khurana find it to be fruitful as well.

If we consider musical leadership in light of this role-versus-person duality, we need to bear in mind a few things. First, musical leadership is largely instantaneous: a leader's action and the leadership impact are simultaneous, at least in the concert situation (and partially in the rehearsal situation). Second, the entire organisation being led is physically present, within sight and audible (and even physical) reach, and there is less infrastructure and technology-based mediation surrounding the exercise of

leadership. Therefore, if personal leader traits matter in business organisations, they likely matter even more in a music event. The presence of the leader is more explicit, and there is an absence of proxies (at least as named roles). At first glance, we might therefore expect the role-versus-person duality to favour the latter in a musicking context. However, it is also possible that, given the presence of the conductor and the simultaneity of leadership and followership, leadership traits would be featured more prominently here as well. For example, the nonverbal nature of conducting a concert tilts the leader's mode mix (use of various communicative means) towards gesture and breath at the expense of language.

3.4.3. Universal versus contingent

Leadership researchers generally agree that there is no single best way to lead in all situations in all domains of human endeavour. In fact, a key research theme involves the quest to understand how leadership might vary across organisation types and cultures as well as according to the characteristics of the leader. In fact, a contingent theory of leadership that is broad enough in scope to encompass every situation runs the risk of becoming meaningless; Nohria and Khurana (2010:17), then, propose that the middle ground is most fruitful: researchers ought to seek what is core and what is contingent in the most important situations.

While it has been debated over the years whether a good leader would be able to lead anything/anyone or leadership in fact depends upon intimate domain knowledge, this particular question is less relevant to musical leadership, which requires knowledge of music. Musical leadership therefore appears to be more contingent than other domains, and this impression is reinforced by the unmediated musicking situation and an organisational infrastructure that is either limited or absent. Still, the contingency issue raises a key question about ensemble type: is choral conducting different from orchestral conducting, and do various ensemble types require different leadership approaches? This question is not explicitly addressed in my project, but we should still expect some interviewees to reflect on it.

3.4.4. Agency versus constraints

Nohria and Khurana observe that the word *leader* evokes an image of a person with a high capacity for agency. On the other hand, leaders are constrained by a myriad of constituencies and pressures, as well as by their own personal limitations and available resources:

Navigating this tension between agency and constraint—recognizing the limits to their power yet finding a way of taking action is at the heart of the practice of leadership. (2010:219)

This duality seems to engage with a leader's ability to survive, and to adapt to (or transcend) the frames of the given organisation. Whereas the tension between constraint and agency is usually seen a net undesirable in the business world (constraints may hurt profits), constraints—even the 'impossible'—can be fruitful in the arts. If 'containing and working with contradictions and paradox is indeed central to most artistic endeavours' (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010:239), the unresolved tension between agency and constraint could be expected to be one of the productive forces behind musical leadership. Compliance with every musical and organisational expectation would likely compete with genuine artistic expression, and conducting is therefore probably attracted to a high degree of agency.

3.4.5. Thinking and doing versus becoming and being

This duality reflects the age-old question of whether leaders are born or bred. However, Nohria and Khurana suggest a subtler spin: the skill aspect versus the identity aspect. *Knowing* highlights the leader's cognitive capabilities, while *doing* highlights behavioural capabilities or skills. In contrast, leader identity is a 'self-concept that enables someone to think of himself or herself as a leader and to interact with the world from that identity or sense of being' (2010:22). Skill versus identity impacts the need for (and challenge of) developing leaders, but it may also be critical for a leader to understand the blend of thinking, doing and being that constitutes the exercise of leadership. In fact, a capacity for honest self-reflection may in itself represent a leadership quality.

Applied to musical leadership, this duality opens up for the various 'intelligences' a conductor has to utilise. The analytical mind, the social being, and the gestural apparatus are all at play simultaneously, with an underlying

identity of leader-self and a concept of what to bring to the ensemble and how. The significance of this duality is probably more important for musical leadership than for most other domains—at least, it is more visible—because the blend of intelligences happens in real time, and nothing can be added later. This concentrated nature (time and space) of musical leadership may also hint that the conductor role is a useful laboratory for investigating leadership in general, since action and effects take place with everyone present within short time frames.

All five dualities convey the complexity of leadership research and theory. In my view, most of the leadership theories that have emerged over the last few decades involve biases and pitfalls when applied to musical leadership, because of two primary shortcomings. First, they have failed to encompass the full range of intelligences at play in the musicking situation. Second, there has been no allowance for or attention to the instantaneous nature of musical leadership. By leaving these five dualities as unresolved tensions, Nohria and Khurana have (probably unintentionally) made the canon of leadership theory that much more relevant to the study of musicking and conducting.

3.5. Leadership as an embodied practice

According to Ladkin and Taylor (2010), leadership happens through the engagement of and interactions among human bodies. Both art and leadership are lived through the processes by which they are created. Artists in particular make sense of the world in an embodied way, by lingering upon the perceptions received through their senses, rather than cognitively analysing data (2010:237).

The literature on leadership as embodied practice often deals with the leader's perceptions and sensations—an embodied leader, in this case, employs his or her full range of intellectual, emotional and spiritual capabilities. The other side of embodiment, the leader as sensemaking *agent*, is often not given equal attention, despite the fact that 'embodied intelligence is not after all about representing; it is about acting and agency' (Bowman, 2004:37). So, even if we have applauded the perceptive and sensitive leader, we still invest in the axiom that *mindfulness* is the distinctive source of humankind's superior achievements and reduce the body to a 'sensorium', in Bowman's words

(Bowman, 2004:30). In my experience, surprisingly few business leaders are aware of the impact of their own bodily appearance, or even of the fact that there *is* an impact from such a source. It is simply impossible not to see the conductor as an acting body, however. Conducting is gestural leadership in the broadest possible sense, from breathing to glances, from posture to hand movements. In the musicking situation, we simply cannot isolate the conductor's mindful musical idea and agency from his embodied ones, proving Bowman's statement: 'Knowing is inseparable from doing: knowing is doing, and always bears the body's imprint' (Bowman, 2004:46).

Koivunen and Wennes, as discussed above, describe orchestra conductors as engaging in relational listening, aesthetic judgement and kinaesthetic empathy. Listening and judging may be understood as turned inward, as the leader perceives and makes sense of what is going on. Kinaesthetic empathy, on the other hand, points outward: it is 'show-how' that is designed to make musicians react with their bodies as well.

Kinaesthetic empathy has a capacity to make sense of other people's experiential movements and coordinate that with our own bodily movements. It includes the placing of oneself in another locus without the loss of one's own. (Koivunen and Wennes, 2011:64)

Kinaesthetic empathy, then, goes both ways. The conductor wants to understand (and master) the gesture that will trigger the intended movement among the musicians. But the actual movement of the musicians also reflects kinaesthetic empathy, although a mode of it that is probably less conscious than the conductor's intentions. Kinaesthetic empathy is also at play among musicians, as co-musicians read each other's movements.

3.6. Leadership as sensemaking

Gill observed that the spiritual dimension of leadership has been openly and systematically neglected in leadership research until very recently, even though a holistic model would have to account for how people make meaning of their lives and organisations and leadership. Weick (1995), on the other hand, proposes that organisations ought to be seen as sensemaking entities, and that leadership must be understood in terms of how it enables the organisation and

its members to make sense of their environment and adapt themselves accordingly. Weick also makes a fine but important distinction between sensemaking and interpretation. The former is an activity and a process, whereas the latter can be a process but is just as likely to be a product. Sensemaking includes interpretation, but it is also about authoring; it is more about invention and creation than about discovery:

Thus the concept of sensemaking is valuable because it highlights the invention that precedes interpretation. It is also valuable because it implies a higher level of engagement by the actor. Interpretation connotes an activity that is more detached and passive than the activity of sensemaking. Sensemaking matters. A failure in sensemaking is consequential as well as existential. (1995:14)

Weick also makes an important distinction between sensemaking and decision-making. Sensemaking deals with what the decision is about, the need for a decision in the first place, and who owns the decision, not just what the decision should be. He observes that different cultures have different understandings of decision-making as well; the Japanese concept of decision-making, for example, is much closer to his concept of sensemaking.

It is worth paying a little attention to the etymology of sense and sensing.²³ Sensing as perceiving is the most common use, but the Latin *sensus*, from *sentire*, encompasses finding one's way as well. In present-day Latin languages, the association with way and direction is retained in *sens* (French) and *senso* (Italian). Sense involves the duality of perceive-*in*—that is, apprehend, take hold of something out there and bring it in—and direct-*out*, a corresponding action element. Hence, there is an etymological basis for

²³ For example, sense (n.), circa 1400, 'faculty of perception', also 'meaning or interpretation' (esp. of Holy Scripture), from O.Fr. *sens*, from L. *sensus* 'perception, feeling, undertaking, meaning', from *sentire* 'perceive, feel, know', probably a figurative use of a lit. meaning 'to find one's way', from PIE base **sent-* 'to go' (cf. O.H.G. *sinnan* 'to go, travel, strive after, have in mind, perceive', Ger. *Sinn* 'sense, mind', O.E. *sið* 'way, journey', O.Ir. *set*, Welsh *hynt* 'way'). Application to any one of the external or outward senses (touch, sight, hearing, etc.) first recorded 1520s. Source: www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=sense.

sensemaking as more active than interpretation. Corvellec and Risberg (2007), observing the same etymological duality, denote the action component of leadership as *mise-en-sens*, in reference to the way leaders as meaning managers stage projects and provide them with direction and deliberately evoking the term *mise-en-scene* from the performing arts.

Sensemaking is also more inclusive than decision-making, and it is tempting to view sensemaking as less rational than decision-making, but this is simplistic. While rationality is a commonly applauded virtue of decision-making, it may be part of sensemaking also, even if sensemaking is not constrained by it as such. So what is sensemaking all about? Weick develops his concept of sensemaking in organisations via seven properties (Weick, 1995:17–62) that I summarise below.

3.6.1. Grounded in identity construction

Sensemaking starts with a sensemaker who must move among various interactions with the world and among various definitions of the self with which he or she makes meaning:

Depending on who I am, my definition of what is ‘out there’ will also change. Whenever I define self, I define ‘it’, but to define ‘it’ is also to define self. (Weick, 1995:21).

Because this constant interplay between the sensemaker and the environment (defining ‘it’ and self) is a two-way flow, the notion of identity is key to sensemaking. This is in line with Ruud’s view of identity construction—he points out that our lived experience may be seen as a narration, and that it is through the telling of it that we become conscious of its significance (Ruud, 1997:200). I might extend Weick’s notion that sensemaking is grounded in identity construction to say that sensemaking appears to be a *cornerstone* of identity construction.

3.6.2. Retrospective

Sensemaking is retrospective because it must always be founded on meaningful lived experience. A conceived object will always be in the past, because once it is thought, it is in the past. Even when a thought about the future has been

thought, it is part of the past, and therefore part of our retrospective sensemaking. Weick describes a host of issues regarding cognition and memory beyond the scope of this brief outline. One of his key observations involves the 'inevitability' of the flow of events we might recall, because 'hindsight both tightens the causal couplings and reconstructs as coupled events a history that leads directly to the outcome' (Weick, 1995:28). In memory there occurs a partial erasing of the past that favours a certain clarity and sense of order. For several decades, Henry Mintzberg (1978) has been critical of the idea that an organisation's strategy is about prospective design, and that real-life plans are emerging in the organisation over time and are crafted-in-action rather than designed-before-action. According to Mintzberg, an organisation's strategy is often merely consistent behaviour blended with supporting hindsight. Making sense of a musical flow is also retrospective. We cannot make sense of a music flow that is neither heard nor thought, and the present now is the permanent edge of retrospection.

3.6.3. Enactive of sensible environments

Weick distinguishes sensemaking from interpretation by degree of active involvement. While interpretation is about discovery, sensemaking is about invention. Weick sees action as crucial to sensemaking and uses the word enactment 'to preserve the fact that in organisational life, people often produce part of the environment they face' (Weick, 1995:30). For example, the act of saying enables people to see what they think. In the musicking situation, the enactive aspect of sensemaking becomes very concrete. In the midst of a musical flow, we make sense of the passage in every present moment, while at the same time anticipating and enacting its conclusion.

3.6.4. Social

Sensemaking is never a solitary act; even monologues presume an audience, and meaning changes as audiences change. 'Social' in this context evokes the organisation as a network of intersubjectivity, of shared meanings, maintained and processed through language and interaction. However, Weick advises against seeing social sensemaking as dependent upon shared understanding, because the latter is not necessary for collective action. Common values may

constitute an organisational glue, but conflicting values can still accommodate concerted action, or alignment, via compromise, because this alignment serves the various parties' interests. According to Weick, alignment from compromise is no less social than sharing. The implication here is far reaching: people may align their efforts not because they understand something in the same way or share the same values but because it makes more sense than the alternatives. As we will see in part III, singers will often happily relinquish their own musical idea and accept the conductor's idea because the alternative would be meaningless.

3.6.5. Ongoing

Weick sees the 'flow' as the constant of sensemaking: 'Streams of problems, solutions, people, and choices flow through organizations and converge and diverge independent of human intention' (1995:44). The import of the flow becomes most apparent when it is interrupted, and because flows are subject to interruption, sensemaking is infused with feeling. Within this ongoing property of sensemaking, then, Weick locates its relationship with emotion. Interruption triggers a reaction that is discharged in the autonomic nervous system via an emotional response. But Weick emphasises that the perception of this reaction also triggers a rudimentary act of sensemaking, which in turn provides an opportunity to deal with the interruption in the first place. Emotion also affects sensemaking through its retrospective nature; past events are reconstructed as similar not because they appeared to be the same but because they felt the same: '[A] feeling-based memory to solve a current cognitive puzzle may make sensemaking more difficult because it tries to mate two very different forms of evidence' (1995:49). The fact that sensemaking is difficult and generally wants for an unambiguous solution (which cannot be found) implies that sensemaking is a never-ending effort that has neither fresh starts nor clean stops, it is always underway.

3.6.6. Focused on and by extracted cues

People can make sense of anything, and the possibilities are endless. But we do not in fact make sense of everything, so some filtering and classification work is going on. The process of noticing something around us involves extracting cues

for sensemaking. What we notice, which is the study object of the discipline of cognition, is contingent upon a wide array of features, including expectations, novelty, deviation, extremes and personally primed categories based on past experience, context and goals. Context clearly affects the extraction of cues, and the salience of cues is a consequence of context; small, subtle features (like a small cough in the tense silence of an opera scene) can have surprisingly large effects on sensemaking. The notion of cues has particular relevance for conducting in that the conductor is in fact a provider of cues, where he or she deliberately chooses what to signal when. In my own experience as a choral singer, I have noticed how the salience and value of a conducting cue can vary greatly, depending on my own state as well as the performing situation. Weick develops an interesting line of thought around variants of the self-fulfilling prophecy, observing that the starting point, the initial cue, may in fact have little to do with what sense is ultimately made. An extracted cue is used to prophesy, so that the character of the cue is then shaped in the direction of the prophecy, while the prophecy itself is also adjusted: 'Each element, the prophecy and the referent, is informed by and adjusted to the emerging picture of the other' (1995:54). Cues are crucial for their capacity to evoke action—they lead people to act with more intensity, and they animate and orient people. Weick tells a story about members of a military unit lost in the Alps, who, after having surrendered themselves to their fate, suddenly found a map in a soldier's pocket and then made their way out and were rescued. Afterwards, they were astonished to discover that it was not a map of the Alps but of the Pyrenees. As the men started moving again, they kept noticing cues and updating their sense of where they were. In this particular story, even the wrong map was sufficient to initiate that learning process. In other words, any cue was better than no cue. This last point leads to the seventh property of sensemaking.

3.6.7. Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

Weick sees the strength of the sensemaking concept as arising from the fact that it does not rely on accurate object perception. Instead, he says, 'Sensemaking is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention, and instrumentation' (1995:57). He lists a number of reasons for the relative unimportance of accuracy. One reason is that people

need to filter and separate signal from noise in order to cope with the abundance of cues. From a sensemaking point of view, according to Weick, it is more important to understand the filters that people use to make sense than to bemoan human error and irrationality. Another reason is that sensemaking is about elaborating and embellishing a single cue that is linked to other cues and past ideas, and accuracy is meaningless (impossible) when one is reconstructing a past that has been edited in hindsight. Several of Weick's reasons are related to the action property of sensemaking as well; a quick response tends to shape events before their meaning is entirely clear, and, he adds, 'Events are shaped towards those capabilities the bold actor already has' (1995:60). Furthermore, people headed for action tend to simplify to get moving rather than elaborate to get it right. Having dismissed accuracy, Weick looks at what *is* in fact necessary for sensemaking:

Something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story. (1995:64)

So what does this mean for musicking and this study? Several of the characteristics of sensemaking hold some relevance for conducting, thanks to their applicability to the musicking moment, not least the notion of conducting cues, whether it is words, breath, glance or hand gestures. I have already commented on musical meaning and identity. The fact that sensemaking is retrospective even when one is thinking ahead parallels the flow of music, in that sounding music is already a memory once the present now has passed. Musical meaning is enactive in the sense that it is the act of engaging with music that creates meaning. The social and interactive aspect of music is certainly obvious when musicking takes place in an ensemble. The notion of cues is a distinct and visible feature of conducting, and how singers make sense of conducting cues is at the heart of conducting's impact. The concept of sensemaking will not be used in the interpretation of the interviews in part III; however, sensemaking will be a cornerstone of the conceptual discussions in part IV.

3.7. Summary of main theoretical framework

3.7.1. Theory for what purpose

Given the range of leadership theories, each with its own origins, explanatory potentials and limitations, what is the most appropriate theoretical basis for researching musical leadership? Or, even more fundamentally, do we need a theoretical platform at all? If so, what for? A phenomenological inquiry into how singers understand conducting does not in and of itself require theory beyond the chosen philosophy of science, at least as long as we remain within the confines of phenomenological *description*. However, as soon as we start to interpret, reason and structure the project's interview material, we are utilising or constructing some kind of theory. Scientific observation can only capture a selected view of reality, and this selection will reflect a 'theory', even if it is invisible or unarticulated. Every science needs an abstract point of view of reality. In its most modest guise, theory need not supply more than a conceptual frame and a set of terms to allow a systematic approach to the phenomenon being researched (Collin and K ppe, 2007:32). Such a modest and restrained use of theory is exactly what is needed for this project's analysis of singers' phenomenologically captured descriptions of choral conducting. The prime purpose of theory here is to provide a frame for understanding the themes that might arise, for recognising those themes as they emerge, and for structuring a potentially wide array of experiences and perceptions.

Various theories answer different questions. Some theories focus on what leaders need to do, and in which situations they need to do it. Others deal with what leaders ought to know and what capabilities they must possess. Still others focus on being: what leaders are and how they enact this. Every specific question runs the risk of missing something. For example, Gill's five leadership functions seem comprehensive and balanced, particularly in relation to the four intelligences: cognitive, emotional, spiritual and behavioural. But are they necessarily *leadership* functions? Could they just as easily be seen as organisational functions that need to be accomplished either with or without the leader? Can there be great musical leadership if some of these functions are neglected? And even if all five functions are executed well, are we certain that the ensemble members would experience great conducting? These questions should remain open, I would argue, and a theory of musical leadership for the

purposes of this project should not a priori impose a certain structure upon the experience. Naturally, we would like to know the answers to all of the above questions, but they may not be equally relevant for understanding how we experience leadership. In fact, my research question does not privilege any single one of the knowing-doing-being questions.

3.7.2. Project requirements of theory

When singers talk about ‘what is going on when they perceive leadership to be working well’, they should be expected to touch upon a full range of themes, from what conductors know to what they do and how, what they are like, and how they are perceived. The first key requirement of a theoretical platform is therefore not to presuppose that some features take primacy over others—for example, knowledge before action, behaviour before skills, or achievements before way of being.

The other key requirement of a theoretical platform is that it is at home in the music domain. The starting point for this project was to explore a space that most researchers have neglected. The purpose of investigating musical leadership as lived experience arose from the assumption that singer experience might illuminate conducting and the conductor role in new ways and possibly allow us to rediscover aspects of the phenomenon. Consequently, the theory being applied must take music seriously on its own grounds and not force-fit concepts that are alien to it. A particular challenge is that musical leadership affects longterm ensemble development as well as the single present now. Over the long term, the parallels with any other leadership domain are quite intuitive, with similar items on the organisational calendar and the familiar trivia of organisational life—its power plays, hiring and firing, rewards and compensation schemes. From this perspective, musical leadership could potentially be treated like any other leadership domain. The musicking moment, on the other hand, though it has its non-music parallels, is a different sphere and involves unique features that have been explored by a number of philosophers throughout history, from Plato to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson, to mention only a few. It is not obvious that musical leadership remains a coherent term on a continuum from the musicking moment to the politics of the opera house. On the other hand, it is not obvious that it does not either.

A third point is that a theory of musical leadership should be able to accommodate openness with regard to the legitimacy of the leadership role. Some critics of leadership as a concept have questioned to what degree leadership is the determining factor of organisational outcomes. Along these lines, theorists have not been explicitly interested in what legitimises leadership or gives an individual the right to the role. The leadership role is either taken for granted (there 'needs' to be a chief executive of a business or a symphony conductor) or seen to be legitimate if it is being executed well (or even simply predictably). Most leadership theories, then, seem to focus on leaders who are doing everything right. More rarely addressed are the trade-offs that followers are willing to accept from their leaders in the interests of their organisation. The common theme here is how the various ingredients come together—how do the various knowledge nuggets, the activities and the ways of being constitute leadership? This is at the heart of my research question, and my theoretical platform must allow for all of the possibilities therein.

3.7.3. The basis for leading beautifully

Donna Ladkin's concept of leading beautifully offers a conceptual frame that springs out of a musicking situation. As mentioned, it moves beyond what leaders know and do to describe how leadership is enacted—what goes on, in short, when it is executed well. Her notions of *mastery*, *congruence* and *purposefulness* are at once broad and generous enough to encompass an open-ended series of themes and still account for the key features of musicking that are missing in the classical leadership-theory canon. Mastery, of the situation and the self, implies both the ability to live with ambiguity and contradiction and the ability to pay 'attention to the here-and-now possibilities inherent within any given moment' (Ladkin, 2008:33). Congruence is about holistic, embodied and authentic leader self-expression, where all of the messages and their various delivery modes are congruent. Ladkin's concept of purposefulness moves beyond classical goal orientation. It is about meaning, and specifically about how sensemaking is a cornerstone of leadership. Nor are purpose and meaning used as neutral terms; Ladkin acknowledges the ethical dimension of the leadership enterprise and takes into account the extent to which a given purpose serves the best interests of humanity.

There is a provocative parallel to Ladkin's model that she does not appear to recognise: the three elements of Aristotle's rhetoric, which address the requirements of convincing discourse (see, for example, Hastrup [1991]), also form a profile of beautiful leadership. I propose that Aristotle's notions of *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* underlie Ladkin's three elements, though not on a one-to-one basis. *Logos* is about mastery of the subject matter and its context. *Ethos* is about genuineness and sincerity, and it is about coherence—there must be no lies or manipulation in either the messages or how they are conveyed. *Pathos* is about commitment—that it is important, that it has meaning. *Pathos* therefore evokes purpose and sensemaking. Whereas *ethos* is a distinct category in Aristotle's model, Ladkin frames it as an element of purposefulness. The connection is that, for purpose to be meaningful, it must satisfy some deeper human interest. Of course, Ladkin could have framed ethics within her notion of coherence, thus overlapping even more with Aristotle.

I will use Ladkin's three-element model as a broad guide to understanding the themes that emerge from the singer interviews. A prominent element there is the ability to cope with ambiguity and contradiction, a hallmark of the arts that is also applauded by leadership scholars. I will therefore use Nohria and Khurana's five axes of tensions to remind me about the types of tensions that singers find relevant and the guises that leadership contradictions might take. Because the five tensions transcend specific schools of thought but still build upon them, they remain linked to the canon of leadership theory. Once we accept the possibilities of tension, ambiguity and contradiction, we must also remain open to alternatives other than these five as well. Lastly, I will make use of Gill's five leadership functions as 'points of recognition', as with Durrant's conducting model. None of these are used as categories to structure the analysis, however.

3.7.4. Theory levels

Despite the preceding clarifications, the application of theory to the project remains somewhat problematic, at least if we see continue to see theory as subject matter centred. For theory to apply, we must work out a certain degree of delineation or definition of the subject matter. But what if it is the nature and scope of the subject matter itself that is being researched? Musical leadership as lived experience, like every real-life experience, transcends categorisation.

Furthermore, every verbalisation of such experience makes use of concepts and categories that are not amenable to concrete definition. Lakoff and Johnson note that the use of metaphors permeates language and philosophical concepts; far beyond linguistic beautification, they are the very building blocks for how our conceptual system is constructed.

How people understand their experiences requires a view of definition very different from the standard account. An experiential theory of definition has a different notion of what needs to be defined and what does the defining. On our account, individual concepts are not defined in an isolated fashion, but rather in terms of their roles in natural kinds of experiences. Concepts are not solely defined in terms of inherent properties; instead they are defined primarily in terms of interactional properties. [. . .] Rather than being rigidly defined, concepts arising from our experience are open ended. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:125)

These scholars see concepts as multidimensional gestalts whose qualities arise naturally from our experience of the world. For human beings, categorisation is a means of making sense of this experience, and it is open ended and flexible, giving the whole notion of 'definition' a very different role in the humanities than in the natural and social sciences. It may be useful, then, to consider theories of musical leadership on three levels:

- **Meta-theory:** broad categories and rich concepts aimed at understanding the holistic picture of conducting. This corresponds to what Liz Garnett (2009) calls meta-language.
- **Subject-matter theory:** specific categories for clearly defined angles and topics. Most research traditions are within certain subject-matter boundaries, like music pedagogy, semiotics, and neuro-acoustics.
- **Theory (philosophy) of science:** the ontological and epistemological basis for researching musical leadership.

There may not be a clear division between subject-matter theory and meta-theory, and several leadership theories probably apply to multiple categories. The danger with subject-matter theory, of course, is its combination of implied assumptions with precise definitions of rich and fuzzy concepts. A given concept or term may therefore appear more precise than can be justified, disregarding Lakoff and Johnson's notion of interactional properties; that concepts acquire their definition by how they are talked about. Instead, it may be

more useful to give fuzzy concepts definitional powers through dialogue, although we are then forced to leave the realm of subject-matter theory and enter meta-theory. Van Manen even suggests that the scientific-philosophical basis of phenomenology tends to evade subject-matter theory:

[Phenomenology] differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it. So phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us into more direct contact with the world. (van Manen, 1990:9)

With a hermeneutic phenomenological foundation, subject-matter theory is somehow short circuited, providing an opening in turn for meta-language. Ladkin's three-element model of leading beautifully is, to me, a meta-theory. Of course, the notion of meta-theory does not rule out the relevance or usefulness of subject-matter theory. Each element in Ladkin's model encompasses a host of more specific concepts (subject matters). If the aim of this project is to discover a broad concept of conducting, it would appear to require a combination of solid scientific-philosophical platform and meta-theoretical development. The choice of hermeneutic phenomenology was made based on its fit with the research question. The methodological implications of this choice will be elaborated in part II.

PART II – How to explore choral leadership as lived experience

Part II deals with *how to do a phenomenological inquiry*. In short, chapters 4-8 represent 'the method discussion' of the dissertation. A review of a range of methodological issues will begin with an in-depth look at some of the fundamentals of hermeneutic phenomenology. Part II also describes the sampling approach and the execution of interviews, and presents key points about the acquired material, including sample profiles of the interviewed singers.

4. Operationalising phenomenology

The six stages of phenomenological inquiry are presented. Some of the unique features of researching musical experience are highlighted using selected texts by Gadamer and Bergson. Some reflections are presented on what it means to do research based on conversations as opposed to literary text, drawing upon Gadamer and Ricœur. A philosophical basis for the notion of themes in the interpretive process is presented via Ricœur's bridging of structure and meaning. How themes are used to create meaning from the interviews is described, including how these themes are encountered, uncovered and explored. The four fundamental types of themes, called existentials by van Manen, are temporality, spatiality, corporeality and relationships.

As discussed elsewhere, musical leadership as lived experience lends itself naturally to a phenomenological inquiry, but this alignment is more philosophical than methodological. It is easy to associate the ontology of conducting with its impact via singer perception, and the epistemology of conducting's impact with singer experience. But it is much harder to conduct a phenomenological inquiry in practice, sorting out the various details of method while always adhering to its basic principles. Several points of dispute along the evolving tradition of phenomenology deal with the platform's feasibility in one way or another. An individual's life world is really only accessible to others through some sort of exchange, involving language, speech or text, and understanding. Research can even involve 'alienating' interactions, such as

staged conversation or rewriting. All of these exchanges present both opportunities and dilemmas in relation to the fundamentals and origins of phenomenology. Van Manen's hermeneutic-phenomenological approach resolves many of these issues, but certain challenges merit further discussion because they directly affect the project's approach. By contrasting and combining texts by Paul Ricœur, Hans Gadamer and Henri Bergson, I will present these challenges and perhaps also clarify my application of van Manen's approach.

Ideally, phenomenology attempts to capture pure descriptions of an individual's life world that are void of preconceptions and interpretation. Hermeneutic phenomenology, on the other hand, recognises that interpretation must come into play in some way. I will discuss the relationship between description and interpretation in section 4.1, when I outline van Manen's stepwise process of hermeneutic phenomenology and look at the significance of being in the musical life world.

In an interview-based research approach, conversations constitute the raw material. However, in order to work scientifically with such data, we must rely on some proxy for the actual conversation, such as recorded sound or video or transcribed text. What this means for the research process and for unfettered access to the life world we seek is discussed in section 4.2.

As the aim of this project is to explore the conducting phenomenon via experience that is shared, at least to some degree, among several individuals, we must understand the phenomenon across multiple texts. This presents the need for categories, or common themes, but even the very notion of a theme puts us in the middle of the long-standing conflict between structure and meaning in the text. I will discuss Paul Ricœur's resolution of this conflict in section 4.3 and describe van Manen's practical steps for dealing with themes in section 4.4. The remaining sections of part II deal with the project's specific method and actual acquired material, including the precautions taken to ensure quality throughout the research process.

4.1. Description and interpretation

4.1.1. The role of reflection

The object of phenomenology is the unattended familiarity and self-evident relationship we have with the world, according to Dan Zahavi (2003:37). Its task is to challenge this 'self-evidentness'—to find what is not obvious in otherwise apparently trivial phenomena. Phenomenological inquiry entails the creation and re-creation of text that is reflected upon in a process during which we partly suspend established assumptions and preconceptions and partly utilise them. Van Manen proposes six steps to the phenomenological inquiry, the first of which is to attend to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and compels our personal commitment. He sees such commitment as an asset, not a problem, thereby explicitly rejecting the myth of the independent, distant researcher. At times, I have wondered about my own involvement in my research topic, as I am both a singer and conductor, but from van Manen's perspective, this involvement is in fact a virtual prerequisite. Van Manen's second step is to investigate how we *live* the chosen phenomenon rather than to explain or conceptualise it. If interviewing singers is my data-gathering method, then, I must make sure that the interviews are flexible in format, with open-ended questions and no a priori categorisations.

His third step is to reflect on 'essential' themes. The whole notion of essence, of course, tends to create philosophical dispute. Constructionist thinking rejects the idea that the truth lies somewhere behind the object in question; in fact, it does not accommodate any difference between surface and core/essence. Instead, ontological meaning resides solely in the communicating and interacting situation—the place where we construct our perception of the world. Essence in phenomenology, however, is not what lies *behind* the phenomenon; it is in the invariant aspects of the phenomenon, in what appears with some regularity when we expose the phenomenon to creative variation. In van Manen's words, the quest for essence is about 'bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life' (van Manen, 1990:32). Think of the orchestral conductor's use of the baton: removing that baton would not make the conductor a non-conductor, but a conductor who made no hand movements at all might indeed become a non-conductor (that is, he would disrupt our

immediate perception of a conductor). Hence, gestures could probably be said to be more essential to musical leadership than the use of baton. We might also think of the importance of the physical presence of the conductor. Can musical leadership be exercised without the conductor being with the singers while they perform? The answer is probably yes: singers would be able to remain mindful of the conductor's musical ideas, either explicitly communicated during rehearsals or absorbed as performative ideals over a longer period of time. Hence, the conveyance of musical ideas and ideals overrides the actual presence of the conductor in the arena of musical leadership—it is, in effect, more essential. The need to distinguish between essential and non-essential themes in phenomenology arises from the aforementioned hope of penetrating the veil of unattended familiarity that shrouds our everyday relationship with the world. Only by creatively varying a phenomenon's appearances may we reduce (in the original sense of *lead back*) the appearances to the phenomenon itself. To me, then, constructionism's rejection of essence is a consequence of its ontology, whereas phenomenology's dependence on essence is based upon epistemological necessity.

For his fourth step, van Manen positions phenomenological investigation as a writing process, but a creative one that involves iteration and rewriting as well. He aligns it to writing poetry, recognising the truth experience made possible by the artful use of language. Phenomenological research and poetry share a desire to grasp the essence of some experience in literary form, and both endeavours recall experience by transcending it. However, they part ways concerning the theme: the poet leaves it implicit, whereas the researcher makes it explicit.

Van Manen has pedagogy in mind in this model, and his fifth step asks the researcher to keep the pedagogical perspective in focus by constantly relating description to practice. Outside the domain of pedagogy, this step advocates for a renewed devotion to whatever the nature of the research topic is (in this case, musical leadership). The sixth and last step is to balance the parts and the whole. This is probably where hermeneutic thinking comes most into play, with variants of hermeneutic circles.

Although van Manen's model proposes discrete steps in the phenomenological research process, it is not so much a procedure as a mindset allowing for and guiding systematic reflection.²⁴ Creative variation and reflection upon essential themes constitute the cornerstone of phenomenological inquiry. Both actions take place at every stage of the investigative process—in the course of interviews, in the analysis of interviews, and in the writing and rewriting of interpretations. The third step in the model, reflecting on essential themes, will be explored further in section 4.4. It is particularly important for two reasons: it is where much of the research work lies, and it connects the interview material by viewing one experience in light of another.

4.1.2. Being taken for a ride by the music

The hermeneutic-phenomenological method is not developed specifically with music in mind. In this project, conversations about musical experience will represent the 'text', whether they derive from a live conversation, a remembered conversation, a recorded conversation, or a transcribed conversation. Regardless of the format, are there any special considerations because the topic of the text is music? Are there features of music, in other words, that provide particular interpretive challenges or opportunities? To approach these questions, I will start with Gadamer's view on the notion of play, which he sees as an aspect of nature:

The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played—it is

²⁴ Amedeo Giorgi proposes a four-step structured approach to phenomenological inquiry (see, for example, Giorgi [2009] and Giorgi & Giorgi [2003]). The main difference between the scholars is that van Manen explicitly deals with the interpretive aspect of understanding descriptions of lived experience, while Giorgi stays within the confines of description, using the notion of *meaning units* to structure the analysis.

irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. Thus we speak of the play of colours and do not mean only that one colour plays against another, but that there is one process or sight displaying a changing variety of colours. (Gadamer, 1989:104)

Gadamer sees play as closely related to the mobile forms of nature, from waves hitting the shore to the games and drama of human life. Play depends upon movement, not upon who or what the players are, so Gadamer sees no need to distinguish between literal and metaphorical usage of play. He makes two further statements that are particularly relevant to the present project. First, he says that 'play takes primacy over the consciousness of the player' (1989:105). Second, he says that '[the] players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation (*Darstellung*) through the players' (1989:103). Play therefore has the ability to make us players—to involve us or to move us. Many years before Gadamer, Henri Bergson also wrote about movement and aesthetic feeling, attributing a certain value to movement and describing how we perceive it, why it is attractive, and what it does to us:

Let us consider the simplest of them, the feeling of grace. At first it is only the perception of a certain ease, a certain facility in the outward movements. And as those movements are easy which prepare the way for others, we are led to find a superior ease in the movements which can be foreseen, in the present attitudes in which future attitudes are pointed out and, as it were, prefigured. If jerky movements are wanting in grace, the reason is that each of them is self-sufficient and does not announce those which are to follow. (Bergson, 1910:6)

While Gadamer observes the omnipresence of play as movement in nature, in which humans take part, Bergson articulates *how* we perceive it. We perceive movement in a way that is aesthetically attractive to us, because it creates meaning and even enables us to understand the flow of time. When Bergson articulates the grace and attractiveness of continuous movement in this way, he provides a mechanism for play's ability to grab us: we want to be apprehended by it because it gives meaning to the flow of time. Embedded in this desire is the duality of free will versus surrendering control and becoming objects of play.

Having recognized the significance of play, as the continuous movements of nature and ever-recurring training-for-life-plays (in my words) amongst living creatures, Gadamer then applies the concept of play to the being of art:

The being of art cannot be denned as an object of an aesthetic consciousness, because, on the contrary, the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is a part of the event of being that occurs in presentation, and belongs essentially to play as play. (Gadamer, 1989:115)

When he says that the work of art is not an object of aesthetic consciousness, he attributes a transcending ability to art. He views the being of art as first and foremost belonging to performance, and views performativity as at the heart of art, even more so than its conception. At first sight, this may appear to represent a break with the Romantic view of *the work* and the genius composer or poet. Gadamer's emphasis on the presentation event could even be argued to favour spontaneous expression and free improvisation. However, he does retain a large space for the Romantic artist (as exemplified by the poet who is overjoyed and surprised by his own writing; see section 4.2.1). Gadamer's thinking may supply a model for the interdependency between art as conceptualisation and art as performativity. He uses the Greek tragedy to show why and how it is possible for the work of art to 'play' us:

What is experienced in such an excess of tragic suffering is something truly common. The spectator recognizes himself and his own finiteness in the face of the power of fate. What happens to the great ones of the earth has an exemplary significance. Tragic pensiveness does not affirm the tragic course of events as such, or the justice of the fate that overtakes the hero, but rather a metaphysical order of being that is true for all. To see that 'this is how it is' is a kind of self-knowledge for the spectator, who emerges with new insight from the illusions in which he, like everyone else, lives. (Gadamer, 1989:128)

It is interesting to note the parallel between Gadamer's view on the classical tragedy and myths as used by Ricœur (see section 4.3). The Greek tragedy²⁵

²⁵ Merriam-Webster: A serious drama typically describing a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (such as destiny) and having a sorrowful or disastrous

and the myth²⁶ are each a type of narrative that represents an *étude* of similar extremes, existential situations related to birth, sexuality, suffering and death. Gadamer seems to be saying that play is a fundamental and omnipresent feature of how we perceive and experience the world. The fact that we are being played does not exclude our agency but reminds us that we as agents are always subject to rules of play. When Gadamer says that play plays us, why are we affected, why are we moved? As noted, Bergson celebrates continuous movement as an attractive feature of life. He then continues:

If curves are more graceful than broken lines, the reason is that, while a curved line changes its direction at every moment, every new direction is indicated in the preceding one. Thus the perception of ease in motion passes over into the pleasure of mastering the flow of time and of holding the future in the present. (Bergson, 1910:6)

If Gadamer's notion of play as movement implies a certain futility—play takes us for a ride outside our own consciousness, but it is a ride that goes nowhere—Bergson opens up the possibility that we are not completely victimised by movement/play. We may not be able to control the flow, but we can act to understand it, anticipate it and prepare our response.

Music has been noted for its special ability to take hold of us, expressed by a number of thinkers throughout the history of philosophy.²⁷ What changes in this discussion above if the movement we refer to is music? In his book on music cognition (2008), Marc Leman reflects on music as moving sonic forms, its impact on our bodies, and what it means:

Moving sonic forms do something with our bodies, and therefore have a signification through body action rather than through thinking. Therefore, this type of signification could be called corporeal signification, in contrast with cerebral signification. (Leman, 2008:17)

conclusion that elicits pity or terror. See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tragedy.

²⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica: Myths relate the events, conditions and deeds of gods or superhuman beings that are outside ordinary human life and yet basic to it. See www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400920/myth.

²⁷ See, for example, Sundberg (2000) and Sundberg (2002).

It seems reasonable to view Gadamer's notion of play—at least, play in relation to Greek tragedy and text in general—as biased towards cerebral signification. Leman suggests that music as play is meaningful primarily through our body. Building on Gadamer's notion of 'being-played' and Leman's notion of corporeal signification, I propose to frame signification in music as less about us *comprehending* music than about music *apprehending* us. Bergson articulates this beautifully:

In music, the rhythm and measure suspend the normal flow of our sensations and ideas by causing our attention to swing to and fro between fixed points, and they take hold of us with such force that even the faintest imitation of a groan will suffice to fill us with the utmost sadness. If musical sounds affect us more powerfully than the sounds of nature, the reason is that nature confines itself to expressing feelings, whereas music suggests them to us. (Bergson, 1910:7)

Bergson observes that music is able to disrupt the flow of sensation within which we exist, supplanting it with its own flow, which derives from the composed work itself and, crucially, from the performance of it. Bergson's key point is that through musicking, we commit ourselves to a flow other than our 'normal' flow. I find, however, that Bergson underestimates the resiliency of our own flow, which does not stop but rather merges with the musical flow though admittedly surrendering its timing. Letting go of (or, in Bergson's formulation, 'suspending') our emotional control—giving it to a flow outside ourselves—is a 'hazardous' prospect. Gadamer, of course, says the play plays us, and Bergson adds that music is a particularly ravishing play in this regard. When Bergson draws attention to music's suggestive ability, it is interesting to note that the French word *suggestif* has the dual meaning of both providing choice and of being so compelling that all choice is removed. Perhaps this is an overreach, but it appears that Bergson is toying with two sides of a coin here: music's gentle invitation and its seductive command.

If music plays us, what does this imply about how we tend to describe the lived experience of a music event, and, more specifically, how we might interpret such descriptions? My interview data are choral singers discussing various facets of musical leadership, describing conductors and conducting, and reflecting upon how musical leadership enabled or disabled great musical moments. My impression from Gadamer and Bergson's texts, first of all, is that the interpretive focus must remain close to the interviewed subjects. When a

singer describes lived experience, the description must be understood as effect (how the play plays the individual), even when the singer's wording does not appear to suggest it. Also when a singer describes aspects of the music event outside his or her immediate personal realm, there was in fact a play playing the singer. Whether the singer is consciously aware of how the play plays him/her or not, any personal account will always also be a narrative of *what it did to him/her*. Even the most neutral account of the observed situation should be understood in light of very biased needs and expectations, and how they were met or unmet. Put another way, singers' various stories not only reflect the actual situations they are describing but also the lived lives with which they faced those situations. Each individual narrative reflects a horizon of understanding that the researcher must seek to find in order to understand. Some samples from my interview data include the following:

- A description of a conductor 'giving me a sense of security to sing freely' may point to the kinds of relationships this singer needs as well as to the particular conducting situation.
- A description of a conductor as being 'authoritarian' may suggest something about the singer's behavioural history and practice fields (in the sense of Bourdieu) as well as the conductor's leadership style.
- A singer's irritation about being excessively instructed on vocal technique might simply reflect the singer's self-perception as a professional rather than an obsessiveness in the conductor.

Here we realise something important about pure phenomenology: the implication of the play that plays the player is that the player's description of the play can never be taken as pure description. Put differently, the phenomenon (conducting) that we are seeking to understand in this particular way is only ever going to be accessible via the singer's horizon of understanding. In this sense, Gadamer's notion of being played may therefore constitute one of the strongest arguments against the pure phenomenological description and for a phenomenological-hermeneutic blend.

Evolving conversations with singers about musical leadership reflect individual horizons and contain different perceptions and preferences as well as shared themes. Gadamer's emphasis on play, and Bergson's recognition of music as a particularly ravishing play, opens a hermeneutic path towards

understanding musicking and conducting. The role of play elucidates how our descriptions of music as play are intertwined with what the music as play does to us. Description becomes indistinguishable from how we understand the experience (as with Sartre's blushing example; see section 1.4.2). The role of play helps to connect the descriptive and interpretive aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology and reinforce the blended nature of hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry. Van Manen's perspective, then, offers a practical approach to uncovering themes from descriptions of lived experience. The subsequent sections will explore how meaning might emerge from conversation, as speech and as text.

4.2. Conversation as data

4.2.1. Speech and text

Paul Ricœur (1986) defines text as any discourse that is fixed in writing, then wonders whether text must always be preceded, either physically or mentally, by an actual discourse. At first, he is tempted to consider speech (*parole*) to be language's realisation in a discursive event and that text relates to language in the same way that speech does, the only difference being the permanency of text, thanks to the lasting nature of its graphics. The text would simply take the place of speech, manifesting the discourse as graphics rather than sound. But Ricœur ultimately decides otherwise: 'In fact, the relationship write-read is not a special case of the relationship speak-respond. It is not a relationship of conversation; it is not a case of dialogue' (Ricœur, 1986:155).²⁸ Instead, he decides, the text separates the author and the reader. The references to the world available in a dialogue that are outside of the dialogue itself are *not* embedded in the text. The text (at least temporarily) loses its reference to

²⁸ My translation. Original text: En effet, le rapport entre écrire-lire n'est pas un cas particulier du rapport parler-répondre. Ce n'est pas un rapport d'interlocution; ce n'est pas un cas de dialogue.

reality: 'The text, as we will see, is not without reference, it is precisely the task of reading, as interpretation, to fulfil the reference' (1986:157)²⁹. In his choice of words, Ricœur emphasises the text's sense of suspense or pending resolution; absent a reader, the text finds itself in some sort of limbo, with its references to the world suspended. In fact, Ricœur defines literature according to this temporary freedom from the real references of the text. He also calls literature a 'quasi-world', though one so comprehensive and complete that literary works may play out in a world that is a literary construction itself, like *The Greek world*, *The Byzantine era*, and so on. Such literary constructions, I might add, seem to be far more prevalent than is generally acknowledged. For example, we tend to forget that such notions (like *Romanticism*) are literary constructions of a certain era. Ricœur's notion of a free text that is always in contact with other texts seems to make intertextuality not only possible, but ubiquitous, not least because of our unawareness of it. If I were a writer of literature and made use of references outside my immediate world of experience, how could I possibly distinguish real-world references from literary constructions? And there is a further complication: when we speak about something that involves a literary construction (for example, *Romanticism*), we are constructing a discourse that then in itself becomes a real reference for those taking part in the discursive practice. This is, in effect, a bridge to the role and power of discourse proposed by Michel Foucault. The fact that we take part in discourses reaching beyond our immediate experience could even be seen to support a constructionist point of view, because so much of our perception of the world is based on multiple layers of text (in dialogue with other texts), and therefore by definition is constructed. I make this remark without further elaboration, since I find it an interesting concession, after having chosen a phenomenological platform, an approach with some distance to social constructionism, including discourse theory.

Gadamer's view of the literary text is similar to Ricœur's regarding its break with preceding speech:

²⁹ My translation. Original text. Le texte, nous le verrons, n'est pas sans référence; ce sera précisément la tâche de la lecture, en tant qu'interprétation, d'effectuer la référence.

The literary text is in a particular way text in that it does not refer to an original speech act, but on its part prescribes all repetitions and speech acts. No speech can ever completely fulfil the prescription that an authored text presents. It exercises a normative function, which neither refers to an original speech nor to the speaker's intent but leaps out of itself, for example in joy over having succeeded with a poem that even surprises and surpasses the poet. (Gadamer, 1986:352)³⁰

For Gadamer and Ricœur, the text is independent and free, and its reference to reality and its author has been intercepted (by the fact that the author is no longer present with the text). Gadamer does stress the text's normative, even commanding function, in that it prescribes future discursive acts. And he seems to put more weight on the text's transcendental power than Ricœur does, to the extent that the artist might be surprised by his own genius.

In terms of living speech as it unfolds in a conversation, real references are simultaneously present for and available to all of the speakers. The fact that real references are shared, be it the situation or its environment, will affect what is talked about and how, in accordance with what is self-evident, allowed and required. Furthermore, the speakers have a full repertoire of expressivity available to them, one not limited to speech:

In the exchange of words, the speakers are present with each other, but also the situation, the ambiance, and the circumstantial environment of the speech. It is in relation to this circumstantial environment that the speech is fully meaningful. (Ricœur, 1986:157)³¹

³⁰ My translation. Original text: Der Literarische Text ist gerade dadurch in einem besonderen Grade Text, daß er nicht auf eine ursprüngliche Sprachhandlung zurückweist, sondern seinerseits alle Wiederholungen und Sprachhandlungen vorschreibt; kein Sprechen kann je die Vorschrift ganz erfüllen, die ein dichterischer Text darstellt. Derselbe übt eine normtive Funktion aus, die weder auf eine ursprüngliche Rede noch auf die Intention des Redenden zurückweist, sondern die in ihm selbst entspringt, etwa in Glück des Gelingens eines Gedichthes selbst noch den Dichter überraschend und übertreffend.

³¹ My translation. Original text: Dans l'échange de parole, les locuteurs sont présents l'un à l'autre, mais aussi la situation, l'ambiance, le milieu corconstanciel du discours. C'est par rapport á ce milieu circonstanciel que le discours est pleinement signifiant.

For example, a singer talks to me about perfect timing and describes how the shared experience of a musical phrase enables coordinated deviations, as an example of great musicianship. The singer *acts* the feeling with me, involving me gesturally, since I am also a singer. The meaning of this singer's speech at this moment, then, is conveyed as much by the intersubjectivity established through and by the conversation as it is by the actual words that are spoken. The speech loses its full meaning when removed from the moment of conversation. However, while still in the conversation, the full meaning is retained, according to Ricœur:

Thus, in living speech, the ideal meaning of what is said is bent towards the real reference, that is, what is being talked about; eventually this real reference is liable to be confused with an ostensible description where the speech rejoins the showing gesture, to make see. The meaning dies in the reference, which dies in the showing. (Ricœur, 1986:157)³²

What he means by *bent towards the real reference* is not immediately clear, but my reading is that the living speech attempts to move the listener to share the perception of the real reference. In relation to my music example above, as the perception of perfect timing becomes increasingly mutual, the distinction between the shared perception and the combined speech/gesture is blurred. The way the singer mimics the musical phrase and breathing exemplifies the *showing gesture* in the quotation. The meaning of the speech *dies in the reference* because it is no longer needed when the intersubjective sensation is fulfilled. To Ricœur, the meaning of speech is fragile and ephemeral—its importance dissolves in the process of conversation. Furthermore, once the conversation has concluded, and it (possibly) only exists as transcribed text, its full meaning is inaccessible. Thus there is a huge difference between living speech and written text. Foucault echoes Ricœur's phrasing about speech's meaning dying in the showing, using *annuler* instead of *mourir*:

³² My translation. Original text: Ainsi, dans la parole vivante, le sens idéal de ce qu'on dit se recourbe vers la référence réelle, à savoir ce sur quoi on parle; à la limite, cette référence réelle tend à se confondre avec une désignation ostensive où la parole rejoint le geste de montrer, de faire voir. Le sens meurt dans la référence et celle-ci dans la monstration.

Discourse is nothing more than a play, firstly one of writing, secondly one of reading, and thirdly one of exchange. This reading, this writing only stages a play of signs. The speech is thus nilled in its reality, as it is put at the command of the signifier. (Foucault, 1971:51)³³

My understanding is that the real reference dominates the text, taking primacy over every attempt to interpret it. Text, interpretation and meaning are only relevant while we are in the suspended mode, attempting to reconnect to the real reference. Even more confusing, the speech become void once understanding is established. Still, discourse is power; in Foucault's view, it is the prime regulatory mechanism of human interaction. How can this be? For me, it is resolved by the simple observation that understanding between people transcends the discourse. This would apply to discursive as well as non-discursive practices³⁴ and especially to non-discursive practices such as musicking.

Ricœur pinpoints another major difference between speech and text. In speech, the discursive subject is the one who speaks—that is, who refers to him/herself when saying 'I'. When text takes the place of speech, the discursive subject is no longer visible. There is also the following intermediary situation: what if (1) the text is a transcription of speech, and (2) the reader was present when the speech took place, taking part in the conversation? While the interpretation of this text still appears to be about reconnecting it to reality, we now must account for the fact that the reader of the text was part of the reality that interpretation seeks to reconnect to, although this reality may be a fading and imprecise memory. In a research situation based on qualitative interviews, then, the distinction between speech and text may not be as clearcut as it is depicted in Ricœur's essay. I will elaborate upon this middle ground in the following section.

³³ My translation. Original text: Le discours n'est rien de plus qu'un jeu, d'écriture dans le premier cas, de lecture dans le second, d'échange dans la troisième, cette lecture, cette écriture ne mettent jamais en jeu que les signes. Le discours s'annule ainsi, dans sa réalité, en se mettant à l'ordre du signifiant.

³⁴ For a discussion of discursive and non-discursive practices, see, for example, Jørgensen & Philips (2006:79).

4.2.2. Understanding conversation

Understanding a conversation as it unfolds is different from understanding a text where connection to the author is intercepted. How to approach intermediate situations, where I interpret a transcribed text from a conversation in which I took part? Gadamer provides a case in-between live conversation and disconnected text: the personal letter. He views the letter as a written conversation and attributes the same basic conditions to it:

In the written conversation, the same basic foundation is thus assumed, as also applies to the oral exchange. Both have the good will to understand each other. Hence, good will prevails wherever understanding is sought.

[. . .]

As it is in living speech, where mutual understanding is sought through speech and response, which however means that words are sought and accompanied by intonation and gesture, expected to reach the other, one who cannot convey how the words are sought and found must open a horizon for interpretation and understanding in the text itself, which the reader has to fill out. 'Writing' is more than mere fixation of the spoken. (Gadamer, 1986:344)³⁵

Gadamer and Ricœur seem to have similar views about the characteristics of conversation: basically, some premises are shared between participants, and

³⁵ My translation. Original text: Im schriftlichen Gespräch wird also im Grunde die gleiche Grundbedingung in Anspruch genommen, die auch für den mündlichen Austausch gilt. Beide haben den guten Willen, einander zu verstehen. So liegt überall, wo Verständigung gesucht wird, guter Wille vor.

[. . .]

Wie es im lebendigen Gespräch ist, wo man durch Rede und Gegenrede zur Verständigung zu gelangen sucht, das heißt aber, die Worte sucht und mit Betonung und Gestik begleitet, von denen man erwartet, daß sie den anderen erreichen, so muß beim Schreiben, das kein Suchen und Finden der Worte mit-teilen kann, gleichsam ein Auslegungs- und Verständnishorizont im Text selbst geöffnet werden, den der Leser auszufüllen hat. 'Schreiben' ist mehr als bloße Fixierung von Gesagtem.

each expects to be understood by the other, to some extent. Both participants drive towards mutual understanding through statements and responses, complemented by clarifications and replies to objections. While a personal letter is not a conversation, the difference appears to be one of degree rather than kind, or approach rather than purpose—the letter writer attempts to guarantee a reading which is as close as possible to listening. The possibility of a fusion of the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader (as formulated by Gadamer) is more likely when one reads a personal letter rather than a free text, though both are less likely than when one is in a conversation.

The letter, in fact, resembles a self-transcribed conversation. It retains some properties of text as discourse fixed in writing, and its reference to reality may have a similar status—it is neither fully present nor fully disconnected. A reading opens up for multiple interpretations—for understanding differently, as Gadamer puts it. However, the text is not entirely free. Any reading of a personal letter is a blend of interpretation and reliving conversation that has never completely lost reference to reality. The interviewer-transcribed interview text claims a similar in-between position, in that there is partial access to the actual conversation, either as memory or as recorded sound. Do we give the transcribed text primacy over memory, though, or do we simply see the text as a supporting cue to an understanding that already resides in the reader? The answer has methodological implications. If verifiability (for example, by reproducibility) is important, text would have primacy; in fact, the presence of the reader in the conversation would contaminate the data. If, on the other hand, the presence of the researcher is seen as a vehicle for generating insight otherwise foregone, any combination of memory, sound, and text is probably worthy. Different perspectives upon this intermediate speech-text situation derive from the status of the transcribed text: is it the data or merely a proxy for the data? If we acknowledge the shortcomings of the standalone text and the impossibility of fully reconnecting it to its real references, we should seek data that are closer to the conversation, its participants and its subject matter. This in turn supports one of the ideals of hermeneutic phenomenology, in that if the researcher is close to the research topic, even committed to it, the work will benefit rather than suffer.

Another question is whether it makes any difference who transcribes the speech. I see two implications of the interviewer as transcriber in addition to conversation partner and reader. First, the process of transcription is in itself a

process of interpretation, directly via choices about punctuation and error correction and whether or not to capture audible signs of hesitation, bewilderment or humour, and indirectly via the reading that is implied by the transcription. In this process, my horizon probably overlaps more with the conversation's horizon than a third person's would. Second, transcription anticipates the 'actual' interpretation, so that I have made presuppositions while transcribing that will inform a more systematic interpretation process.

In my project, I can analyse the conversations either as recorded sound or as transcribed text. This may seem to be a methodological question at first sight, but it has profound epistemological ramifications. What knowledge is it possible to acquire in each case? If we assume that sound play-replay and text read-reread are equally feasible, the main difference is speed and rhythm. Sound replay is subject to the original sound flow, if we eliminate fast-forwarding and pitch-adjusted tempo changes (which would remove much of the attractiveness and uniqueness of sound as data, because we no longer hear the original sound). Text reading, on the other hand, allows for 'diagonal reading', skipping, superficial scanning, repeating a single sentence, and pausing and reflecting on a single word. Sound compels attention on its terms; text transfers flow control to the reader. These differences in analytical process appear to favour the transcribed text. Are there also differences as to what can be extracted, in terms of the result of the interpretation? Replaying sound implies returning to the lived experience, whereas reading text leads directly into an interpretive process that involves, for example, the search for themes and structure. However, reading text may also tempt us to explain or conceptualise, which are warning flags in a phenomenological inquiry. It appears, then, that some sort of iteration between replaying sound and reading text will be more viable than either option on its own.

4.3. Bridging structure and meaning

4.3.1. Embarking on the hermeneutic arc

One of the challenges with interpreting multiple interviews, or multiple texts in general, in the interests of overarching meanings is that it requires a structure

for those meanings. Van Manen offers the concept of *theme* to capture such structure, although he does not elaborate upon the philosophical basis for how themes can be seen as a bridge between meaning and structure. Because the notion of theme plays such a prominent role in the present methodology, I have chosen to discuss this bridge in more detail using the *hermeneutic arc* proposed by Ricœur (1986). His point of departure is the antagonism between explication and interpretation that arose in philosophy towards the end of the nineteenth century. The divide owes its roots to the origins and traditions of each concept. The explanatory powers of the natural sciences tempted some scholars to transfer positivism to the historic sciences and other disciplines. However, interpretation became the domain of the human sciences, and Ricœur pinpoints that the divide to a large extent was an agreed divide, each discipline leaving the other alone. Ricœur attempts to reevaluate and reconnect the poles of structural explication and interpretation. First, he recognises the dialectic involved with reading a text. On one hand, we may attempt to recreate the text as living communication—that is, to interpret it. Ricœur acknowledges that written text, as opposed to speech, has an autonomous status, at least potentially and temporarily, while awaiting interpretation. While the text is waiting to be recreated as living communication, that is, being interpreted, it has no world and no author. We may therefore also explain the text using its own internal connections and signs. In this reading, the reader stays in the 'location of the text' (*lieu du texte*) and within this location's 'enclosure' (*clôture*). Here, the text has no surface, only an inside, and the reading prolongs the tension between its referential connection to the world and the speaking subject (Ricœur, 1986:163). Ricœur notes that such explication of the text is not borrowed from another epistemological model, such as the natural sciences, but from the knowledge field of language itself. I referred previously to his statement that text is on the same side of language as speech (*parole*). The pivotal point in his argument to reconnect structure and meaning is the following:

The working hypothesis of every structural analysis is this: despite the fact that writing is on the same side as speech in relation to language, that is, on the side of the discourse, the specificity of writing in relation to

actual speech rests on structural traits which are possible to treat as analogous to language in the discourse. (Ricœur, 1986:165)³⁶

Here he suggests that there are discursive aspects of a text that may be analysed in a similar fashion to language as a system—that is, that there are structural aspects of a text that are neither pure structure in a linguistic sense nor pure meaning in a discursive sense. There is a bridge position. Ricœur uses myth as an example, drawing explicitly on the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1986:165). The myth is comprised of structural elements that Lévi-Strauss calls *mythèmes*, which are at a higher level than the more basic phonemes and semantemes, which have signifying functions. Mythèmes are not conveyors of full meaning as such but represent clusters of meaningful connections, such as ‘son marries mother’ and ‘son kills father’ (*Oedipus*) or ‘brother buries brother’ (*Antigone*) (1986:166).

In short, Ricœur starts with the obvious: language as system can be understood from a structural point of view. He then wonders whether there is also a structure associated with the discourse—whether speech *as meaning* can be seen as comprised of constitutive elements that are layered and connected. He then uses myth to answer in the affirmative. For Ricœur, structural analysis is both legitimate and productive within a hermeneutic process that seeks a critical and in-depth interpretation of a text:

If we, on the other hand, see the structural analysis as a stage—and a necessary one—between a naïve interpretation and a critical interpretation, between a superficial interpretation and a deep interpretation, then it seems possible to place explication and interpretation along one single *hermeneutic arc* and integrate the

³⁶ My translation. Original text: L’hypothèse de travail de toute analyse structurale de textes est celle-ci: en dépit du fait que l’écriture est du même côté que la parole par rapport à la langue, à savoir du côté du discours, la spécificité de l’écriture par rapport à la parole effective repose sur des traits structuraux susceptibles d’être traités comme des analogues de la langue dans le discours.

opposite positions of explication and comprehension in a global concept of reading as regaining meaning. (1986:174)³⁷

The concept of the hermeneutic arc supplies a bridge over the traditional divide between structure and meaning. To explain a text is to expose its inner structures and dependencies, opening a line of thought along which interpretation may take place—‘embarking towards the orient of the text’, as Ricœur puts it. While he retains Schleiermacher’s and Dilthey’s understanding of interpretation as appropriation, as a process of making the text your own, he sees this as the final stage in a much longer operation: ‘[It] is the last bridge pillar, the anchoring of the arc in the lived earth’ (1986:178).³⁸

The concept of the hermeneutic arc does not necessarily conflict with Gadamer’s thinking, but Gadamer appears to view linguistics and structure with somewhat greater scepticism:

That which ensures fulfilment of comprehension is, contrary to linguistics, precisely a lingual oblivion, in which speech or text is enveloped. Only where this is disturbed, that is, where comprehension does not succeed, is inquiry into the wording of the text made, so that a processing of the text can become a separate task. (Gadamer, 1986:175)³⁹

³⁷ My translation. Original text: Si au contraire on tient l’analyse structurale pour une étape—et une étape nécessaire—entre une interprétation naïve et une interprétation critique, entre une interprétation en surface et une interprétation en profondeur, alors il apparaît possible de replacer l’explication et l’interprétation sur une unique *arc hermeneutique* et intégrer les attitudes opposées de l’explication et de la compréhension dans une conception globale de la lecture comme reprise de sens.

³⁸ My translation. Original text: C’est la dernière pile du pont, l’ancrage de l’arche dans le sol du vécu.

³⁹ My translation. Original text: Was den Verständigungsvollzug trägt, ist im Gegensatz zur Linguistik geradezu Sprachvergessenheit, in die Rede oder der Text förmlich eingehüllt ist. Nur wenn dieselbe gestört ist, d.h. wo das Verständnis nicht gelingen will, wird nach dem Wortlaut des Textes gefragt und kann die Erstellung des Textes zu einer eigenen Aufgabe werden.

Here, Gadamer sees linguistics as blocking the view to understanding. He acknowledges that discourse is enveloped by structure but does not consider structure to be a vehicle for achieving understanding. His thinking parallels with the quantum physics notion that the world has a dual nature, particles and waves, but you have to forget one of them to see the other. Gadamer is clearly on the side of interpretation and sees a structural inquiry as a defeat, one driven by an inability to understand. The reason why Ricœur, on the other hand, was able to open up for a continuous bridge between structure and meaning was his realisation that some elements simultaneously take on structural and signifying functions.

4.3.2. Mythèmes: signifying building material

What makes the myth relevant for Ricœur is its narrative power in relation to extreme human situations and stories, about our origins, our fate, birth and death, and sexuality and suffering and triumph. This narrative's significance derives from the integrative power of its subordinate parts—by how each part with a signifying function is able to relate to others and to the myth as a whole: 'The meaning of the tale lies in the organisation of its elements' (Ricœur, 1986:167).⁴⁰

Ricœur notes that a mythème is not a particular phrase we are able to encounter in the text but instead an oppositional value (*valeur oppositive*) that attaches to clusters of phrases. Its signifying function, in my reading, emerges from the combination of gravity and clarity through which myths become tools for understanding our own lives and experiencing the tension between choice and fate. As an aside, poetry that addresses destiny and prophecy has parallels with myths and folktales. Foucault's view of Greek sixth-century poetry also emphasises the disciplining and self-fulfilling role of the discourse:

[It] was the speech which, prophesising the future, not only announced what was going to happen but contributed to its realisation, bringing with

⁴⁰ My translation. Original text: [Le] sens du récit est dans l'arrangement même des élément.

it the support of mankind, and thus colluded with destiny. (Foucault, 1971:17)⁴¹

While Foucault is more interested in the controlling function of the text, Ricœur (in this context) focuses on the interpretive implications of the new bond between structure and meaning. Mythèmes as signifying structural elements evoke van Manen's notion of themes, which he uses to uncover the structure of meaning in a given lived experience (van Manen, 1990:79). For van Manen, themes are how we experience focus, point and meaning, but they are not inherent to the text itself (which Ricœur points out about mythèmes as well). A thematic phrase, then, is not the same as the theme itself; articulation may only point to, allude to or hint at an aspect of the phenomenon in which the theme emerges. In the present project, I understand a theme to derive from a cluster of things an interviewee talks about, and this cluster either comprises the notion itself or helps me to proceed with further reflection.

Myths and mythèmes appeal to Ricœur because they are generally applicable across cultures and eras—they represent a sort of *common* ground and therefore realise the bridge he trying to build between the meaning of the myth and its structure. Van Manen, on the other hand, starts within the *individual* lived experience and introduces the notion of theme to structure meaning in a phenomenological description:

In order to come to grips with the structure of meaning of the text it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. Reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience. (van Manen, 1990:78)

Although van Manen presents a comprehensive picture of what a phenomenological theme is, what role it plays in our attempt to create meaning, and how such themes may be uncovered, he does not explicitly reflect on the ontology of themes and where they come from. It seems to me that Ricœur and van Manen reach the middle ground between structure and meaning from

⁴¹ My translation. Original text: C'était le discours qui, prophétisant l'avenir, non seulement annonçait ce qui allait se passer, mais contribuait à sa réalisation, emportait avec soi l'adhésion des hommes et se tramait ainsi avec le destin.

opposing shores of the bridge. Ricœur began with structure and then found that the text can have constitutive elements with signifying functions. These elements do not convey full meaning in their own right but represent clusters of phrases that do convey meaning. Van Manen, on the other hand, starts on the discourse side, where he introduces theme as a way to look for meaning. To me, Ricœur's hermeneutic arc does provide an ontological basis for van Manen's epistemologically founded themes. It should also be noted that Ricœur constructs his logic around a specific text category, whereas van Manen introduces themes in order to make sense of descriptions of lived experience, which usually means individual accounts. Yet they do meet in the middle. Although the meaning that we can create from a lived experience is tied to an individual's real references, the underlying themes (according to both Ricœur's and van Manen's reasoning) are of fundamental, existential and universal character. If this is true, we have arrived at an epistemological-methodological avenue for investigating a certain category of lived experience, one that includes musicking and conducting, through the interpretation of multiple stories. Conversation with singers about musical leadership can be expected to contain a wide variety of experiences, preferences, opinions and uses of words, but it will also contain some recurring themes, from which (and with which) meaning can be structured.

Van Manen sees themes as a means of interpreting descriptions of lived experience. He also proposes the four so-called *existentials* —spatiality, temporality, corporeality and relations—as guides to uncovering themes. However, he is not implying a direct link between existentials and themes. Starting from the structural side, using Ricœur's thinking, it is more likely that the four existentials represent the first step along the hermeneutic arc. They do not carry meaning and can hardly be said to have signifying functions, but they do represent cornerstones upon which more specific signifying elements might rest. For example, leadership authority may be a recurring theme in descriptions of a conducting situation. As we can see, it rests on an existential relation and carries no full meaning but is instead constitutive of a cluster of meanings, including the desirability of leadership authority and the ability to radiate strong leadership authority. Another example theme would be a 'common room' for musicking (which is how some singers describe the musicking moment), which rests on spatiality (in a metaphorical sense) and relations; singers use this theme to express the ways in which they expect the

conductor to create an ambiance where great musical moments can happen. In short, I understand van Manen's four distinct existentials and notion of theme to represent two steps along Ricœur's hermeneutic arc connecting structure and meaning.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) developed his philosophy of perception with corporeality at its centre and used it to investigate spatiality, temporality and relations. However, he did not place them side-by-side, as complementary cornerstones to guide the quest for themes in an interpretive process, as van Manen proposes. Van Manen, in fact, superimposes a considerable amount of structure on the use of existentials, possibly due to his experience within his own practice field of pedagogy. However, I have observed that within the musicking and conducting domain, existentials are more than just separate aspects of our experience. Somehow, they seem to span the canvas, literally holding the field of experience; they are not alternative ways of perceiving so much as truly simultaneous aspects of the experience. We could even say that music's ability to touch or move us is linked to how these four existentials play out, very visibly and in reinforcing combinations. Here are some examples from conversations with singers:

- **Temporality/reactions:** sensing intersubjectivity is relational, but combined with sensing temporality, as when sharing a musical flow, even anticipating a deviating path together (improvisation), intersubjectivity is deepened.
- **Spatiality/corporeality:** sensing spatial distance in the choir, while being on the same breathing cycle (as in a musical phrase), opens up for a sense of spiritual intimacy.
- **Temporality/corporeality:** riding the musical phrase, closely connected to administering breath and bodily tone support, sharpens the sense of time flow and expands the moment to the point where time ceases to move.

When we move from the description of individual lived experience to the thematic analysis of multiple lived experiences, we enter a liminal space between hermeneutic phenomenological description and the construction of discourse, even though we are dealing here with a practice that is largely speechless (musical experience). Although the controlling, power-regulating

and self-fulfilling role of discourse may not be at the heart of musicking, it would be naïve not to acknowledge its presence, a discussion beyond the scope of this dissertation.

I understand phenomenology primarily to represent an ontological platform that benefits from some epistemological guidance. Since the pure, uninterpreted description is not possible, despite the credo of the early phenomenologists, interpretation becomes unavoidably embedded in description. Furthermore, if we accept the existential inclination of themes and their position on the hermeneutic arc, it is also possible to see hermeneutic phenomenology as a bridge between the individual and the shared experience. Themes help to understand individual lived experience as well as allow the articulation of shared experience, not by erasing individual meaning but by capturing how individual meanings relate to an existential common ground. In the last sections of this chapter, I will present a practical approach to this thematic analysis.

4.4. Themes: nuggets of meaning

4.4.1. Encountering themes

The suspension of preset categories and concepts is such a fundamental aspect of phenomenology because preconceptions tend to scumble the distinction between the familiar and the essential, a veil of self-evidence. It is safer all around if insight about the phenomenon in question emerges from the investigation itself. The consequent abolition of existing categories is a wilful (and temporary) exercise—a bracketing of presuppositions that phenomenologists call *epoché*. Of course, even in an *epoché* mindset, we seek meaning and want to make sense—that is, to create and re-create categories and concepts—and we need themes to do so. When different singers all talk about communication, contact and being in the same ‘room’, there may be a lingering theme related to the nature of the encounter between the conductor and the singer. I see the notion of theme as a way to get beyond the singular words. A theme helps to uncover what the example is an example of.

A theme (in the context of the human sciences) is some experience of focus, of meaning, of point. It is not an object that we encounter in a text but a means of grasping the phenomenon we are trying to understand. Van Manen says that we experience themes in a number of ways—it can be both the desire to make sense and the actual sense we are able to make of something. A theme represents the closure (making sense) of something as well as an openness to something (seeking sense). Themes have power when they allow us to proceed with the phenomenological description, and experiencing themes is a process of insightful discovery and invention.

For example, in one group interview, the singers talked extensively about how the conductor should be authoritarian. However, after some guided reflection, it became clear that this dialogue was in fact about two different themes: authority (as unquestionable competence and skill) and determination (as clarity of musical intention). So, what appeared to be a theme of exercising power became the vehicle for uncovering two themes that in this context in fact have less to do with power.

4.4.2. Uncovering themes

Van Manen distinguishes among three approaches to uncovering themes. With the holistic approach, the researcher formulates the phrase that best captures the fundamental significance of a text. The theme is not an object we encounter in the text, remember, so the holistic approach could be said to objectify the essence of the text. With the highlighting approach, the researcher identifies a statement in the text that seems particularly revealing; in this case, unlike in the holistic approach, the researcher lets the text speak for itself. With the detailed approach, the researcher investigates each sentence and formulates what it reveals about the phenomenon.

We might also label these approaches construction, synthesis and analysis, respectively. The holistic approach constructs a new text through an interpretive process that may not be fully transparent. The highlighting approach involves selection and may be more transparent, since it allows for explicit reasoning about the potency of each statement. The detailed approach is fully transparent, since it allows for (even demands) explicit reasoning about every statement in the text. The relevance of each approach derives from the reflection level and articulation quality of the text in question. Some

interviewees provide a well-articulated text that is a gold mine for the highlighting approach, for example. Still, these approaches are not mutually exclusive but best used in combination, and each has particular strengths and pitfalls. Highlighting stays closest to the original text, but privileging one phrase over others runs the risk of imposing an interpretive bias. The detailed approach has the advantage of being systematic but risks losing sight of the significance of the whole, while the holistic approach has this problem but in reverse. I probably could have used Kvale's analysis methodology (Kvale, 2001:121), with its concepts of condensation, structuring, categorisation and interpretation, as an alternative to van Manen's themes. Since the approaches within each methodology are usually used in some combination, the practical difference may not be significant. My actual process constitutes a combination of van Manen's three approaches: I conducted a detailed initial reading, then highlighted the most expressive parts of the dialogues. The holistic approach helped me sort out my highlighted paragraphs and sequence them to constitute a theme.

4.4.3. Existential themes

As mentioned above, Van Manen describes four existentials that tend to play a role when we are working with phenomenological themes. They are related to space, the body, time and relationships, and in what follows, I comment upon them in relation to selected interview excerpts.

Spatiality: Lived space includes physical space as well as space metaphors. When a singer perceives the conductor to be 'creating a common room for musicking', this observation likely encompasses the material premises as well as the situation. Spatiality marks the shared room and delimits what and who is outside. A common room may represent a safe environment for musicking, a place where different rules apply.

Corporeality: The lived body is quite concrete in the musicking situation, particularly in relation to how singers perceive a conductor. The notion of intersubjectivity is closely linked to the conductor's body and encompasses not only his/her gestures but also posture, breath and facial expression. When a singer perceives the conductor to be 'well grounded', the descriptor may refer to the physical body but could also refer to perceptions of authority, determination and emotional maturity. Conducting gestures are

invitations (or not) to breathe, and singers respond intuitively. Singers also commonly reflect consciously on how a stiff conductor's body stifles their free musical flow.

Temporality: In this context, we are not talking about clock time or elapsed time but lived time—how singers perceive synchronisation, experience 'the now' and flow, together anticipate a musical gesture, and so on. Singers tend to use words like 'mutuality' and 'understanding flowing both ways' to describe musical moments at their best. It is interesting to note that these themes do not appear to have anything to do with time, but they are absolutely linked to lived time nevertheless, because they enable the future to be changed—that is, an intersubjectivity that is so vivid that improvisation and deviation from the planned are not only possible but highly desirable and in fact is seen as the essence of great musicianship.

Communality: The lived human relations between the conductor and the singers appear in various situations and modes, rehearsing, onstage, backstage, and so on. In addition, different ensembles and ensemble types imply widely varying role schemes. When singers expect the conductor to 'maintain a certain distance but still take part in the group', this is an example of the many seemingly impossible balancing acts of the role. 'To be an authority but not have an authoritarian style' would be another example.

The existentials may seem to represent dangerous and unnecessary categorisations that are completely at odds with the starting point of phenomenology. They would be particularly damaging as categories into which the researcher was force-fitting themes. Themes emerging from a text should be expected to cross the boundaries rather than contain themselves within one of the four existentials. A recurring theme with singers, for example, is the 'sense of security in the musicking situation' that good leadership enables. This theme touches more than one and maybe all four of the existentials, involving the wilful musical flow (temporal), the reliability of gestural guidance (corporeal) and a basic trust in the ensemble (communal). It is thus difficult to imagine musicking as intersubjectivity without these existentials, which are useful not in a process of categorisation but in a process of generating a variety of indirect and metaphorical ways of understanding a phenomenon. They help the researcher to remove some of the limiting functions of language during the interpretive process.

5. Designing and crafting quality

The notion of quality is defined for the purposes of this study, including how quality is designed into the research process and ensured along the way. My own position and involvement with the research topic and the interviewees is clarified as well.

Having chosen to research musical leadership as lived experience and to rely on a well-established, though evolving, phenomenological tradition, I will not touch upon the previous or current debates between positivism and various post-positivistic paradigms here. The ontological solidity of hermeneutic phenomenology is a premise for this project. However, even within the confines of qualitative research, including phenomenological inquiry, we may hardly speak of a united approach, and there are different perspectives regarding what constitutes scientific knowledge. Ensuring quality in qualitative research, in other words, is not a straightforward matter, and there is a lack of agreement about *what* constitutes quality as well as how to go about achieving it. Stige (2009) finds that some see quality as a notion of truthfulness—it must correspond to ‘reality’—and others see quality as a notion of rightfulness—there must be interpretive coherence in the process. This chapter will explain my own position on research quality by introducing my main perspective and then detailing my involvement with the research subject and its potential impact upon quality. In order to deal with quality a little more explicitly than van Manen (1990) does in his hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology, I will appropriate Kvale’s (1996) perspective, with some additional inspiration from Stige (2009). The chapter title indicates that research quality is not about

retrospective control, but about process design and the execution of the craft of research.

5.1. Ensuring truthful exposure of musical leadership

Understanding and ensuring quality are integral parts of Steinar Kvale's approach to qualitative research (Kvale, 1996:160). Though he draws extensively on the phenomenological tradition, he positions himself somewhere between the positivistic belief in an objective and universal truth and the neglect or outright rejection of any quality concept inherited from the natural sciences. In his approach, the ideals of reliability, generality (or universality), and validity are not rejected but reconceptualised for and made relevant to interview-based research. In the following, I will clarify my application of Kvale's thinking to my chosen hermeneutic-phenomenological approach.

5.1.1. Can we be sure about the findings?

Reliability is about consistency in the process of generating findings. Are we getting what we should be getting? Are we able to stay clear of arbitrary disturbances and more or less wilful manipulation? Reliability must be maintained throughout the research process, from identifying informants through interviews and transcriptions to analysis and presentation. My main approach to reliability is to invite readers to take part in the dialogues as much as possible, within the constraints of a readable report. I therefore present my interview interpretations in part III without external references, thereby allowing the reader to follow my interpretive line of thought alone. What is not transparent to the reader, of course, is exactly how I coded the themes in the interpretation process. Coding, a form of interpretation, is subjective, but its bias is neutralised by extensive overcoding, or associating a given informant paragraph with multiple themes. Consequently, I always view and review a given statement from several angles. In addition, the potential lack of reliability at the phrase level is regained at the theme level, when several singers will talk about similar experiences or contrasting experiences. By abstaining from single-point precision, then, I ensure a thematic robustness and, consequently,

reliability, in the sense that I can confirm certain experiences and assure myself that a given aspect of musical leadership is significant.

5.1.2. Are the findings credible?

Validity concerns the degree to which a method investigates what it is meant to investigate, and the degree to which the findings reflect the phenomenon the researcher is seeking to understand. According to Kvale, validity in fact derives from the exposure and repair of sources of *invalidity*. Validity therefore also concerns craftsmanship and accompanies the competent and self-critical researcher who constantly evaluates his/her own research process, avoids deviations, excludes false cues and negotiates among competing interpretations. To validate is to ask questions, so the validity of qualitative research is closely connected to the credibility of the researcher. To enable the present reader to assess my impact on my research, I have presented my connections and preconceptions in section 5.2. Along these lines, Kvale proposes a shift from observation to communication to enhance the credibility of one's research, broadening the notion of truth via the communicative validity of the findings, as he encourages the researcher to ask the following questions: Are my findings able to generate a meaningful dialogue? Can a logic of qualitative probability be applied to negotiate between different interpretations (Kvale, 2001:171)? Regarding the present study, some preliminary and informal confirmation of the communicative validity of my findings can be gleaned from the interest of peer groups and the media in the work. Still, this might speak to the project's topical relevance and novelty of approach rather than its actual insights. Communicative validity, of course, is tricky, because truth and knowledge also relate to power, and my findings are probably not neutral information to various professional interests. As I noted in section 1.2.4, my chosen approach is not ideal in relation to these types of structural issues.

Closely related to the communicative aspect of validity is pragmatic validity: In the present study, are the results useful for practitioners? Do they suggest changes in conducting behaviour or a new approach to the role of both conductor and singer? I will return to these questions in the concluding chapters of this dissertation.

5.1.3. Are the findings plausible?

Inferring general knowledge from the single experiment or the limited sample is one of the cornerstones of positivistic science. There may also be a need to generalise in disciplines that rely on qualitative approaches but formal and explicit methods, including statistics. However, a normal generalisation of my project results will not be feasible or even useful here. The key point about understanding a group of singer-informants' lived experience is not to make statements about other singers' experience but to make statements about the conducting phenomenon. Still, it would be good to know how stable the phenomenon remains outside of the specific researched group. It is not only possible but probable that for other groups of singers—for example, a children's choir in Japan or a gospel choir in America—the experiential themes are different. Even if the same or similar themes were to emerge, their relative importance, their linkages, and the meaning associated with them would all be different. A layer of generalisation arises already in the interpretive process of uncovering themes. Themes emerge when singers talk about similar, related or contrasting experiences and we come to understand one experience in light of another. A second layer of generalisation arises when we ask whether a theme would also appear outside the singer profile of the interviewed group? Even if it did, of course, it might be understood differently or perceived to be more or less important. Although we may know the significance of a given theme outside of the interviewed group, we can reflect systematically on how its significance *might* change. Analytical generalisation refers to the possibility of reasoning about one's findings beyond the scope of the interviewed individuals. The potential for meaningfulness outside of the researched situation itself, of course, is about plausibility: Do the findings make sense when we apply them elsewhere? In section 3.6.7, plausibility was identified as one of the characteristics of sensemaking. In order to make sense, a cue does not need to be precise or unambiguous; it suffices that it is plausible enough to be meaningful. The ability to generalise about musical leadership based upon the findings of this study depends upon its findings' plausibility. Those findings may contribute more or less meaning in various contexts, but those meanings cannot be predicted but must be reasoned. Kvale puts it a different way: the opportunity in the act of generalisation is not to make statements about what is

but rather what *could be*. It is possible to assess the plausibility of findings in other contexts, but the reasoning will follow different paths.

5.1.4. Statement of quality

My understanding of research quality is based on the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology (as outlined by van Manen) as well as specific considerations involving reliability, credibility and plausibility (appropriating Kvale's quality terms). I have found Stige (2009) to be an additional inspiration. Although his proposed quality framework is primarily intended for peer-reviewing publications, it attempts to build a bridge (based on the notion of quality) between qualitative research and natural-science domains such as medicine and health. The aim of research, Stige believes, is to be relevant across various traditions rather than a single, specific discipline and its corresponding theory of knowledge. The traditional approach to peer-reviewing publications has been to use local criteria derived from detailed checklists adapted to each discipline or to use metacriteria that are often quite general and abstract. Stige prefers that the reviewer 'bypass the rigidity of checklists, the isolationism of local criteria, and the vagueness of general standards or metacriteria' (2009:1506) and proposes an evaluation agenda denoted by the acronym EPICURE. Its first part, EPIC, seeks to produce *substantive* stories based on an engagement with a phenomenon.⁴² Its second part, CURE, addresses both the preconditions and the consequences of research (2009:1507).⁴³ The notion of an 'agenda' here implies that quality is ensured by neither criteria nor process alone but a selection of concerns or issues that merit attention along the way. Underlying Stige's framework is the importance of collaboration: quality should be ensured through exchange and dialogue between researcher and reviewers/users. The research process and research findings should be

⁴² EPIC stands for Processing of empirical material, Interpretation of the evolving descriptions, and Critique in relation to research processes and products.

⁴³ CURE stands for Critique, Usefulness, Relevance and Ethics related to the situations and communities.

described so as to facilitate such communication. Therefore, building on the preceding sections, I want to highlight three points that have been particularly important to ensuring the quality of my project. In the process of capturing and interpreting multiple lived experiences of musical leadership, I have attempted to ensure that findings are:

- **Expressive:** that there is a meta-story being told, that a picture of the choral conducting phenomenon is established, that there is something for readers to respond to.
- **Communicative:** that the interpretive logic can be traced, that thinking can be exchanged, that my understanding can be challenged.
- **Robust:** that alternative interpretations of single statements or experiences do not fatally undermine the knowledge generated but rather add to it or enrich it by highlighting other aspects or weighing themes differently.

The main implication is that I have chosen to report extensively on what the interviewed singers actually said and have linked my interpretation directly and visibly to what was said. Furthermore, I sought a reporting structure that tells an engaging story. Taken together, these choices mean that part III is rather lengthy. By not applying external theory (beyond the main structure of the presentation), I hope to make the interpretation as transparent and traceable as possible, so that the reader will be able to discover any unintended bias or create alternative interpretations.

5.2. My own involvement and preconceptions

The choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as a foundation for understanding musical leadership implies an interest in striking a balance between two ideals: unfiltered description and insightful interpretation. A phenomenological description seeks to capture the lived experience of another person. A truthful description avoids the concepts and presuppositions that shroud important aspects of familiar phenomena. Of course, as soon as the researcher starts interpreting, he or she is imposing such concepts. To manage this balancing act, the researcher must be conscious and open about his/her position. This enables him/her to reflect on when own presuppositions are in play and how

they might affect interpretation. In the following, I will clarify my own position with respect to the research question as well as the interviewees.

5.2.1. Involved

I am a singer who could have been an informant for this project. Although I am an amateur voice, I have spent my entire adult life as a choral singer, prior to my graduate music education. Despite an adolescent history as a band and orchestra musician, I have found that the singer identity has coloured my grown-up life in an almost existential fashion. I am now also a choral conductor. Although I am not researching my own conducting practice, I am investigating a domain in which I work and relate easily to what the interviewed singers talk about. A shared horizon of understanding with interviewees is absolutely possible. Simply put, I am involved.

5.2.2. Committed

What I am able to uncover and understand through these interviews is important to me in a fashion that transcends my research objective. As mentioned, I have an existential view of music and singing, which of course constitutes a bias. I probably relate more easily to these aspects than to purely instrumental rationales such as power and money, the outward aspects of conducting. I will make sense of research findings not only as scholar but as a singer and conductor who creates meaning directly from those roles. There is a risk, then, that what I already understand is confirmed, or that I will systematically favour data that confirm my own strengths and neglect or miss data that concern my weaknesses. I can only remain aware of this possibility and use it to fuel further scholarly reflection. There are two factors on my side. First, I have professional managerial experience outside the music domain and am therefore particularly conscious about keeping inappropriate theories and paradigms out of the musicking arena. Second, I have a genuine desire to uncover and understand musical leadership on its own terms—that is, to determine what makes conducting meaningful to me as a singer, and to every choral colleague I have ever known. I am committed to the domain in order to improve my own and others' conducting practice.

5.2.3. Free to discover

This project is not initiated by or attached to a specific research priority at the Norwegian Academy of Music. At times, this is hard: for example, I lack a clear academic affiliation or safe haven. On the other hand, there are some advantages. Real-world phenomena always transcend scholarly categories, and, in this case, no one institution or person has any incentive to drive this project in an particular direction. This research is as free as research can be within the institutional frames of a PhD dissertation. Still, it is possible that my research approaches or project findings will collide with some part of the academic establishment, since there are several adjoining disciplines that might claim ownership of musical leadership, from the pedagogy community and the conductor's guild within the music domain to the wider academic domain of organisational behaviour. The only constraint upon my research would be the assumed expectations that I may be unconsciously complying with in the process.

5.2.4. Safely at home in the humanities

Prior to my master's degree in musicology, I completed graduate degrees in both engineering and economics, with an emphasis on mathematical statistics. Given my past in the natural sciences, it would have been a very attractive option to research musicking and conducting within a social-science paradigm using quantitative methods. However, as I developed my research question, I realised that it needed to be explored fully within the humanities. It was also important to abandon the knowledge view of the natural sciences and acquire (from scratch) the epistemological foundation of phenomenology and hermeneutics. I should also mention a personal experience from my master's project, where, as part of an exploratory study of musical leadership, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Jansson, 2008). I found, quite simply, that all of the real insight came from the qualitative material; the seductive precision of the quantitative findings was all but overwhelmed by their irrelevance. The holistic features of the research question eluded positivistic approaches, at least at my level of subject matter insight at that time. Musicking is an intersubjective experience domain. Therefore,

understanding musical leadership as a musicking phenomenon both deserves and benefits from a humanities orientation.

5.2.5. Categories

I have worked with the present research topic prior to this project and have interviewed singers about musical leadership in other contexts. However, the setting was different, the sampling was different, and the approach was somewhat different: in short, I talked with nine singers in a choir that was the object instrument for a conductor competition involving ten conductors. While I asked them questions about musical leadership in general, the immediate frame of reference, of course, was the relatively intense competition itself. I did the interviews in virtually real time during the four days of the event. The interviews consisted of two parts. The first part was open, with no preset categories. The second part involved asking the interviewees to reflect upon given categories that I had developed by combining Aristotle's concept of rhetoric, a modified version of Kenneth Bruscia's *Improvisation Assessment Profiles* (Bruscia, 1994), and Harald Knudsen's notion of jazz and leadership (Knudsen, 2001). The categories were intended to supply a wide set of possible features that might apply to singers in a choral leadership situation. While the categories did not affect the open part of the interview, they probably affected how I analysed the interviews.

Through this project and the writing of my master's thesis, I discovered a sort of dual aspect to categories in general. While they were critical to the singers' ability to reflect upon and exchange their views, they were relatively unimportant in terms of capturing the full meaning of the singers' experience. The preset categories seemed to exert a weak anchoring effect during the interviews, in fact, because they only acquired durable meaning as they were explored, used, challenged and reviewed. A major methodological realisation for me at this point was the danger inherent in the superficial question and answer. I could not take initial responses at face value, because as the singers started to elaborate upon them, the meaning of the resultant categories would evolve. It was as if every interviewee knew that he or she was talking about an essentially speechless phenomenon, an experience, in short, that was not fundamentally delimited by verbal constructs. Singers reflecting on musicking and conducting seem to accept the fact that words and concepts are to some

extent ephemeral, that they don't stick very well. With this implicit and tacit premise, the interviewees felt free to wander around in the categories without worrying about nailing every concept they employed.

It is lastly important to note that categories from prior work have not impacted the current project, which seeks new perspectives and unexpected angles while of course anticipating some recurring themes. It is clear, however, that existing categories informed my repertoire of thought as I posed follow-up questions.

6. Capturing data

The data-gathering process and type of research data are presented. The interviewed singers hold college/university degrees in music. They are spread around the country (Norway) and do not represent specific choirs. The starting point for the interviews was the musicking situation—that is, rehearsing and performing.

6.1. Delimitation and selection

6.1.1. Scope of leadership

Musical leadership as lived experience is thematically broad but methodologically highly specific. In principle, the term musical leadership potentially encompasses any aspect of musical communication that affects the musical flow. Whether there is a single designated leadership role, whether that person also sings or plays with the group in question, and what the scope of the leadership involves are all open issues that will be handled differently across various contexts and traditions. Even within specific traditions, like the present-day chamber choir or sinfonietta, these issues remain open for debate and accommodate different solutions. There is no question that musical leadership could be explored by attending to these grey areas and fuzzy boundaries among different situations and traditions. Here, however, I have chosen to focus on musical leadership centred upon a distinct conductor role—a single, designated, non-singing/non-playing participant. Although this may

sound circular, I am investigating the conductor role as it appears where there *is* a conductor role, within the tradition at hand and in the context of whatever reasons might exist for it.

6.1.2. Leadership situation

As with any kind of leadership, some aspects will centre on the purpose of the organisation, and others will be more general. A conductor may perform activities, exercise behaviour, and make use of competences that are unrelated to making music. Having chosen an exploratory approach toward conducting, I will not look to delimit the concept at the outset, but I will focus on the musicking situation as such, and this is where my questions and reflections will start. My underlying assumption, then, is that the conductor role, and the concept of musical leadership, derives its primary meaning from the musicking endeavour. Non-music leadership aspects will be seen as subservient to music and musicking in the interviews.

6.1.3. Ensemble type

There are some obvious differences between choral and orchestral conducting, including, obviously, what is being conducted: in the choir, a single, vocal tone-production mechanism; in the orchestra, a range of different types of tone production. The evolution of conducting traditions over the centuries, however, appears to indicate that ensemble type as such is not particularly relevant to understanding the conducting phenomenon. One very simple reason for this is that the ensemble commonly consists of both instruments and voices, and most conductors will regularly or occasionally have to face different ensemble types. I have chosen to focus on the choir as the ensemble type and choral conducting as the phenomenon, mainly because the situation is simpler there—that is, the relationship between the singers and the conductor is direct and unmediated, in contrast to the more complex hierarchy of the symphony orchestra. The fact that there is no instrument between the singer and the conductor accentuates the immediacy of the relationship. Hence, it is possible that the conducting phenomenon will reveal itself more directly in a choir. Pragmatically speaking, of course, I am also more experienced in the choral domain and will probably

be in a better position to interpret the singer's experience of conducting and conductors.

6.1.4. Singer competence and experience

Since I am examining musical leadership as *lived* experience, the kind of experience clearly matters here, including experience in the sense of competence. Having said that, early test interviews with amateur singers revealed many of the same topics as later interviews with professional singers (and even a test interview with a professional instrumentalist). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that experience matters to some degree, and I chose to focus on a category of singers who satisfied two criteria in this regard: they were musically educated, and they had been exposed to many conductors.

6.1.5. Relationships

Since my own conducting practice is not the focus of this project, I thought it self-evident that there should not be a singer-conductor relationship with any of my interviewees. In connection with my master's thesis, I did a series of test interviews with singers I had conducted. Although the conversations as such did not seem to unfold very differently from other interviews, the researcher's role in real time was affected, by not being able to escape my own reflections on what the singer statements meant for me, including the relationship between the interviewee and me as interviewer. Whether peer relationships should be avoided or not is a different question. In the interests of breadth of experience, I chose to capture data at some distance from my own personal choral-singer experience, by sampling from several parts of the country. For the same reason, I chose to identify interviewees who were not all singing in the same choir. It would be impossible (and undesirable) to completely avoid any shared experience among the interviewees—some overlapping experience probably enriches the dialogues. In my actual interviews, indeed, there are various groupings of singers who had performed (or were performing) with the same conductor, although not necessarily at the same time.

6.1.6. Selection process

Given the delimitations described above, the selection process was as follows. I consulted with four contact people, whom I knew to varying degrees, in four different regions of Norway. I asked each of them to propose four or five interviewee candidates with a university-level education in music who were currently choral singers and who would be willing to take part in the research project. Based on these contact lists, I invited all by e-mail to take part and proposed specific time frames for the interviews that would take place in each region. No one declined, but a few people were not available at the given times. Thus the actual sample represents all of the suggested singers who were able to meet with me, given the logistical constraints: sixteen singers in total. Happily, their responses were enthusiastic; they all looked forward to sharing their thoughts on something that mattered to them.

I also chose to include another set of singers in the sample: they had the same type of competence and experience but were currently sharing a common choral experience and conductor (in fact, an experience that I had previously been part of myself). I chose the group interview format for this group of six singers, for two reasons. First, I had interviewed them all individually two years before for my master's thesis, and I knew that they were interested in a follow-up session and some sort of experience sharing. Second, a group interview allows the participants to react to and elaborate upon each other's thoughts, which might promote depth and delineate perspectives. This group consists of those six singers (out of nine total) who could meet on the same date for a group interview.

The group of sixteen and the group of six have been treated as one informant group in the analysis in part III. The main reason for this is confidentiality regarding those conductors that the group of six discussed. Given the group's very high level of trust (in each other and in me) and complete lack of self-censorship, there were some very direct and even personal lines of thought that were expressed there. This made it impossible to explicitly report from them as a group, so I have used fragments instead, almost as if they had been interviewed individually. This does not in any way compromise the usefulness of the group setting, but in terms of how the interview material is used in part III, it will not be obvious who belongs to which group of interviewees.

6.2. Singer sample

6.2.1. Demographic profile

Based on the sampling process described above, a total of twenty-two singers were interviewed, ten male and twelve female. The average age is thirty-nine, lower for the men (thirty-four) than for the women (forty-three). The age distribution by alias is shown in Appendix 4. Although the interviews were conducted in four different regions, these singers do not necessarily represent that specific region in any way. In each region, there were some interviewed singers who had moved there for professional reasons as well as some who had grown up, been educated and still practiced music there. Three singers were interviewed in Tromsø, four in Bergen, four in Kristiansand, and five in the Oslo region. The group interview of the six singers took place in Oslo. The key significance of the geographic spread of the individual interviews is that it ensures a good variety of choirs and conductors. (For the group, of course, the significance of the sample was that their experience base was to some degree shared).

Most of the interviewees have working positions of one sort or another within the music sector. Only three singers in the sample have working positions unrelated to music. The music-related jobs include a variety of positions, from singer and conductor to music therapist and teacher. The sample also includes a professional orchestra musician (who participated in the project as a choral singer), a music researcher, and someone who self-identified as unemployed. All but one of the singers has a university-level music education, and eight have master's degrees. The bachelor-level degree is either the 'candidate' degree awarded at Norwegian music conservatories or the bachelor's degrees in musicology awarded at teacher colleges with a music specialisation.

6.2.2. Conductor exposure

The sample is also characterised by the singers' exposure to a large number of conductors. Twelve of the singers have experience with more than ten conductors on a project basis, and some have worked with many more. All of

the singers in the sample have experience with two or more conductors on a continuous basis—that is, for more than a year—and five of the singers have experience with more than six conductors on a continuous basis. For confidentiality reasons, I have not included a list of the conductors in question, but this is something of an artificial concern, given the scale and nature of the conductor coverage. If we only count the conductors to whom the singers have been exposed on a continuous basis, the list includes thirty-three names, among them the most prominent choral conductors currently operating in Norway. These conductors are geographically dispersed in terms of where they primarily operate and nearly all of them have conducting as their primary occupation. There is a certain doubling of conductor exposure as well. For sixteen of the thirty-three conductors, two singers have had exposure to them on a continuous basis. For five of the thirty-three conductors, three to six singers have had exposure to them on a continuous basis. If project conductors are added to the list of thirty-three, the doubling of exposure increases, but a number of new names are also added—mostly foreign orchestra conductors doing choir works with orchestra. Despite some doubling, however, conductor exposure is thinly spread, and no single conductor dominates the experience base. This also applies to the group-interviewed singers if we disregard their common experience. Overall, there is a striking completeness to the sample's conductor exposure, in that almost all of the prominent and still active Norwegian conductors are on the list. The experience base of the singers is broad, varied and complete enough to invite the claim that it enables the capture of the conducting phenomenon in the educated, professional/advanced amateur choir segment in Norway.

6.2.3. Representativity–presentativity

An important notion in the social sciences (and natural sciences) is to what extent the characteristic of a specific scientific experiment makes it an adequate sample of the general case. This might be denoted representativity in English, parallel to the well-established *repräsentativität* in German. However, representativity is not a key concern in the humanities, because scholars there generally attend to individual cases—the single work of art, for example, or the individual human being. If my interests in the present interview sample were to extract data on and provide knowledge about the wider singer population (as

in a sociological study), *representativity* would matter. But this is not the case: this project is a phenomenological inquiry into the conducting phenomenon, and it is not relevant how representative the sample is of the total singer population, as long as the singers in the sample are able to reflect comprehensively on musical leadership. In a phenomenological inquiry, then, representativity applies instead to the richness of the sample's experience base and might better be thought of as '*presentativity*'—that is, the sample's ability to present the kind of lived experience we are investigating. Usually, we would have some difficulty in assessing the extent of an experience base (as a parallel to a population in the social sciences), let alone quantify it. In this project, however, the conductor exposure is unusually broad and coincidentally happens to include a rather 'complete' list of the most prominent conductors in Norway today. This is a windfall: I can therefore claim that the sample's experience base is as rich as can be, and that the sample as a whole should be able to raise most issues that are needed to understand the conducting phenomenon (within the given research focus). The '*presentativity*' of the group must therefore be considered one of the key assets of this study.

6.3. Interview staging and interview approach

I chose to stage the individual interviews on neutral ground to signal their collaborative and conversational character. They were mostly set in semiprivate locations with moderate levels of public noise and disturbance, such as hotel lobbies, café corners and park benches. For me, the non-clinical ambiance more than outweighed the inconveniences, and the audio recordings were of sufficient quality. In short, the interviews were presented as peer dialogues, which was very natural, because we were in fact choral singer peers. I therefore did not use a written script and did not take notes. For the same reason, I started every interview by announcing that I did not come with a list of questions to be answered or a form to be completed. Instead, I said, I intended to encourage the interviewee to reflect freely on his or her own experience with conductors and musical leadership. I also said that if we were to wander into a topic area where there was more to explore, we could stay with that topic for as long as we deemed it fruitful. This was a conscious priority based on a particular concern: I did not want to be stuck with shallow

interviews in which superficial statements were left at face value, without scrutiny and elaboration. Apart from this introduction, statements of confidentiality and further processing of the recorded interview, only the initial question (invitation) was the same for all of the interviews: 'Imagine a situation, as a choral singer, where you experienced that the musical leadership worked very well: please describe what was going on'. With this point of departure, each interviewee took his or her own path, talking about a rehearsal process, a specific concert event, a named conductor or some other angle.

6.4. *Epoché* in practice

Having thought about the research topic for some time as both an acting conductor and a choral singer, I naturally came into these interview situations brimming with concepts and presuppositions. Nevertheless, I did not find it difficult to enter an *epoché* mindset in practice, temporarily suspending this foreknowledge. This was due to the nature of the conversations and the interviewees' use of words in particular—their categories, with a few exceptions, were so ephemeral and exploratory that they took me out of my own head. The 'lack of stickiness' of words, which I assume derives from the nature of musicking as a largely speechless practice, was an advantage in every interview. A word sticks, of course, once multiple experiences can be attached to it—in these interviews, it was as if categories acquired their meanings in real time. Gadamer's fusion of horizon, which results in understanding, is possible if categories, and the associations that go with them, are sufficiently overlapping. In a live conversation, fusion is possible if the categories are given meaning jointly in the verbal exchange. In my *epoché* mindset, I tried to be constantly alert for new themes, new aspects of musical leadership that I had not considered before, or new angles on a well-known topic. I tried not to emerge from any given interview with my old preconceptions confirmed, or with such a shallow conversation that I could not determine the significance of the singer's statements.

My most frequently used follow-up questions were the following: 'What do you mean by that?' 'Have you experienced this in other situations?' 'Have you thought differently about this experience in retrospect?' Sometimes, I simply replied, 'Say more about this'. From previous experience, I know that the

quality of material related to a topic often depends on the quantity of it, so follow-up questions were intended to encourage the singer to continue reflecting and talking. Often, this would result in clarifications, richer wording or even modifications of statements already made. In this way, the most interesting statements did not always come from the most articulate interviewees—compelling insights could be drawn out of singers who otherwise tended to wander around in their conversations as they struggled to find the right wording. This poses a slight reporting problem, because the quotations chosen to exemplify the themes are mostly well articulated. It remains true, however, that even seemingly unproductive parts of the interviews yielded good insights.

At times, I used follow-up questions that included wording from other interviews, but usually I did so in ways that did not impose a particular category upon the interviewee. Such embedded wording was used for two purposes: to explore similarities and differences in the experience itself, and to explore the meanings that singers gave to various categories. I hoped to allow the material to speak, not me, but I did not systematically avoid words from my own choral experience or from my master's thesis. As mentioned, I sought a conversation between peers, and in this way I occasionally and temporarily let myself take the lead role in the conversation, sharing some of my experience as well. The interview material speaks for itself. My footprint is in the material as a conversation partner, not a 'premise giver'.

An *epoché* mindset was also easy to maintain when I transcribed the audio recordings. While a second round of interpretation (the first took place during the interview itself) was in full swing during transcription, the scope of its impact was limited to preserving meaning and interesting thoughts. I had to sidetrack my own preconceptions, in other words, because the interviewee's text flow controlled the process.

In the third round of interpretation, however, when reading, rereading and coding the material, *epoché* becomes much more difficult. For every encounter between a singer's thought and a preconception of mine, the concept in question is at play and alternative understandings compete. Some obvious themes would have to come up in this phase, so I used obvious candidates such as authority, communication, credibility, gestures and rehearsing as cues for deep drilling. Given the ideal of phenomenology to find the untrivial in trivial phenomena, I approached each well-known category as an opportunity to

revisit what was *really* meant by the passage in question. In effect, I anticipated the threat to *epoché* in this later phase by asking the interviewee to go into detail as much as possible, in order to have sufficiently rich material to read.

In the process of uncovering themes in the material, of course, *epoché* gave way to a degree of (re-)conceptualisation. In order to let the material speak for itself for as long as possible, however, I applied two simple principles. First, I used extensive overcoding, associating any given statement with up to five different themes in order to assure that I could later reread it in light of other themes, possibly discovering new interpretations. Second, in the initial writing process, I sought out those themes that stood alone and did not rely on other themes. By first interpreting the most independent themes and then gradually adding categories already introduced by the interviewees, I was able to tell a story that minimised the use of my own concepts and external references. This best allowed the material to provide the themes as well, because the interference of pre-existing concepts can only be bracketed, never eliminated. In the final presentation, I used Ladkin's three-element model to sequence the main themes, but the interpretive logic in part III is largely constructed according to the singer's own words and concepts. The exceptions are some of the headlines, where I proposed post-analysis concepts that serve the theme.

7. Processing conversation as data

The steps in analysing and structuring the interview material are outlined. Specific choices and actions in the interpretive process are exemplified.

The interviews with singers constitute the only data source for this study, and in part III, I present the material as well as the analytical results. Here I will give an overview of the research data (those conversations) and the formats in which they exist: (1) my own memory, (2) recorded sound, (3) transcribed text in Norwegian and (4) transcribed text in English. My own memory of the interviews has been fading ever since they took place. Actually, they have been blending: a memory of an interviewee, either as a person, a competence profile or a narration, would promptly influence conversations with subsequent interviewees. This might be a specific follow-up question to one singer based on a thought from another; in some cases, I might even say so openly as I asked the follow-up question. Blending also derived from the shape of a singer's personal impact on me, my reflections and my emotions. For example, some singers clearly expressed how important it was to them to talk about the research topic. They were deeply engaged. Other singers presented a more detached professional identity, the clarity and pointedness of which was new to me. Either way, all of the singers made an imprint on me, which is as much about me as about the 'data'. In an interpretive process such as is, there is no such thing as 'cold' data: the information speaks not only to me but *through* me. The interview analysis was based on transcribed interviews and, in theory, it could have been done by someone other than me. The results, of course, would not be identical, because of that imprint. As I worked with these transcriptions,

I tried to stick to a deep reading of the chosen quotations alone, in some cases explicitly referring to non-quoted statements, but the imprint informs it all.

There are arguments in favour of separating the roles of interviewer, transcribe and analyst. Given the interpretive mode of the present analysis, however, there are equally strong arguments in favour of following the entire chain of thought from listening to the original reflection to considering the transcribed words, seeking various ways of understanding the written and rewritten text. I think I would have great difficulty performing a similar analysis on someone else's interview material, which in no way invalidates the approach but does question its validity here.

7.1. Transcriptions

The interviews—about twenty-five hours of recorded sound—were transcribed in their entirety about three months after they took place. The main analysis started about three months after that. I used Hypertranscribe, a combined audio player and word processor, which allowed me to flip between listening and writing within the same application.

During transcription, I adhered to two complementary ideals. Wherever statements were perfectly clear, including full, grammatically correct sentences, I transcribed them word for word. Where they were not so—and there were huge discrepancies in terms of linguistic fluency, grammatical precision and narrative structure—I intervened. I corrected obvious grammatical errors, including gender use problems and conjugation errors that arose in sentences that concluded other than planned. At times, as well, meaning was lost when the words went from live conversation to transcribed text. For example, a given statement may have initially enabled an overall understanding of a theme, but in isolation it does not make sense. In many cases, an erratic speaker produced insights that were not possible to convey in a transcribed text. Incomplete sentences could still be highly meaningful in an interview context, through body gestures or other implicit references to common experiences. The choice of quotations in part III is therefore biased toward 'crispness' in thought as well as verbalisation. Conversely, even well-articulated interviews contained lengthy portions with less interesting statements, thanks to various digressions and so on.

Various interruptions mar the transcriptions as well, such as long pauses, external disturbances, associative leaps, and conscious efforts to get back on track. A generally slow pace or pauses with no interpretive value were not reflected in the transcription. Brackets with ellipses were used to denote pauses and leaps, the omission of a word that is unintelligible, references to something confidential or beside the point, and anything that would distort the meaning of the statement in question. Brackets were also used to replace names, works or venues that could reveal identity. In certain extremely sensitive cases, changes and replacements are not explicit in the transcribed text. If there was a conflict between confidentiality and precision, confidentiality was given priority. I preserved some auxiliary words and expressions ('sort of', for example) to communicate a conversational atmosphere, but when they were excessive, I took them out without using brackets. Brackets containing a single word or several words were also used to restore meaning that had been lost as the result of an improper start to a sentence or an unfinished sentence.

7.2. Emerging themes

7.2.1. Letting the material speak

The first rounds of reading and rereading interview transcripts were done, as mentioned, with an *epoché* mindset. A series of topics and words arising from my knowledge of the literature, my master's thesis, and my own choral experience were naturally in the back of my mind, but this was such a large and varied domain that it was easy to ignore. In many ways, the expressivity (and concentrated nature) of the interview material allowed it to drown out the background noise of my preconceptions. Even my background categories were eventually overwhelmed by the expressive power of the interviews—the material was rich enough to allow the singers to take the speaker's podium in my head. Still, a number of well-known themes reemerged through the interviews, thanks to the inherent malleability of the various concepts that constitute musical leadership. There was a certain freshness to the material at this stage; while I knew that a number of themes would prevail in the end, I did

not yet see their content, delimitations and linkages. Where I had presuppositions, I tried to blur the boundaries, search for alternative meanings and allow for overlaps with other themes.

7.2.2. Blurring the boundaries

Van Manen's four existentials (temporality, spatiality, corporeality and communality) provide an overall framework for uncovering the themes of a particular lived experience. Certain themes are unavoidable in any study; in the present study, such themes will address explicitly how we visibly and immediately know the conductor role and musicking (*authority* and *will*, for example). Corporeality is also the most explicit feature of conducting and is reflected by themes like *gesture* and *contact*. But *contact*, we might notice, is also communal and spatial, and in fact, most themes seem to touch two or more existentials. Some themes are also unavoidable because they are so deeply embedded in the administrative aspects of a role like conducting (*control* and *rehearsal management*, for example). In short, many of the themes emerging from the interviews would also surface in an everyday chat about conducting. What the research material offers beyond this superficial appearance, however, is a depth of reflection and a wealth of experiential references that derive from multiple similar but still unique stories. The key point about emerging themes is therefore not how expected they are but how they acquire rich meaning through the interpretive process. A theme can be said to emerge when a singer (or more than one) talks about something in a way that tends to organise his or her thinking. Themes play an organising role similar to the *mythèmes* (see section 4.3.2) in that they accommodate the structural aspect of meaning. In the process of interpreting multiple singers' reflections, we do not find the theme in the text itself but a cluster of meanings that come to constitute it. For example, there is the conductor habit of stopping the musical flow to correct errors: some singers might find this to be perfectly acceptable, while others might prefer self-correction to enable the fluidity of their own learning process. These preferences are aspects of an 'enveloping' theme—that is, the balance that must be struck in rehearsals between working out the details and working through the whole. They are also aspects of the mentorship theme (how help is blended with demands) and the control-empowerment theme. The notion of

theme, then, is both the result of and a vehicle for concentrated thought, but it also affords a multiplicity of meanings.

7.2.3. Evolving coding

During the rereading process, I used HyperResearch, an application that allows for the coding and sorting of marked text portions. As mentioned, I made constant use of overcoding, in order to attach multiple themes to a given text portion. For example, when interviewee Herman describes a particular conductor, I relate his words to both *gesture* and *authority*. When Daniel talks about how conductors may overdo their signalling, I relate his words to *gesture*, *mentorship* (knowing how to guide) and *legitimacy* (why we need a conductor). I did not derive my coding process from preset code categories but allowed the codes to be easily created, modified and combined during the rereading process. I also deliberately chose to use strings of words, as opposed to single words, to produce broad and inclusive notions and associations—one theme-in-process, for example was *security-vulnerability-fear*; another was *devotion-passion-commitment*. In the final theme list, these ended up as *security* and *devotion*, but not until I had written and rewritten them several times (see section 7.3 below). From a methodological point of view, it is hard to keep terms broad enough to encourage thesis readers to make overlapping associations yet narrow enough to be able to reason with clarity. It is important to note that the theme labels I used, both throughout the process and in the final presentation, acquired their meaning through the elaborate interpretations presented in part III; they are not simple catchphrases. I chose my wording in order to retain interpretive flexibility. Even a poorly framed theme has communicative validity if it inspires a fruitful discussion about the issue.

HyperResearch also allowed me to annotate the codes with ideas, associations and linkages as I reread the interviews. In this way, I noticed that a number of themes reflected a dilemma or an axis of tension (for example, *whole-detail*, *intimacy-distance*, and *control-empowerment*). Even neutral themes contained sub-themes that represented balancing acts, such as *rehearsal management* (with its inherent tension between telling and doing) and *mentorship* (with its need to balance help and demands). Already at this stage of the research process, these balancing acts proved to be endemic. The

code list evolved as I read more interviews; while the selection of themes, and even the total number of themes, stabilised quite early in the process, the moulding of each theme proceeded apace until the end.

After about four rounds of rereading, the coding and corresponding theme list seemed secure, and additional readings yielded no further changes. The HyperResearch functionality then allowed me to create reports—that is, a document dedicated to each theme—that extracted the coded text portions from all the transcripts and assembled them. These theme reports represented processed research data that was available for developing the various elements of musical leadership.

7.3. Writing and re-writing themes

7.3.1. Interpretative turning point

I approached each theme report individually, first reading it and only later writing about it. While reading, I looked for singer statements that were particularly expressive, elucidated a common experience or represented a new angle. With the overcoded set of raw data sorted by theme, this reading process allowed for the extraction of the most salient text portions. The next step was to write down my understanding of each extracted singer statement and then to link the various statements so that they built upon one other. My writing and rewriting process allowed me to test how various singer statements worked together and determine the extent to which they were complementary or opposed and/or suggestive of another topic. Having written out the extracted text portions for a given theme, I then recombined and sequenced them to create a theme *story*, based on one of four general ways that a given text portion contributed to the story: (1) it exposed the same experience with different wording (deepen); (2) it provided a different experience of a similar situation (contrasting); (3) it provided a different facet of a similar experience (elucidation); and (4) it linked an experience to some other theme (connecting).

Apart from the quotations in part III, all of the text involved in the analysis is my own interpreted narrative—that is, *my* understanding—though I

drew upon external references and personal experience only very occasionally. I made a few value statements in relation to singers' quotations that were particularly interesting, concise or even beautiful. Whereas the creation of the theme reports was an interpretation-by-reading process, this stage was predominantly an interpretation-by-writing process, organised around the description of similar versus contrasting experiences. For example, I described the *liberation* theme according to the various ways that singers had experienced leadership that allowed them to sing freely. Some singers, on the other hand, described situations where conductors had inhibited their vocal production and constrained their musical expressivity. Most themes naturally opened for distinct sub-themes such as this one, accommodating the variety of singer experience.

Going from uncovering themes by reading to developing themes by writing is a significant turning point in the preparation of original research. The reading process is about understanding an individual singer's experience, often in light of other experiences. Uncovering themes there depends upon finding structure in the meaning, and thereby embarking on Ricoeur's hermeneutic arc. Theme structure turns into coding, which then determines the assembly of text portions that constitute a new text: the theme reports. The newness here resides in its thematisation and subsequent extraction. Once I embarked on interpretation-by-writing, I began to construct a narrative that was mine. The researcher as interpreter and narrator introduces a high degree of subjectivity to the research, and I tried to make my subjectivity as transparent as possible by adhering to two principles. First, every interpretive sentence I wrote was based on a singer's statement. Second, every part of my written narrative was exemplified by one or more quotations from the full statement. Consequently, part III, which includes these interpretations, is rather lengthy, in order to provide extensive traceability of the analysis.

My researcher footprint is largest in the act of grouping interviewees who are talking about similar situations or topics. This subjective act has two potential pitfalls: (1) assuming that two singers are discussing a similar issue, when in fact they are not; and (2) failing to include a singer's statement in a theme report that in fact involved that theme. The first case is not serious; the reader is able to contest the thinking as it is presented in part III. The second case is serious, to the extent that it impoverishes the development of a given theme. In any case, as the research process moves into interpretation-by-

writing, quality assurance moves from process to product. The value of the theme development in part III and the model proposals in part IV rests on the communicative usefulness of the themes themselves.

7.3.2. Emergent structure

At this stage in the process, I did not draw upon external theory to structure or sequence my writing, though I did reflect on the feasibility of interpreting-by-writing without external references. I decided that each of the theme reports was sufficiently rich in singer-generated concepts and reasoning to serve as the only necessary structuring mechanism for my initial draft. Because of the shared (and rather broad) kick-off question, most of the singers began with some kind of overall picture of a successful musical leadership experience, in the process introducing many of the more detailed themes that I could build on. This invited a cumulative writing process, where I could start with a few singer-generated concepts and then expand upon them as the singers provided additional words and concepts. Would it have been better to undertake this process with an externally supplied theory or framework? Given that I had not found a theory of musical leadership that would have addressed the comprehensive and holistic nature of musicking, I decided to approach it entirely on its own terms.

At a stage where most of the interpretation-by-writing was done theme by theme, I had to review the theme structure itself. The writing process would have either substantiated or weakened the given theme notion, and new linkages might have been discovered. It would also have become apparent whether or not the interview data were expressive enough to support a given theme. Here I did contemplate the need for outside theory to take the analysis to the next level. Given Colin and Køppe's (2007:31) definition of theory as an abstract conceptual frame for organising data, did I need such a mechanism to organise or group the two dozen themes that had emerged at that point? To answer this niggling question, I chose to bring in an external perspective: Ladkin's model of mastery, congruence and purposefulness. Because it seemed to fit closely with the themes generated from the material itself, I decided to let this model headline the main theme groups. Apart from bringing in Ladkin's model to create the overall theme structure, one specific theme requires a commentary: for the *rehearsal management* theme, it was natural to make use

of subthemes found in the conducting and choir research literature, whether or not they were fully covered in my interview material. Two themes from the interview material had to be dealt with outside Ladkin's model: *singer profiles* and the *complete experience*. Singer profiles do not deal with musical leadership as such but with their own self-perceptions and identities; they are therefore described as the final stage of the method applied in part II, exemplifying the results of the interviewee selection process. The complete experience is treated as a separate introductory theme in part III, because it addresses the question of conductor legitimacy, an issue outside Ladkin's model, and most leadership models, for that matter. The complete experience also serves as an introduction to the various more detailed themes. One theme (or perhaps non-theme), the *sounding music*, is challenging because it is both absent and omnipresent in the interview material. According to Gadamer's notion of play and in accordance with the compelling power of music described by Bergson, the sounding music must be considered an agent, or subject, alongside the conductor and the singers, rather than merely an object with which the ensemble operates. Although there is little explicit data on the role of the sounding music, it will be discussed in the summary section of part III and in the conceptual sections in part IV.

7.4. Presentation structure

The transition from interpreting-by-writing each theme to sequencing and grouping the themes takes place in the grey area between hermeneutic-phenomenological description and conceptualisation. The purpose at this stage, however, is still to stay as true to phenomenological description as possible by inviting the reader to take part in the singer's reasoning. Nevertheless, I needed a presentation structure within the frame of the sequential textual report. As discussed, the interviews started with the same open question. In some cases, it led to a holistic description of great musical leadership; in other cases, it led to much more specific observations. Holistic descriptions also emerged unprompted. Either way, these particular descriptions played a unique role in the analysis, because virtually all of the themes appeared in them, one way or another. I decided, therefore, to present these short but comprehensive passages in a separate chapter 9, before the detailed interpretations. In

addition, a group of themes is related to the *why*—that is, the purpose or legitimacy of the conductor role. These are described in chapter 10. The remaining themes are described according to the mastery-congruence-purposefulness model.

In discussing each individual theme, I rely upon various angles from a selection of singers. Sometimes singers describe different situations that represent similar experiences; other times these descriptions may reflect contrasting experiences of similar situations. In either case, the experiences represent a common subtheme. Different singers might also introduce apparently related angles that in fact constitute different subthemes. For the most part, however, I tried to limit the quotations in a given section to a specific theme and reserved particularly revealing longer lines of thought to my discussion of the holistic experience in chapter 9. Beyond these holistic descriptions, I have chosen not to present any full singer narratives. I undertook this fragmentation of a single interviewee's line of thought for three reasons. First, the explicit goal of each interview was to find topics that energised the interviewees and elicited a lot of feedback, likely at the expense of a fuller story. Second, I am able to generate more insight into a theme by linking similar thoughts across several interviewees than by confining myself to single interviewees, no matter how compelling they are. Third, it was difficult to conceal the identity of the interviewee (or conductor being talked about) when I utilised longer excerpts—they would therefore require neutralisation measures that in turn reduced their quality and relevance. This was especially the case for the group interview. I try not to make explicit which of the twenty-two interviewed singers were in the group interview. Hence, where those group interviewees built upon each other's thoughts in the dialogue (which was the point, of course), those connections are not shown. Nevertheless, I have tried to put all of the quoted statements in context, by describing how they came about in the interview or what preceded the dialogue in question.

For each theme, I follow a similar presentation structure: I provide a link to a previously covered theme, if appropriate, then introduce a singer's statement, followed by my understanding of its meaning and implications. I then build a bridge to a similar, contrasting, or new experience. The resulting sequence represents a conceptualisation, the aim of which was more to provide a readable sequence of thoughts than to introduce a structure as such. In part IV, I add more interpretation to the theme structure by converting the theme

sequence into a model. The text comprising part III is a thematic narrative constructed by me as the researcher; it is *my* story about the conducting phenomenon. While the descriptions are obviously extracted from the data and their meanings are latent in the material, the resulting narrative represents one understanding that the reader is invited to engage with, following my trail as far as it is traceable.

7.5. Language and translation

The writing process took place in English, though I first read and reviewed the interview transcriptions in Norwegian. Quotes were translated into English as a final step in the reporting, not as a step in the analysis. The reason for leaving the interview material in its original language throughout the interpretation process is very simple: it forced my interpretation to remain as true as possible to the expressed experience. However, working with two languages introduced an unexpected advantage: for every word and concept used by a singer, I had to think twice about the meaning. Often, a word had multiple translations, and every such choice involved the scrutiny of alternative interpretations, which served as a sort of continuous, self-imposed quality control. One example is the notion of *trygge koret* (assure the choir), which involves making the choir members feel secure and reassured that they will be able to master the performing situation. It is an unconventional use of words—the verb *trygge*⁴⁴ comes from the adjective *trygg*, whose meaning lies somewhere between sure, confident, safe and secure. I chose to translate the verb *trygge* as *assure* (avoiding the more common *reassure*) to acknowledge the fact that interviewee Trym had a very specific notion in mind as he was talking—that is, that the conductor should enable the choir not only to master the music material but also to know that they had done so. The words and their possible translations required additional considerations about what Trym had in mind.

⁴⁴ A verb requiring an indirect object.

The translation of the quotations into English separates the reader another step from the original conversation. For this reason, I found it acceptable to deviate from exact colloquial English equivalents and did not attempt to replicate every idiom, case of poor grammar or poor phrasing simply for the sake of it. The translated quotations were allowed to retain some of their linguistic imperfections even as I ensured that the English version conveys clearly and truthfully the point being made. Some of the English quotations may therefore be slightly better articulated than the originals. The following sample demonstrates some of the translation issues I encountered:

Arne: Det blir kanskje litt for store bevegelser og litt voldsomt, uten at det trenger å være det. Det er kanskje det jeg først og fremst tenker på, at man er litt rolig og avbalansert, men likevel ikke så svevende at man ikke skjønner hva man egentlig gjør der framme. At han klarer å beholde en tydelighet selv om han ikke har så store utagerende bevegelser.

Arne: Movements become a little too big and a little violent, maybe, not needing to be. That is perhaps what first strikes my mind, that [the conductor] is calm and balanced but still not so floating that you don't understand what is done up there. That he manages to maintain distinctiveness, even if he doesn't have these big, excessive gestures.

Norwegian makes more frequent use of the neutral third person (in the form of one, you, he) than English does. For example, Arne refers to both the conductor and the singer as *man* (one) in the same sentence. I have introduced [the conductor] in brackets in the first instance and *you* in the second instance to avoid confusion. The word *svevende* is translated into *floating*, although *svevende* refers to air rather than water—either way, I tried to capture the lack of anchoring. Incorrect syntax is partially retained and partially corrected.

Whereas the Norwegian quotations may be seen as primary data (although they had undergone a process of transcription), the English quotations should be seen as *illustrations* of points made. The originals can be made available to other researchers who are interested in scrutinising any effects of the translation.

7.6. Researcher's footprint

The guiding principle for the interpretive process has been to let the material speak to the reader. A key question is therefore what my contribution as an interpreter is, in terms of value added and biases introduced. My footprint as a researcher appears at four levels in the process, each with different degree of transparency to the reader:

- **Statement selection:** I have extracted the portions of the conversations that I found to be most salient, based on the text's ability to suggest new themes or add to already uncovered themes. The possible effects of non-selected portions are not transparent.
- **Theme labelling:** I associated the extracted texts with one or more themes through the coding process. The appropriateness of my coding is partially transparent, because the reader may judge to what extent a given quotation should in fact be linked to the proposed theme.
- **Theme writing:** This is the most visible researcher footprint. The interpretation-by-writing and elaboration of each theme is fully transparent to the reader.
- **Theme sequencing:** The presentation sequence is my implicit expression of how structure might be applied to the choral leadership phenomenon. The thinking is partially transparent in part III and is discussed explicitly in part IV.

The lack of transparency of statement selection requires further remarks. This process was intended to create an expressive and poignant narrative for each theme. I sought to include statements that had something to offer, and to exclude dialogues that were merely transitions or deviations or that were difficult to create meaning from. If text portions were left out that should not have been, this was because I was not able to attach significance to them. Parts of the interviews constituted periods of verbal wandering around, as we searched for good topics to dwell on. Perhaps other researchers would have selected other text statements, but I think they would most likely produce similar (though not identical) insights. The quest for expressive statements, which accommodated contrasting experiences as well, provided some protection against selection bias. It is still possible that I missed some things.

For this reason, I have chosen to view quantity as an aspect of quality and included some statements that might be considered redundant.

The partial transparency of the theme labelling should not be a key concern, because the theme labels acquired their meaning through the descriptions, not through any external or a priori definition. Lastly, there is one further researcher's footprint, over and above the four preceding points, that has to do with assumed completeness. The aggregate set of themes and the corresponding interpretations are rich and comprehensive, and I have been tempted to understand the data to give a rather full picture of the conducting phenomenon. I have therefore likely argued for this position, either implicitly or explicitly. It is a mistake, however, to assume that what the interviewed singers did not talk about either does not exist or is not important.

8. Singer profiles

Sample descriptions of the twenty-two interviewed singers are given. Their purpose is to enable an understanding of how background and profile might shape the experience of musical leadership. Despite having a fairly similar level of musical experience, the singers' profiles reveal widely differing life worlds, in terms of self-perception and outlook on choral singing.

I captured key facts about education and music experience prior to the actual interview, including a write-up via email. Given the open nature of the conversations, however, the singers also talked about their personal motives and self-perceptions to varying degrees during the interview. Some made a few incidental remarks about how they see themselves, while others elaborated at great length upon their own stories as singers. In this section, I will present a selection of singer profiles, partly as fragments and partly as longer narratives, for two main reasons. First, it will help the reader to understand the situations in which the interviewed singers see themselves, beyond the demographic data given in the section about sampling. Second, several singers make explicit and useful statements about their identity and its implications for their preferences of choir group and choral leadership. All of the singers in the sample are on the borderline between advanced amateurship and professionalism. I will discuss the singers via five profile themes: (1) entering the singer profession; (2) changing identity as the innocence of amateurship is lost; (3) the pride and joy of amateurship that some singers retain; (4) the expectation to participate in a learning process; and (5) how leader preferences can be linked to the feeling of joining a social club, when singers decide which ensemble to join, remain with

or leave. The purpose of this section is not to analyse the singers' profiles as such or to explain leadership preferences by correlating them with the profiles. Instead, these sample profiles will acquaint the reader with some of the interviewees and thus elucidate the various phenomena they describe and their views on leadership, as they are presented in part III.

8.1. Entering a profession

Sean is a young, part-time professional singer, having just completed his music education. Throughout the interview, he expresses a combination of pride and humility, as he finds himself in an environment with very skilled musicians. Sean feels the stakes are higher in the professional domain. He perceives pressure, from conductors and his peers, and responds by working very hard to merit his position. He sees himself as having the necessary qualifications, but this does not prevent him from harboring serious self-doubts and a fear of failure:

Sean: It should be enough proof that I sing in a very good ensemble, which is one of Norway's few professional choirs. So I should absolutely reassure myself that I am good enough. But I am probably an overachiever and don't dare to believe that I am really good. Since I started there, I seem to work stone hard to keep up with the others.

He seems to expend quite a bit of energy coping with his lack of self-confidence, and he is very open about his need for confirmation and praise:

Sean: I am probably one of those who fishes for praise. Maybe I strive a little extra in the choral situation because I want to be portrayed as . . . 'oh, you are so good'. I have in fact gotten a lot of confirmation of that, but then I cannot really believe it. It is very strange. It is very puzzling.

Conductor authority is a recurring theme throughout several interviews, and Sean admits that he needs order and authority around him. He offers insight into the direct link between his own childhood and family background, his self-image, his personal needs, and his view on conductor authority:

Sean: I have a very special family history, and I have probably an enormous need for authority in my life, I think. [. . .] I am a divorce child [. . .] and moved around a lot and [had a] rootless childhood and moved out

early on to live by myself. I am a very proper person. I assumed very early on that I should become something in life, get a good education, get good grades. But I am probably very unsure of myself, at least when it comes to music, because music is so personal, and when I sing, it is something that I give of myself. And I feel 99 percent of the time that what I do is not good enough.

Sean puts very high demands on himself, and he quickly assumes responsibility when an error is attributed to his voice group, even when it is not his fault. Sean finds it to be great fun but very hard work to be in a professional choir, and he is occasionally a soloist. It is interesting to note that, at one stage in the interview, Sean conveyed a much more self-assured image, in relation to his views on effective rehearsals. He considers himself to be a very good sight-reader and is eager to get to the work on musical expression:

Sean: That's the reason I could not sing in an amateur choir. And that sounds very arrogant, but I am simply too good, I get tired of having to hear my part be sung over and over again so that the clever ones will pull up those who aren't as clever. This may be because I am quite young and a bit arrogant and haven't understood my place in the world yet—that may be the case—but at least I stand behind it: I enjoy much more working in a professional environment.

Sean clearly defines himself as a professional choral singer, and his expectations of conductors reflect this self-image. Whereas Sean explores his own position and reveals mixed feelings, another singer with a similar profile, Daniel, has no doubt about who he is and what this implies for his expectations of the leader:

Daniel: I am a professional singer. That is my occupational pride. It is what I know how to do. It is in these situations that I make all these reflections. [. . .] The feeling of being treated as a professional is absolutely critical in order to get a good result at this level.

Throughout the interview, Daniel insists that being a professional choral singer is something completely different from being an amateur singer in an advanced amateur choir. In a professional ensemble, he points out, there is a meaningful musical result from the start, without any rehearsing of individual parts. By distancing himself from the amateur choral domain and the semi-professional choral domain (a term he implicitly rejects), he is associating with the professional orchestra domain. Despite different levels of inherent self-

assuredness, Sean and Daniel share an investment in the identity of professional choral singer, which impacts their views on conducting and conductors in turn. The fact that they are both new to the profession at times even leads them to demonstratively distance themselves from the skilled amateur choir.

8.2. Losing innocence

Daniel says that he is a professional singer and uses every marker available to stake out the territory. Other singers in the sample with the same education and experience levels, however, prefer the amateur domain or are still figuring out exactly what they want to do with their singing careers. Morten, another young singer, contemplates the costs and benefits of being a professional:

Morten: I have tried to figure out whether I should move into a professional career; it is a question of how much you can work. I have put myself in a [family situation], so I don't imagine that I can go all the way to being a fulltime freelancer and travel around without losing something important as a consequence. It might perhaps be more realistic to just hunt for the good experiences, so that I can preserve the joy of singing. Naturally, there will not be much money in it if you constrain yourself, but it must be *worth* it.

Morten's hesitation is lifestyle based, and he celebrates the joy of musical moments alone, even in the absence of a freelance career. I asked him if he thought the joy of making music would change if he took the leap and became a professional, and he replied:

Morten: That is of course the big troll in it—that you lose the joy of singing. I met my wife in the choir, therefore it's doubled. Should the joy of making music disappear, then a big part of life . . . would be lost.

Whereas Sean and Daniel reflected on their roles as activities, Morten introduces the *meaning* of being a choral singer. Surely the role is meaningful for Sean and Daniel as well, but it appears to be more self-evident or unproblematic. However, Morten raises meaning as a dilemma, a choice he has yet to resolve.

Leif is a singer who has already experienced the profound effects of the transition to professionalism. He has chosen to make a living from singing, as

best as he can, with a combination of projects and ensembles, including amateur efforts and soloist jobs. The following dialogue arose from a discussion about rehearsal efficiency:

Leif: [I] don't sing in choirs any more because I think it's fun. I've happened to be educated for this, and as of today I only do choral jobs if I get paid, unfortunately. I don't like it to be this way, but it is sort of an effect of my education. And efficiency⁴⁵ [in rehearsals] has become something that is incredibly important to me. But I don't notice whether it is there, because I expect it to be there.

Leif has gone from singing for the pleasure and personal reward in it to singing for compensation, and he is not entirely comfortable with such a rebalancing of attention:

Leif: I think it has been a very strange transition. Of course, it opens a lot of doors, but at the same time it's a little sad.

What's more, Leif even finds that some qualities of musicking were lost as he departed good amateurship for strict professionalism. He associates some of his greatest musical moments with his time as an innocent choral singer with no expectations beyond enjoying great music and musicking.

The dialogue with Leif, we can see, opens up a wide set of topics that constitute complex research domains in their own rights but are outside the scope of this dissertation. I have chosen to leave that door ajar, however, because it is such an important indication that leadership is contextual. Had my project been situated firmly within a well-established professional domain or the context of community choirs alone, the leadership role might have appeared to be more straightforward. The middle ground of the present project, on the other hand, accommodates a broader range of qualities, as well as the fact that conductors themselves sometimes operate in a mixed setting with amateurs and professionals.

⁴⁵ Efficiency is translated from the Norwegian *effektivitet*, which also means effectiveness. Several singers talk about *effektivitet*, and I have chosen to put more weight on the efficiency aspect of the word.

8.3. The pride and joy of amateurship

Stella offers another perspective on the amateur–professional relationship through the notion of level of musicking. Stella is a trained wind instrumentalist, but her passion is choral singing, although she is not trained as a singer. She sings in two choirs on a regular basis, one with high ambitions and a high-profile conductor, and one with more mixed competences but strong, idealistic views on musicality and musicking. This is how she describes the latter:

Stella: It is a choir of heart. That is where I can develop. The other places [are] okay—I am good at sight reading, I am good with rhythm, I can learn difficult material, I can go into a score that looks strange, crack a couple of codes, surely. Then I take what I learn back to [the choir of heart], when needed, and then we have the competence there. So of course, I benefit from other choirs as well. But the musical drive in [the choir of heart] I don't find anywhere else; I haven't found it yet, even with topnotch conductors.

She expresses less enthusiasm about the more ambitious choir but has stayed with it because she truly enjoys the fast pace, the sightreading challenges, and the professional mindset. Nonetheless, she does not find it to be as fulfilling as her choir of heart; the music may not be as challenging, but the musicking represents a never-ending quest for perfection and magic moments, and now and again those moments happen. Despite her evident skills, Stella values her choir of heart above her more polished alternatives, and she even complains about the widespread obsession with high-level repertoire over high-level performance. Despite her enjoyment of sightreading, her deepest joy comes from perfecting a piece she already knows. The sort of symbiosis she describes above in turn affects her perceptions of musical leadership as well, as we will see in part III.

Victor and Bob are two singers with years of choral experience, partly in the semiprofessional domain. Yet they often find professional choirs boring to listen to:

Victor: I have been at choral concerts that were supposed to be the top, with [choir] from [country], with [conductor name] as conductor and the like. I looked forward to it, that it was the top, but then I came out of the concert annoyed. I felt that it didn't touch me in any way, that it was

simply very clever, and I couldn't put my finger on what it was either, but there was something that made it not take hold of me in any way.

Bob: [I often] experience professional choirs as unbelievably boring to listen to. I would much rather hear passionate amateur choirs who do this out of will and joy, who give something, than professional choirs who sing what's correct and what's in the score. No matter how professional or great it is. And I think this has to do with the will and joy that some singers have. And that is an ingredient that amateur singers must have, in order to take part and to have this as a hobby.

Victor recalls a specific incident that demonstrated to him his preference for the slower pace and gradually maturing expressivity of the advanced amateur ensemble over the 'cleverness' of the professional ensemble. Bob proposes that there are elements of expression that constitute some sort of uncontaminated devotion, and that they are no longer available to choirs once they become professional and project efficient.

Maria is a college professor in music pedagogy who defines herself as an amateur singer. Her reflections came out of a dialogue about acceptable and non-acceptable conductor behaviours, and how she especially disliked the way that some conductors pick on individuals:

Maria: I don't think I would want to be in such a place. I mean, it's supposed to be pleasant. It has to be enjoyable to make music. It is something you do with a certain extra energy, in my mind. And for me, it is a leisurely pastime, not a career project. If it had been [a potential career], I would possibly have gone more head over heels and crossed dead bodies to become part of an ensemble with prestige [...] and then you would tolerate or accept or adapt to a type of conductor who is not kind.

For Maria, the choir experience should be comfortable, and, because she has acknowledged herself to be an amateur, she does not feel compelled to accept a conductor who is not nice.

For singers with the competence levels of the present interviewee sample, it is common to be a conductor as well. While the interviewees were asked to reflect on conducting from the singer's point of view, their conducting experience and practice often also came through in the conversations, more or less consciously. And some singers, such as Arne, explicitly addressed the topic:

Arne: Right now, I am primarily a conductor, I believe. But I am still a singer. But I probably don't feel so much as a singer as I used to, because [the choir where I sing] doesn't rehearse every week, it's a little less frequent. But I conduct more often. But I feel like a singer, really. I'm just a conductor more often than singer.

Arne finds that being a singer himself affects his conducting practice, but he is still able to describe what he would like from a conductor. He notes that the two worlds are quite different, and that it is important not to forget what it is like to be a singer. In addition, being a conductor affects his singing. He sees himself as more attentive and responsive to particular conducting signals as well as the overall rehearsal process. While we could see Arne's reflections as beside the point, in that the present study is devoted to singers' perceptions of musical leadership, I found that those singers with conducting experience sang at a higher level as a result of it. This devotion and ability translated into vivid, richly experienced, even passionate accounts of practice (and conducting). I will return to this discussion at the end of part III.

8.4. Being in progress

Personal development is an aspect of the singer's role in any choir, amateur or professional, though the motives for and content of it may vary. Kristine describes her views on development and her developing attitude towards contemporary music:

Kristine: It is a process. It is not only the conductor who may improve, but also I will improve. Because it's no fun to be part of something where you are standing still and only sing a few notes. We should stretch ourselves all the time. So I've had to work a lot on having a positive attitude towards some contemporary music, for example, which has made me furious at times. I've found it meaningless to spend a lot of time, stand here at home and drill things where I don't get the point. But of course, if I show up at the rehearsal with a terribly negative attitude, I will affect those around me as well.

Kristine, who is a part-time professional singer, accepts the fact that she has to perform music that she finds meaningless—it is simply part of the job. She also realises that doing the job well implies working on her attitude towards new

material in general and expanding her horizons because of it. If she were not as committed to the professional aspect of singing, she might have had a different approach to her own development. Kristine introduces some of the options facing a singer who is not comfortable with a particular choir or conductor: stay and work on yourself or choose a choir with a better repertoire fit (or a different conductor, for that matter). The key point concerning interpretation is that singers' views must be understood in light of the actual choirs and conductors they are attracted to, choose to remain with, or quit.

8.5. Leader preferences—club selection

The community choir as a social club is an obvious and well-known notion, whether it is the members or the leaders (or both) who define and sustain it. This is less true of the ambitious choir that is focused on musical performance, and of the professional ensemble. However, even professional and semiprofessional singers are drawn to some conductors and avoid from others. Trym, who is a freelance singer and one of those in the sample with the most extensive conductor exposure, is very specific about which conductors he will sing with:

Trym: I would not want to sing in a choir with [conductor name 1] as conductor. I might take an assignment, but probably not.

Trym: I haven't sung much with [conductor 2] either and that is also a conscious choice. He is a nice person and I think he has achieved a lot with the choirs he has had. [But] I think he is a very clear example of someone who was very good early in his career.

Trym: While we talk about [conductor 3], can you understand how it is possible to conduct a choir well like this [showing fist hands]? [. . .] I don't understand it. It is so uptight. He is ambitious and has been clever musically speaking and such. But you can't make a singer breathe well when you have fist hands most of the time.

Trym: [I have] experience with conductors who I thought were the best in the country maybe; [. . .] I don't even want to sing with them now.

The fact the conductors attract certain singers and repel others demonstrates that singers look for the leadership they need. In other words, when they

describe what makes conducting and conductors work, they are in fact describing leadership they have experienced that responded to the full array of premises, competence, history, maturity and hang-ups that constitutes them as singers. In these situations, there is probably a high level of mutual understanding, with highly overlapping horizons of understanding (in Gadamer's sense). This is an important perspective upon my research question. When I ask what characterises great musical leadership, I must complement it with *great musical leadership for whom?* The reminder here is that 'who' is not a question of sampling and segmenting interviewees but of recognising them on an individual level. Assuming that all choral singers act on their preferences like Trym, and that those preferences will vary according to their deep needs, singers and conductors will form clubs.

Ragna is a young singer who has extensive choral experience in the advanced amateur segment. At a certain point, she felt that she was part of a club that was no longer for her, and she chose to quit. It all began with a complete changeover of singers in her voice group:

Ragna: It was only me left in the end. And those coming in were young and Christian. And I may be young, but I am not Christian; so the conductor attracted these people and the profile of the choir attracted these people. [. . .] And I still thought that I should stay because of the conductor. But [. . .] it stopped working [. . .] the concerts didn't turn out so well.

Choirs as teams change more or less rapidly, but most change constantly. For Ragna, the change was so big, in terms of both scale and type, that she felt alienated. In addition, she felt let down by the leadership, which was no longer able to fulfil the potential that she had been accustomed to. Apparently, Ragna's initial attraction to the choir was the conductor, so in the process, she was doubly disappointed.

One of the effects of seeing the ensemble as a club is bonding with the conductor. Birgit suggests that choral singers care more for the conductor than orchestra instrumentalists:

Birgit: I have experienced that most choristers are very fond of their conductor. [. . .] No matter how bad the conductor is, it is their conductor, and they are fond of him or her and are accustomed to that conductor. But how often have you been to an after-concert party and heard [orchestra] musicians badmouthing the conductor? Not unusual.

The singer profiles exemplified in this section demonstrate that singers take part in the musicking situation and negotiate with the leadership based upon their own needs and expectations. Even if the interviewed singers share many characteristics in terms of competence and interests, they all have unique approaches to their role as choral singers, and this variability is a requisite to understanding their views of conducting, as we will see in part III.

PART III – Understanding conducting through the choral singer experience

Part III presents the singer's view on musical leadership, as articulated by the interviewees and via my interpretation of their statements. The first section deals with the overall experience with conducting and conductors. This is where the interviewees' most holistic perspectives are presented, including the ways in which they see the role as an integrated phenomenon. The second section deals with the legitimacy of the conductor role, what makes it meaningful and why they want it. The remaining sections cover a series of specific themes in more detail. Throughout the interpreting process, the guiding principle has been to use the interviewees' words and concepts as much as possible, and to impose external theory only when absolutely necessary.

9. The holistic experience

When singers were interviewed, they were always invited to introduce any topic or reflection on musical leadership. Conversations tended to drift between the specific, incidental or anecdotal and the holistic. Singers reflected on experiences that were unrelated to a specific situation or conductor and followed elaborate lines of thought on named conductors. The holistic perspectives are especially interesting because they often highlight the most important themes—that is, those that shape the aggregate experience of musical leadership. Furthermore, the holistic perspective at times reveal the singer's trade-offs, the balancing judgments that must be made when desired leadership features are in conflict. In this section, I will present some of the holistic perspectives that were prompted by my initial question regarding what characterises a situation where great musical leadership is exercised. This presentation has a dual purpose. First, in each of the following statements, the singers weave together a broad range of thoughts on the overall experience of conducting. Second, these holistic descriptions serve as introductions to the more specific themes that occupy the following sections.

9.1. Two bars of bliss

I will let Nora's description introduce the overall experience. She provided a beautifully phrased statement about great musical leadership in response to the opening question:

Nora: That is a blissful situation. The music is in focus, and the conductor knows exactly what he or she needs to do to get it to work. The conductor listens; he hears where to put his finger and fix things. And he unites the ensemble to sound like one choir and pulls everyone to share one

thought, so that all concentrate on one thing. [...] The aim is that it happens in concert, but it might just as well happen at a rehearsal—in fact, it often happens there [laughs], in my experience. And then, standing there, I think, ‘Oh, this is life’. It could in fact be just two bars, or getting a passage right that you have worked on for a long time, or you hear that it all comes together, or you master everything better than before. When everything works, there needs to be a shared feeling, not just ‘yes, now I did it’ while the next person thinks, ‘I didn’t do it’. You have to have a shared experience of ‘oh, now it’s there’. And then complete silence when we’re through with the piece, because there is nothing more to say. Then focus is sort of removed from the conductor, he has done his job, and the music becomes the key point. That is what I perceive as an absolutely good—or rather fantastic—conductor. Or someone who is able to use movements so that as a singer I am breathing correctly, who has movements and gestures that make me just flow with the music, who is able to show it in a physical way, so that as a singer I may sing freely. In those moments, I am a happy singer, when I may stand in front of such a conductor, who in addition [...] has prepared himself musically, who shows the music, who has an idea behind it, an idea that you can buy into.

Nora describes great leadership as a situation where the music comes into focus and the conductor fades out of focus. When investigating the conducting phenomenon, it is very tempting to always see the conductor as the subject playing the key role, especially in light of conducting’s history and the executive powers of the position. However, people also often point to well-executed music as a sort of omnipresent euphemism for the successful conductor. But Nora’s observation has deeper implications. If the conductor does relinquish ‘key subjectness’, and the music becomes this, what does it mean? First and foremost, it means that the *music is playing us*. Consequently, when we interpret what singers say about musical leadership, we must remember that, the conductor plays the lead role in a managerial sense, he or she does not play the lead role in a hermeneutic sense. The music as play (in the Gadamer sense) is at times the most prominent leader. How we experience the music itself, and its capacity for organising, seducing and commanding, is fundamental to how we experience musical leadership, even in terms of what we yearn for, despise, accept or reject about it.

Nora indicates that great leadership requires knowledge as well as the ability to mobilise the ensemble. In her words, knowledge includes the musical idea—that is, a vision of where it should be going as well as how to get there,

including error detection and repair. Mobilisation is needed to unify the ensemble around the musical idea. Nora observes that great musical moments can happen during rehearsals or in concert. While preparation and performance represent two different modes of musicking, she reminds us that rewards are not solely to be gained in the concluding flourish. The rehearsal process is goal oriented and instrumental—we rehearse in order to make the music presentable—but there are also existential goals and rewards associated with practicing. Nora also captures the notion that great musical moments (as the results of great musical leadership) have an existential value: ‘This is life’. She is even literally thinking about moments, since a mere two bars, if everything comes together just so, is enough to create the sensation. She also observes that such moments cannot be experienced in solitude but must take place as a shared experience, which is why, when they happen and everybody knows it, there is truly nothing more to say. Nora describes, that is, a wordless intersubjective sensation.

Her last observation is that great leadership liberates her singing. The conductor’s breath and gestures directly affect her own body and sense of flow. In terms of cues and signals, the conductor realises his/her impact through conscious and evident perception and corresponding response on the part of the singer. The singer starts when the conductor gives the downbeat, enters a phrase where cued, and begins to crescendo when indicated. When Nora describes this liberating effect, she is pointing to a much deeper impact, one that is as much corporeal as cerebral. Conductor movements enable her to physically flow with the music even as she consciously reflects upon (and rejoices over) the fact that it is all coming together as a whole.

9.2. Double features

Trym was asked whether he had a favourite conductor (he did) and to describe what worked so well with him:

Trym: He is clear. He expresses when he is dissatisfied, which he often is. But he doesn’t dwell on it. He has high standards and is good in the performing situation. He has very good rehearsing technique and is able to build further on it and make it special, also in the concert situation. He is not wishy-washy but no nonsense—just straight ahead.

In this rather dense ideal picture, Trym bridges the conductor's strength in the rehearsing situation with the performing situation. He first describes aspects of efficient rehearsals and praises the conductor for his directness; he also recognises that even negative feedback can be effective, if the conductor does not dwell on it. Most importantly, he applauds the fact that good preparation only serves as a basis for the potentially special moments that happen during performance, never remaining a technician only. Implicitly, Trym is suggesting that not all conductors are equally effective in both rehearsals and concerts. This apparently trivial observation about the dichotomy between preparation and performance is in fact the point of departure for two very different academic traditions: the combined disciplines of project management, pedagogy and team development, on the one hand, and artistic and aesthetic research, on the other. Trym's favourite conductor is able to blend craft and art; in fact, it is the blend itself that makes him stand out. The significance of this blend is at the heart of the present project's research approach, and it is a challenging affair, given that no single discipline can claim the territory.

Gustav introduces another blend: a conductor's communicative abilities and his/her technical skills. He reflects on a specific experience with one of his early conductors and mentors in response to a direct question about what he appreciated most about this conductor (it was clearly not his technical skill):

Gustav: He conducted in a very strange way. There are things that I am unable to put into words [when it comes to] his communication, how he came across as some kind of authority. [...] But his conducting technique [...] was nothing to boast about. [...] Still, it worked. He could say very good things, but that wasn't so fantastic either, in its own right. So, what was it? [...] Of course, he had clear ideas about how it should be, but he didn't micro-manage, [...] there was lots of initiative out there and we were singing and having a great time. And the result was good.

Even early in his singing career, then, Gustav has realised that this conductor was technically weak, to an extent that his strange conducting style is the first thing that comes to mind about him. He was not overly impressed by this conductor's oral skills either. Nevertheless, the conductor had ideas about the music, he had a certain authority, and he was able to communicate—something about the ambiance that he created allowed room for musicking, in a way that made the singers feel good about what they were doing. Herman extends

Gustav's example across various experiences with successful conductors, especially in terms of how they communicate with the choir:

Herman: Sometimes you meet a conductor and it just works immediately, without you even knowing the person. It can happen. Clearly, it has to do with security, [. . .] whether conductor and choir know each other well. But it is perhaps most interesting to look at why, for some, it works so very well immediately. I am not sure there is a textbook answer. It has to do with personality—it has to—[with] radiance, eye contact. I believe it has a lot to do with such things, much more than with conducting technique. Again, I have to say that basic conducting technique needs to be there, but there are other things that often determine whether it is good or bad.

Herman recognises that good communication is generally founded on a sense of security and well-established relationships but wonders why instant rapport is also possible. He attributes it to presence—'radiance' and eye contact—rather than technical skills. Having made this point, he promptly returns to the premise that technical skills must be in place as well. The competition between communication and technical skills represents a major theme throughout all of the interviews. It is an excellent example of a double feature—themes tend to come in pairs as interviewees balance conductors' behaviours and conducting attributes. When singers make choices or otherwise act based on how they balance these elements, they are making trade-offs, an inherent characteristic of many of the themes emerging from the interviews that I will elaborate upon in many of the following sections.

9.3. Ambiance

Gustav and Herman talk explicitly about contact and communication while only hinting at its positive effects upon the working environment. Lucy does not mention communication as such but describes aspects of the communicative and interactive space between the conductor and the choir when great leadership is exercised:

Lucy: The chemistry must be there. There has to be a musical leader who is conscious about his job as a musical leader. So, in reality, that atmosphere, or that space or that feeling or certainty about whether it

can happen—it is created prior. If it is a musical leader [whom] we don't know, it will become very noticeable in the preparation phase whether this is a conductor who is interested in team play and making use of the resources that exist in the ensemble or not.

She uses words like atmosphere, space and feeling to describe the state that a conductor instils in the ensemble. She sees the musicking situation as a privileged place, where good things may happen, and the leader is responsible for creating it by indicating a conscious, deliberate desire to team up with the singers and make good use of the choral resources at hand. Like Herman, Lucy realises that singers notice very early on whether there is a rapport with a new conductor or not. While describing what it is that creates this rapport, Lucy captures the very essence of it: the willingness to be with someone. The successful conductor evinces this willingness and creates a place for its expression.

Arne is one of several singers who talk extensively about the working environment and the choir ambiance as part of the overall picture of good leadership:

Arne: [Ambiance] means a lot; a good ambiance in a choir is almost everything. [...] If there is a bad ambiance in the choir, regardless of what the reason might be, it's not going to take long before the choir goes down the drain, I think.

Arne believes that the viability of the whole ensemble depends upon its 'ambiance'. I then pointed out that there are rough, even obnoxious conductors who are still known for great musical achievements. Arne agrees and reflects on why singers put up with this behaviour:

Arne: Those who sing in [that choir] are able to handle the situation and his way of being and perhaps in fact like it that way. I don't think I could stand it, over time, to be under such leadership. I would surely have coped for a period, but it wouldn't be what I really wanted. For me, it is important to have a better ambiance than that. [...] The conductor's way of working and not least the conductor's professional experience and knowledge mean a lot to me. At least when I am in a regular ensemble, a competent conductor who is likeable is important to me.

He makes an interesting distinction between the project choir and the permanent ensemble here, in relation to the corresponding notions of project conductor and team builder. The encounter between conductor and singers is

different in these two working environments, which seem to further imply different singer standards for conducting skills and behaviour as well.

9.4. The ultimate trade-off

In a number of the conversations, usually towards the end, I introduced the ‘ultimate trade-off question’, or what came to be called the scumbag question. The purpose of this question was partly to force a choice from the person when neither of the two offered alternatives was desirable, and partly to seek new themes if the conversation was starting to run dry. It is not a research question in its own right, then, but a vehicle for exploring further lines of thought. The question went as follows: ‘If you could choose between a fantastic musical experience with a scumbag of a conductor and a middle-of-the-road but still good musical experience with a really likeable conductor, which would you prefer?’ No one, interestingly, chose the likeable conductor. The rationale for this seems to be based on the combination of two very different strategies, one existential and one pragmatic. Arne was the exponent of the latter:

Arne: On a project basis, I would probably have chosen a fantastic experience with the scumbag conductor. I probably would have. Because I would have known that it was only for a period. But if it were a regular ensemble, I would probably have chosen the other one, without being absolutely certain about it.

Even Arne, who values good ambiance so much that he made it one of his choir selection criteria, would go for the great musical moment and suffer the obnoxious leader. This is pragmatic coping: some of the singers were willing to endure the misery as long as it was temporary, in the interests of peak experiences? The following dialogue with Kristine about a specific conductor shows examples of the various dilemmas she faced in this regard, and how she resolved them:

Kristine: I always wanted to do my best, even if I believed he was a dickhead a lot of times, because I knew that he also could provide some of the greatest musical moments I had ever been part of. You forgave a lot along the way. But most people could not have behaved like that and come out of it the same way.

Dag: The fact that he behaved like a dickhead—is that also what made it good?

Kristine: I [...] did think a lot about that. The fact that he had such temper, I believe, may have been [good], because it also had positive effects. And clearly, when you burn for something and it goes heels over head, it clearly may create some magical moments, which it also did.

In Kristine's view, bad behaviour does not necessarily conflict with great music. In her particular example, it even brought something to the sounding music. Some conductors, of course, may deliberately behave on the edge of acceptability as part of their artistic process. But Kristine realises that the success of this strategy depends on the conductor's personality as well as the musical experience, and that not every conductor can get away with it. Despite the great musical experiences she had with this conductor, she does not want to do new projects with him, because it is too demanding. I asked her if the musical reward made her think twice:

Kristine: [Laughs] He has called and asked if I can join on something, and fortunately I was not able to. But I thought about whether I could endure going into it again, because I know that I will be so emotionally engaged. [...] He demands that others must be as dedicated to what they do as he is. But if I had been able to, I probably would have participated.

Dag: So, in other words, you are not burnt?

Kristine: No, no no. Oh no. It is what makes it so thrilling to sing in a choir, these characters you meet along the way.

Although Kristine appears to balance her view pragmatically, like Arne does, her rationale for preferring 'the dickhead', as she puts it, is more existential. Her mind is absolutely not clear regarding what she wants. First she wants no further part of it, then she probably would do it after all. Her lack of conviction is so evident that it is the coincidence of calendar availability that will decide the next time she works with this conductor. Her coping swings between the emotional stir of the heat of the situation and a meta-perspective on her life as a choral singer and all of the interesting 'characters you meet'. In this way, of course, even the unlikeable conductor is made meaningful.

9.5. Lift-off

Despite Kristine's willingness to endure personalities and situations that she does not approve of but still reaps pleasure from, her description of her preferred leadership style is somewhat different:

Kristine: I think I would describe that as interplay, that it is a conductor who is able to make me show my best sides, who has prepared text and music properly and who you feel that you have worked with in-depth. And then in concert I really feel that we are able to bring forward what we have been working with, including my personal . . . maybe not personal expression but my strong sides, that I am really able to get those out in the concert situation.

What Kristine deeply appreciates, then, is the leader who brings out the best in her. She sees this as deriving from a process of working together, an in-depth collaboration that leads to a performance where it all comes out. She makes a further interesting distinction between expressing herself and showing her strengths, displaying a willingness to relinquish the former in the interests of the latter. Kristine's experience highlights the duality of musical leadership, its double features, in the way that she makes these sorts of trade-offs while balancing her preferences. Her notion of desirable leadership is clear, but she is willing to accept an alternative arrangement, with all of its frustrations, for another set of benefits and rewards. In my view, this kind of trade-off is exactly why it is virtually impossible to make any statement about musical leadership that cannot be modified, twisted or even inverted and still be valid. It even seems as though the two-sidedness of themes and the fragile, contingent nature of preferences are among the more stable attributes of the conducting phenomenon.

The quest for great musical moments is a lingering theme in all of the singers' descriptions of good leadership, though it surfaces in different ways. We saw the force of Kristine's yearning for musical magic in her acceptance of a conductor whom she can barely endure emotionally. Jenny describes a far less tumultuous experience of great leadership, which for her is about collaborative effort, inspiration and liberation:

Jenny: It is kind of a lift-off situation that is really good, when the conductor functions well during a concert [. . .] you as a singer are able to get into a flow situation, you breathe much better, you make music much better right away. There are a number of ways that the conductor may

function well or poorly; there is a lot of individuality. It is not only about beating the correct beat patterns. I experience it as liberating and I am lifted forward as a singer. You are allowed to sing freely. I mean that you are led in a way, but you are not micro-managed or overcontrolled.

The theme running through Jenny's statement is the liberating effect of good conducting, a flow situation that seems strongly linked to breathing, among other things. She does not spell out what the conductor actually does when things go well; her description is primarily about the impact on her. She does, however, make one interesting remark at the end: she is led without being excessively controlled. Here lies yet another dichotomy of the conductor role: there are obvious elements of control, which is its very purpose, of course, but there is a grey area as well where control comes to inhibit the ability to sing freely.

9.6. Not wasting time

Sean had thought extensively about what constitutes great leadership, specifically in the rehearsing situation. He talks about how conductors waste time in a number of ways, by not understanding the choir's needs. His point of departure is that the conductor must be well prepared for the rehearsal problems that might arise and make a clear distinction between what should be individual preparation (and fixes) and what should be plenary work. He is also very critical about unnecessary reruns and recurring faults, and he expects targeted interventions:

Sean: It is about knowing specifically what is going wrong—how can I [the conductor] psychologically intervene, knowing what the singer is thinking right there? In what way can I resolve it and see to it that we move on?

Effective plenary work requires that the conductor knows exactly where and how to intervene. Sean expects the conductor to mentally identify with the singers, understand why they are struggling in order to help and move forward. The most important pitfall he sees is when conductors fail to judge how far to go in trying to fix a problem. He says that every choral singer at times loses motivation because he or she is exhausted, especially after lengthy rehearsals.

In Sean's view, if the conductor does not know how to reenergise the group at this point, the rehearsal must stop:

Sean: Those who cannot sing it will never be better than there and then, and those who sing it really well will sing themselves to boredom. So this is the golden middle road. [. . .] To know when enough is enough. Combine your own musical needs with the choristers' needs, so to speak. You can't be too nice, either. That is a mistake many [conductors] make; especially somewhat inexperienced conductors with low self-confidence, I believe, have a tendency to give up too easily.

Conductors need to recognise the marginal benefits of too much additional effort, one more try, yet another rerun. Singers become fed up, and beyond that point, time is wasted. In Sean's view, everybody's time is wasted—those singers who have fixed it as well as those who still struggle. Having said that, he pulls back a little and admits that some conductors stop too early as well. However, Sean's statement indicates that determining the most appropriate intervention is not only about knowing the music but also about knowing the singers, as voice instruments and as human beings. Sean's description opens up a wide theme that we might label rehearsal management. Sean's view is well in line with English conductor Sir Adrian Boult (1949:39), who said, 'The most important things are to see that everybody is happy and comfortable and to waste no time'.

9.7. Theme structure

The descriptions of the overall experience in this chapter introduce most of the themes that will be elaborated in the rest of part III. Because the various themes are linked to some degree, they may overlap, and one theme may be a subset of another, the choice of presentation structure necessarily reflects a certain conceptualisation. Although such conceptualisation preferably should come out of the description and interpretation, a theme sequence must be used to present the material. In light of the themes introduced in chapter 9, Ladkin's three-element model (mastery, congruence, purposefulness) will serve as the centrepiece of the structure. This model deals with how leadership is enacted. In addition to this, and to the corresponding impact of leadership, the singers also reflect on the role itself—the *why* and the *what for*. Preceding Ladkin's

elements, then, is the legitimacy theme—that is, how the right to lead is earned and merited. There is yet another element that needs to be considered as well: the sounding music and its significance for leadership. The main presentation structure is as follows:

- Leadership legitimacy
- Mastery
- Congruence
- Purposefulness
- The sounding music

In the context of conducting as perceived impact, the *why* and the *what for* are not about formal position and employment contracts but about how singers give meaning to the role. As perceived impact, leadership legitimacy is *awarded legitimacy*.

Mastery encompasses a range of themes related to skills and knowledge, including how they are deployed and applied. Central to mastery is the ability to hold contradiction and ambiguity, as described by Ladkin (and largely dismissed in the classical leadership theory canon). We will see how contradiction, tension and balancing acts run through most of the mastery themes.

I will apply the term 'coherence' rather than 'congruence' in Ladkin's model. This is not meant as a distinction between the two terms, but to reserve 'corporeal congruence' as a subset of 'coherence', the way in which the various facets of 'coherence' come together as bodily manifestation. Coherence includes the themes related to the leader as a whole person, and the features of leadership that make it credible. The key themes belonging to coherence are contact, authority, sincerity, devotion and musical vision. The embodied nature of conducting requires a corporeal congruence—that is, all of the coherence themes are about the fit between intention and action and between message and the way it is delivered.

Ladkin frames the purposefulness issue by considering both the instrumental goals of leadership and their existential implications. Purposefulness is not only about achieving goals but about making sense of them for the ensemble. A key question in dealing with the interview material is

how purposefulness is manifested or ensured in a music ensemble. The singers talk about several themes dealing with what happens between the conductor and the singers, and between singers—purposefulness in the context of lived experience is created as intersubjective experience. The singers describe such experience in terms such as a common room, a state where time is standing still, a shared flow. Building on Ladkin's notion of purposefulness, I propose to apply the wider concept of *intersubjective space*, including all of the various themes that deal with sensemaking. In the final chapter of part II, I discussed the sounding music. It plays a strange and challenging part in the interviews, seldom explicitly addressed but nevertheless everpresent and pervasive.

At this point, I would like to come back to the openness of the research question. For the purpose of this project, as was stated in section 4.7.2, it has been important not to impose any preset bias on the leadership concept. There is no particular feature that is given primacy over any other—knowledge above action, behaviour above skills, or achievements above way of being. In fact, the interviewed singers touch upon all of these features. However, throughout the process of interpreting the interviews, the emerging themes did not fall neatly into competence features, behaviour features or action features. (The exception is music skills and knowledge, which is presented as an explicit subset of mastery.) Other types of skills and knowledge, including, for example, people-relation skills, are more or less visibly embedded in other themes.

10. Legitimacy of the designated single leader

The descriptions of great musical leadership in chapter 9 refer to situations in which a conductor plays a distinct role. The interview question soliciting these descriptions assumes that there is a leader and implicitly positions the ensuing dialogue within a music tradition that accommodates a conductor as a prominent figure. Still, the singers do reflect on the *why*, in different ways. The purpose of the present chapter is to examine how they view the legitimacy of the conductor role, what makes the role meaningful, and what gives the conductor the right to exercise leadership. Legitimacy seems to arise both from how the role is construed—that is, the expectations associated with it—and how the role is enacted in each individual case. Hence, there are thematic overlaps between this chapter and all of the subsequent chapters in part III. While this chapter deals with the legitimacy of the role as such, the other chapters address themes that can either enhance or weaken legitimacy, depending upon how the leadership in question is exercised.

10.1. Unifying efforts

In the course of the interviews, a dialogue around singing without a conductor often arises, in one way or another. Every singer has done without a designated leader at some point, whether with a small vocal group in concert or as a rehearsing step with a larger choir. Questions about how music is affected by the absence of a conductor, and how singers adapt when they have no gestural leadership, seem to be particularly enlightening regarding the conducting position. Descriptions of empty versus filled conductor spaces prompt recollections about various lived situations as well as what-if explorations. Whereas many of the other dialogues are about the multitude of ways and

modes of being a conductor and of conducting, this particular dialogue tends to engage with the rationale for the role, the legitimacy of this person's presence, and the meaning of the conducting phenomenon. An implicit assumption underlying this entire project, of course, is that the conductor makes a difference, whatever that might be, and the interviews show this to be true. Further insight into these issues arises from the converse situation to the conductorless rehearsal as well—most of the singers have experienced a series of conductors in the course of a few hours, in the same location, with the same choir, performing the same music—for example, at conductor auditions or conducting competitions. These singers too have visibly and audibly sensed the influence of the role, and further that, all things being otherwise equal, different conductors have very different impacts. Trym is an experienced singer in conductor-audition choirs, often used in higher conductor-education admissions. In Trym's experience, singers in these sorts of groups are highly skilled and usually know the music inside out.

Trym: When practically everyone knows it [the music], it is the conductor alone who guides the performance. One [interesting] thing is to see the conductor's expression when he does a wee bit with his hand and then something happens with the choir, what an aha-experience and eureka that is for the person—that is really amusing.

Trym recognises that these people are very responsive singers, so the smallest signal affects the music (and, in turn, the conductor candidate). He also observes how bad the music sounds when the ensemble dutifully follows an inappropriate conductor signal—for example, a gesture that is at odds with the music's style.

Trym: In those situations, only a few of the conductors have done better than we could have done alone. But notice that this is when the singers present are top notch. But also, then, there have been a couple [of conductors] who have added something and made us fully buy into the conductor's team, and [together we] excelled at making music and felt that it became better. So it is possible for the best conductors to do it.

Trym is very clear about the effect of the conductor, underlining how the smallest gestural detail impacts the singers, for better or for worse. He is quite cynical and even a little blasé, writing off all of those who fail to bring something of value to the (apparently rather jaded and in any case quite

capable) ensemble. Whereas Trym notes the impact of the conductor who is present, Arne reflects on what happens when the conductor is not present:

Arne: You are then very much left on your own as a choir. [...] Everyone perhaps needs to take more responsibility for getting where we are going and doing what we have agreed to do. Things very easily fall apart and become somewhat less precise than if you have someone in front that leads. [...] Yes, you lose the clear leadership.

He sees several positive effects of having no conductor—singers assume more responsibility, for example, and they concentrate and listen more deliberately. Yet he notes that things can fall apart, perhaps in terms of timing (he mentions ‘precision’) or other musical elements like tone onsets, accents and consonants. In the absence of distinct leadership, distinctive features of the music can be lost as well. Sean actually envisions such a situation:

Sean: Should you fall out, which I have experienced with a quartet, there is no chance to save yourself again—no one to take hold of it before it happens. You fall out, and then you have to begin again from some point. What you lose is the overall control, someone who takes responsibility, helps out and keeps everyone in place.

Even for the very small ensemble, then, Sean sees no other option but a conductor for keeping control. He assumes that the conductor will be able to anticipate problems before they actually materialise. The presence of the conductor likewise removes any doubt as to where this control resides, and where to look for guidance or rescue. Sean also reflects on his experience with a choir of twenty singers that had no conductor for a particular piece of music:

Sean: One thing that often happens when you don’t have a conductor is that you flatten—well, that can happen in any case—[and] the tempo changes, usually increasing if the song is fast. I remember we were singing an arrangement of [demonstrates the song], and we were speeding up and speeding up and we wondered, ‘Where is this happening?’ And no one could tell us that it was there where we increased. Instead, we had to record it, and when we listened to the recording . . . ‘Oh yes, that’s where we in fact increased’.

Sean focuses on the negative aspects of a lack of central oversight and observes that certain ‘control elements’ fall apart, such as tempo and pitch. The singers’ awareness of the total picture is not good enough, and they are unable to determine where and why things go wrong. For Sean, the main benefit of

having a conductor is his/her ability to keep things together, and he summarises by stating that there is an audible effect:

Sean: Why do we essentially have a conductor? The simplest answer is that you would hear it if he was not there. It [the performance] would not have gone well, because you simply need a person to run the show.

Maria provides an example in this regard, describing aid as a softer side of conductor control:

Maria: We need to be reminded. It goes for everyone in the choir to a larger or lesser degree that you need to be reminded, usually things we have been told before. We have such Teflon brains [laughs]; it passes by. But when we have heard it enough times, we remember it, and we only need maybe a small hint to recover it when we perform.

In saddling the conductor with the expectation of being the minder of the ensemble, Maria raises the issues of the division of labour and specialisation as an organising principle. In the symphony orchestra, such division of labour is clearly relevant—the musicians play different roles because they sound different. The positioning and impact of this is not as obvious in the singing ensemble, or between the ensemble and a leader. One might expect that a group of singers moves in lockstep. However, this is not the case: singers must focus on preparing their own bodies for tone production, align themselves with the choir's overall intonation and sound, and pay attention to the music's structure and dramaturgy. It is very helpful, then, in terms of division of labour, if the conductor keeps track of the musical flow and reconciles the group to it through gestures and the like.

Maria also notes that the effect of singing without a conductor changes over time:

Maria: When we are doing it [working without a conductor] only for a short while, we are in a way [only] repeating what we have [already] been rehearsing. So the conductor is sort of still present in our heads, or we imagine him there, in one way or another—invisibly present. But if we had continued to do it longer, I believe that it would have been different than [doing it] with a conductor. Perhaps someone will step up and take more responsibility, in the voice groups, or overall. It is always someone who does that and sort of drives it a bit. They become sort-of-conductors, and it crystallises the sort of group that takes leadership.

Maria describes the restoration of leadership after a conductor has left. At first, conductor instructions still linger in singers' heads, as a memory of the sound, as written score notes, or possibly as gestural images. As time goes by, this will probably fade, and singers will start to take more responsibility themselves; some singers may even step forward and take the lead, though they retain their choir positions as well. Wherever leadership is needed, it will be supplied, Maria appears to believe—it is almost as if non-leadership is unthinkable, at least in situations where there is a shared mission, such as ensemble musicking.

Daniel is young, but he is still an experienced singer. He simultaneously appreciates what a good conductor brings and dismisses the superfluous words and gestures that many not-so-good conductors provide. He gives a very concise explanation as to why we need conductors:

Daniel: When it works, one should have a conductor to have the overarching ideas, [to] collect things technically in the concert situation—things that either because of [a lack of] listening or difficulty are not together at the outset. Then you need a hand to look at and to unite the overall expression, that one does the same thing . . . and in order to have the possibility of doing something . . . collectively impulsive—was that the right word?—that you may experience that things are impulsive there and then. But if we talk about singers on a professional level, [then] unfortunately we don't need a conductor to beat the same things as at the rehearsal. Often that is not necessary. [. . .] The conductor is important to create efficiency in the rehearsing situation and to make impulsiveness and technical passages possible in the concert situation.

Daniel touches a number of different topics in his statement. There is a strong but nuanced undertone concerning conductor control in his reflection. He expresses (in another part of the dialogue) dislike of unnecessary conducting signals and control, during rehearsals as well as in concert situations. While he recognises the legitimacy of conductor control, he is quick to question the role altogether when he sees it as disempowering qualified singers. He also introduces the prospect that conductors in fact do a number of things they should not, and at these times, they get in the way. Daniel's notion of collective impulsivity must be understood in light of his insistence throughout the interview that great musical moments are nothing mysterious and magical; they simply may (or may not) happen as a result of full technical mastery, when all of the tonal, rhythmic and expressive elements are in place. He is turned off by compliance with expectations and routine fulfilment of responsibilities. He

wants the unexpected to happen, and he expects the conductor to provide the basis for it by reserving his/her gestures and signals, for example, to those that are compelling and impactful. Daniel frequently talks about conductors who get in the way of the music and the choir, but he has also experienced conductors who balance their signalling very well. Even within the same piece of music, he points out, a good conductor may at times step aside and leave the singers to it, then return to coordinate rhythmic complexity, tempo changes and expressive deviations during more challenging passages.

10.2. Unleashing efforts

In the preceding paragraphs, Daniel makes two important observations: the conductor should provide the overall ideas, and he or she should unify the ensemble, gesturally and visually, in technical as well as expressive terms. In a dialogue about singing without a conductor, Birgit also talks about the unifying effect of the conductor as the focal point but also points out his/her impact on the sound of the ensemble:

Birgit: It is easier to focus on the musical, and [especially on the fact] that the musical comes out, that it reaches beyond the stage front. Maybe when we sing together [without a conductor], we easily sing for each other, not only leaning on each other but also becoming kind of withdrawn—musically, volume and everything.

Without a conductor, choirs tend to sound edgeless and dull, Birgit says, for two possible reasons: attention capacity and attention orientation. In the first case, singers naturally focus on the music, but when they have to focus *too much* on the music, they neglect its expressive and performative aspects. The conductor presumably provides some relief by keeping track of the music for them. More specifically in this regard, when she observes that conductorless singers start to lean on one other and communicate with one other, these things tend to take place at the expense of the ability to project the music beyond the stage enclosure and thus communicate with an audience instead. In short, Birgit describes a trade-off in terms of singer attention—choir members have a limited amount of attention and must always make choices, even implicitly or unconsciously, about where to direct it. Other words for this reserve include focus and energy, but they all refer to a capacity for communication and

interaction that is limited and can be prioritised. Stella also observes the need for the attention trade-off and elaborates upon what Birgit introduced:

Stella: [When you have a conductor, you] don't need to spend a lot of energy observing everyone else's breathing but are calm and balanced and know when the beat comes, because you don't need to think about it, you know where it's coming from and the only thing to think about is to listen a little extra.

Dag: So there is something liberating about not having to take responsibility too?

Stella: Oh, yes. [. . .] I believe that this energy can be used on something else. In fact, I experience, in those situations where we sing without a conductor, which for example we do in the vocal groups all the time, [that] we become good at singing clean chords but the pitch goes up or down.

Stella flatly states that the conductor relieves her of sensing the activity around her on her own, for herself. This awareness of breath and beats can be left to the conductor; the individual's energy may be redirected and concentrated as she sees fit. Listening in the absence of a conductor appears to be more comprehensive and multifaceted. Stella expresses relief at not having to personally take responsibility for timing, indicating that it is in fact possible to surrender this responsibility altogether. Tonality, on the other hand, seems to be one of the listening objectives that singers cannot give up, and where energy is spent differently if there is no conductor. She notes that the relative tonality improves with the listening that must go on in the small (conductorless) vocal group, but this transpires at the expense of absolute pitch. Though Stella does not explicitly suggest it, she implies that the conductor supplies something that enables singers to stay on pitch, either in general or through the impact of the conductor's breath and gestures upon the singers. Sofie shares Stella's experience with the relief from responsibility that is possible with central leadership, in that tempo and onsets are simply given to you, but she observes something further as well:

Sofie: You might say that you get bigger contrasts in the piece [. . .] in everything from dynamics to . . . that maybe you do more if the conductor shows it . . . but I'm not quite sure. [. . .] You get more extremes, perhaps. [. . .] And then, in some cases, you might feel more secure by not sensing the

others in the same way when you come with your thing—you just do what the conductor shows.

Sofie pinpoints, if tentatively, one particular advantage—namely that the conductor may be able to control the extremes in the musical expression. Interestingly, she also frames ‘sensing the others’ not as a virtue of musicking but as a drawback of sorts, one that in certain situations actually reduces expressivity. She observes that singers without a conductor must commit some of their attention to negotiating among one another’s contributions to the performance. These negotiations can in turn affect a singer’s timing as well as his/her intensity. Singers with a conductor can simply forge ahead, leaving any negotiating among these respective contributions to their leader. When the singer does not have to self-moderate all the time, he or she may respond more unconstrained to the leader’s invitation, which will inevitably facilitate expressive extremes.

Sean makes a specific observation that at first sight may seem to counter the perceived loss of extremes that Sofie introduced:

Sean: Everyone with his own instrument believes that this is the most important instrument. [. . .] [We need] a conductor to take control and say ‘you up a little, you down a little’, to make sure that everyone comes forward at the right time. That’s what it is about, I would claim, that the conductor is simply a steady ‘parental’ figure.

Sean reminds us that an ensemble consists of members who all want to contribute and dismisses those individuals who believe their voices are the most important as children craving parental attention. Those sorts of singer contributions need to be moderated, rebalanced or even corrected in the interests of the overall musical idea. He even uses a metaphor of a father figure who keeps order in the house, which resonates with his explicitly stated desire for firmness and authority in his life (see chapter 8). So, if there is no conductor, are a number of singers wanting to be heard reconcilable with the loss of extremes? I think, in fact, that Sean’s and Sofie’s experiences are complementary. Extremes arise from change and variation, whether of intensity, tempo or articulation, and they will be more difficult to achieve if overeager contributors are constantly performing in peak mode. While a stable, moderate level of expression is possible amid dispersed and different singer contributions, performative extremes demand a concentration of ensemble effort that is more viable through the one single will of a conductor. When

singers refer to a conductor's ability to liberate and actually unleash their efforts, then, it is about more than being inspired: they are describing a real impact on both their ability and their willingness to contribute to a concerted musicking effort.

10.3. Staging sound

Whereas the preceding reflections concentrate on the presence (or absence) of the single leader, Gustav considers the spatial placement of the conductor in relation to the role:

Gustav: Then you have the technical things that may be difficult as a chorister to catch in your own position, [...] for example, balance, which also can have consequences for intonation—it might be perceived differently there [where the conductor is] than here. And then we have what is a little unique for choirs, perhaps, compared to instrumental ensembles—that what is perceived as a lot here is perceived as very little out there. Almost irrespective of [competence] level, [we have] this aspect of . . . 'yes, you think you sing distinctly, but you don't sing distinctly. You think you are exaggerating that phrasing, but you aren't. I can barely hear it'. This becomes one of the most important [aspects], and as such it is the conductor who inspires it . . . and it's got to be focused on in the rehearsal situation, in order to make a really good result.

Dag: Does that mean that the conductor functions as some sort of amplifier? Amplifier of effects?

Gustav: Yes, absolutely. Yes, when it comes to these things. That is the case for all the technical things.

Much of what a conductor does can in principle be done by the ensemble singers as well, but Gustav points to one of the few things that cannot be done. Simply put, the choir sounds different out front than it does at any of the singer positions. The sound that greets the conductor who is positioned there is closer to what can be heard, should be heard, or is intended to be heard by the listening audience. In this particular capacity, the conductor assumes a role similar to the sound producer in an electronic production and is seen as responsible for staging the soundscape. Gustav makes another significant point: effects sound stronger within the perimeter of the ensemble than they do out

there with the audience (or even to the conductor). This means that singers tend to systematically overrate the crispness of their consonants, the clarity of their articulation and the conviction of their phrasing. Likewise, they underestimate the need for exaggeration. Thus the conductor also becomes an ‘amplifier’ of singer effects.⁴⁶

In a dialogue with Nora about singers’ focus when there is no conductor, she has specific thoughts on what will go missing:

Nora: Most often phrasing. And often the life in the music. It depends on whether it is an amateur ensemble, and on how big the ensemble is. If it is an amateur ensemble, it usually becomes a little stiff without a conductor, in my experience, and the musical progression stagnates a bit, because you don’t know whom to follow, because you automatically look for someone to lead. Then you become insecure, and it [the performance] often slows down a bit, while a conductor would be able to move it forward.

Nora has found that phrasing is the first to go and provides a detailed description of the way in which singers are forced to begin paying attention to each other as they searching for guidance (which remains ambiguous at best); this leads to a certain lack of fluidity. The security and confidence derived from a single designated leader therefore becomes the key driving force of the relentless, unquestioned musical progress. Nora’s observation links several of the preceding thoughts regarding the efficiency of having a single leader (singers only have to look to one place for guidance) to the leader’s impact on the soundscape. The meeting point between conductor control over the ensemble and conductor alignment of expressive efforts is the sounding music. Kristine describes how to make individual singers sound like an ensemble:

Kristine: The conductor must of course provide the overall picture, aligning our different personalities. We are not supposed to stand there like soloists, it is supposed to sound like an ensemble. And I believe it is

⁴⁶ This singer self-deception is probably based on the physical circumstance that the energy level of high-frequency sounds decays more than lower-frequency sound over time/distance. The soundscape reaching the audience’s ears is therefore duller in acoustic terms.

important, at least when it comes to ensembles where most singers are soloists and work as free-lance singers and such, that the conductor's most important task is to make people listen to each other and cultivate the ensemble sound, as opposed to the soloist sound.

Kristine expects the conductor to assemble the individuals into a whole, subordinating individuals to the ensemble's overall sound. Her statement applies particularly to single projects (as opposed to lasting ensembles that allow the sound to develop over time) and to singers with a soloist profile—that is, those who on a regular basis have to align tone and expression to different ensemble settings. Although the singers physically produce the sound, the conductor is positioned to stage the music as a deliberate, processed and shaped soundscape. Many snide comments have addressed the conductor who gets all the applause without singing or playing a single note (Lebrecht, 1997), but when we begin to recognise the impact of good sound-merger management, we will find them less valid. In this regard, Victor draws a pronounced contrast between the project conductor and the ensemble leader:

Victor: A conductor having a choir over a longer period of time creates not only the concert but also the choir, the sound, the dialogue. Everything. Whereas someone who only takes on the situation [of a single performance], he creates the concert—that is quite a big difference.

Here, Victor nuances the assumption made above that the conductor stages the soundscape. When a conductor shapes a choir over time, he or she is laying foundations that may survive the concert as even the conductor him/herself. As such, this musical leader resembles the theatre director, to the extent that the signature sound remains even when the conductor is not personally present. When a conductor shapes only a concert, the lasting effects of his/her work beyond that concert will depend upon the singers' ability and willingness to make agreements and conventions related to the specific concert part of their ensemble standard on an ongoing basis. The project conductor, in other words, shapes the concert with the instrument at hand—that is, the individual singers—drawing upon whatever ensemble bonds might exist. The ensemble conductor, on the other hand, is not only a project conductor (of multiple and ongoing projects) but also an instrument maker. Of course, in the performing situation, the two roles come together, because even the ensemble conductor, once he/she is onstage, is shaping the soundscape with the instrument at hand. Still, given all of the hardwired agreements and conventions that are embedded

in the permanent ensemble, the ensemble conductor in a performing situation will have the advantage of rapport that the project conductor typically does not.

Stella makes an interesting point about aligning an uneven ensemble. She has observed that the choir without a conductor benefits significantly from singers who are equal, in terms of voices and musical competence, in the interests of balance:

Stella: If you are without a conductor and entirely have to rely on [each other] to have a permanent balance in the ensemble, you need singers on an equal level, or at least on approximately the same level. For in those situations where there is a big difference [among the singers], some sort of leadership will come in automatically, I believe. With this kind of coordinator [conductor], even the one [singer] who only sings Thursdays from 1930 to 2200, who never practices, who only has a nice voice and commitment and a presence now and then on Thursdays, and the one [singer] who sings maybe forty hours a week can do something together and be on equal terms.

Dag: So what you are saying is that the conductor role in fact may even out . . .

Stella: Yes.

Dag: Should we say heterogeneity . . .

Stella: That's what I am thinking.

Several of the singers have talked about the conductor's balancing responsibilities from a sound-specific point of view, whereas Stella talks about those responsibilities in terms of ensemble heterogeneity regarding knowledge and skills. She suggests that a conductor is needed to coordinate among disparate levels of experience in the full range of choral singing skills, from repertoire knowledge to vocal technique, score reading and listening habits. She may also be thinking about the conductor's responsibility to prepare a rehearsal plan that balances the capabilities of the uneven team. In my own experience, different skills apply at different stages in the preparation for a concert, so individual contributions can change over time. For example, the best sight-readers are very important to the initial phase of rehearsing a new piece, but they are not necessarily going to memorise the music the fastest or display the strongest stage presence. Conversely, a weak sight-reader could represent some sort of unifying presence in his or her voice group, making it easier for

everyone else to blend well. The conductor is in a position to appreciate (and put to use) such differences. Stella's larger point is about creating a level playing field for varied singer contributions, in turn making the ensemble better than it would be without that kind of guidance.

10.4. Creating musical meaning

We have seen how the conductor as a focal point provides disambiguation and also relief from certain responsibilities, in turn allowing more attention to be given to musical expression alone. Where, then, does this expressivity originate? Morten sees the conductor's impact as comprehensive:

Morten: I consider the conductor to be a leader, an interpreter of music on paper, who tries to recreate his or her interpretation of the music . . . with the instrument available, of course. We do have discussions [in the choir] about phrasing and tempo and pronunciation. [. . .] Naturally, it is on an amateur level, and [it is good] to have someone who says that we do it like this, period! And then be able to show it. It is one thing to understand the music that you [the conductor] see on paper, but you also need to be able to express it through your own body language and instructions that make the others understand the music, or the perception of the music, and be able to execute it.

Morten makes two interesting remarks about the interpretive aspect of musical leadership. First, he says that the interpretation should be contingent upon the ensemble at hand. Second, he allows for the possibility of differing opinions on interpretation but leaves no doubt as to who would be responsible for concluding the conversation. There is a duality here: the conductor should be sensitive to a singer's qualifications and musical opinions when shaping his or her idea of the music but always retains full decision power over the interpretation at hand. Kristine brings up a specific aspect of interpretation when she reflects on certain contemporary music:

Kristine: [We] have sometimes performed some newly written things for various [occasions] that we haven't felt too great about. You then notice this during rehearsing and because you perhaps don't understand the music you are working with. There have been times that things have been so strange that . . . what's the point, really? What is it that the composer wants to say with this music? And when you don't get it at all, it is very

difficult to perform in a positive way. You are, in a way, only singing notes.

Dag: The conductor may be able to do a job there?

Kristine: Absolutely. If the conductor . . .

Dag: . . . is able to give meaning to it . . .

Kristine: . . . give meaning to it, yes. I have experienced that conductors have trouble giving meaning to it, but not often.

The conductor is not necessarily more competent than anyone else when it comes to understanding a work of music. However, he or she is often the only one who has the time set aside to prepare it, and the conductor has to establish a wider and deeper view in order to organise rehearsals. Establishing this perspective, in terms of the score itself, the text and language, the performance and the reception history, is about creating meaning in broad terms, and here we see the musical leader role, as a rehearsal organiser, reveal itself to be a sensemaking role. Conductors may choose to delegate particular aspects of this kind of 'perspective preparation', such as pronunciation or the composer's life history, to others, but the responsibility is ultimately theirs. On their own, singers can struggle with understanding a piece of music, regarding a complex, unfamiliar score, the composer's underlying idea or the sounding music itself. Even within the canon of classical works, there are aspects that require in-depth knowledge to appreciate properly. Experienced and skilled choral singers will make meaning as best they can, or they may simply confine themselves to being able to sing their parts. Kristine is one of those skilled singers who therefore expects (and appreciates) a conductor's deep textual and contextual insight:

Kristine: I expect [. . .] that the conductor has a full overview of the work to be performed or the songs to be sung, the period in which it was written, the background, maybe the background for why it was written, the ambiance it was written in—that is, the situation that the composer was in when he wrote it, which has a lot to do with the musical communication. It may be too much to ask for, but . . . [laughter].

To Kristine, the conductor must never surrender his/her responsibility for creating meaning, both in rehearsals of familiar music and in the ensemble's struggles to find meaning and purpose in unfamiliar music.

In this chapter, we have encountered four themes that together establish the legitimacy of the conductor role. Two of these themes are about channelling the singer's efforts, including the delicate balance between controlling the singers and liberating them. The third theme, staging sound, is about the musical leader's unique positioning with regard to the shape of the soundscape, from an error-free sounding score to ensemble balance and expressiveness. The fourth theme is about the conductor as sensemaker—that is, how the individual leader can help singers to create meaning from the music and their performance of it. The description and interpretation in this chapter has not exhausted but merely identified these four themes. In the remainder of part III, these themes will reappear as fragments of other themes, as we look deeper into how the conductor role is enacted. The basis for viewing the four themes as constituents of leadership legitimacy derives from how they capture aspects of musicking that depend upon the single leader as the centre point. This concept of legitimacy will be developed further in a theoretical sense in part IV.

11. Mastery

The mastery themes deal with what the conductor brings to the music and musicking experience. Mastery is about subject-matter competencies and relational skills, and the ways in which these are enacted in encounters with the ensemble and individual singers.

11.1. Control and empowerment

Crucial to the conductor role's legitimacy are the unique features that a single designated leader can bring to bear upon the ensemble—in other words, a contribution to the musicking process that cannot easily be provided by every other ensemble member. Legitimacy is initially granted by the position itself, at least to some extent, and then it must be earned, or it is possibly wasted, by how the leadership is performed. As a single focal point for singer direction and guidance, the conductor position automatically implies some sort of central control over the music's flow. What is not always clear, however, is the type and degree of control. The conductor has power over the singers, but how does this power impact the sounding music? How does it enable or disable singers to create music? Trym, who is very aware of his identity as a professional singer, provides an entry point into this discussion. The following statement comes out of a dialogue about the amount of responsibility singers want in the rehearsing process:

Trym: [This] is a criticism that is [also] raised against the very best conductors in the country: that they disempower the professional singers they have in front of them, in a way that they would never dream of doing if there were someone sitting there with a violin or something. An

instrumentalist is a professional in everybody's eyes, [but] singers are novices in the professional market in Norway. And I know that a lot of these singers, who are absolutely as professional as any violinist in the country, are extremely frustrated about [the fact] that even the best conductors treat them like amateurs.

Trym wants to be treated like an instrumentalist, and he believes that most choral conductors, including the best, fail to fulfil that want by disempowering singers. He was not explicit about how this happens, and it is impossible to know whether he was speaking for himself or for the 'many' colleagues. In my view, however, the key point is not so much the substance of the story, but the fact that Trym by this wording has introduced the notion that conductors may *empower* or *disempower* the ensemble. The purpose of section 11.1 is to allow more singers to shed light on this potential pairing of control and (dis)empowerment.

11.1.1. Control as labour

As was introduced in chapter 10.2, one of the themes that contributes to the legitimacy of the single leader is the unleashing of effort through the division of tasks, as the conductor's various responsibilities allow the singers to concentrate their efforts on their own specific musical contributions. Several singers note that their capacity for attention is limited, and that they continuously make choices about what to pay attention to. Sofie talks about how taking control, in the absence of a conductor, can be hard work, when reflecting on what happens when there is no central control:

Sofie: I think that everyone works a little harder on things that [. . .] have to do with tempo, on how to start a phrase, on how to end it. [On things that have] to do with crescendo and decrescendo . . . loads of things you do. So I think you listen more. At least I think that I do.

Sofie associates (lack of) control with labour in the absence of a designated leader, especially in terms of those tasks that are needed to control the musical flow. Maria elaborates further:

Maria: When the choir is self managing, you tend to take more responsibility. It has to do with agreeing on things, [on] how it's supposed to be. One is usually happy that the conductor has the responsibility for this, not the majority. Should you have [to obtain] a majority decision on

whether we should sing loudly or softly and so forth, you would find many different opinions. That [eventuality] I'm happy to be relieved of—that's why we like to have a conductor in front. [. . .] It is [nice] not having to do the managing ourselves—to be just part of the instrument.

Maria, then, does not question the legitimacy of the conductor role at all and especially applauds its facilitation of decision making, which she brings up on several occasions throughout the interview. She finds that when there is no conductor, singers must take on more responsibility, and this is tiring. Maria simply wants to be free from decision making in the rehearsing process. She feels relieved by someone else being in control. She is not a choral singer aspiring to play a leadership role. Interestingly, she has a lot of experience as a conductor of community choirs, and she does not want those associated responsibilities to disrupt her sole focus on singing. The whole notion of attention trade-offs, in terms of where the singer's mind is, arose in chapter 9. Maria and Sofie here frame that trade-off in the context of control as labour—as something that must be done, and that they want to be relieved of.

The central control associated with the single leader allows for the possibility of losing control as well as maintaining it. Sean talked about how uncomfortable it is when a conductor is out of control or desperately trying to regain control. I asked him whether singers should step in and try to guide or rescue the conductor, but he demurs. In his view, the whole point is that the conductor is a leader with authority.

Sean: I demand that my conductor be sufficiently experienced and have the authority, so that I don't have to worry about whether this will go well. That is tiring, if you are working with musicians who are not skilful, and you go a little like, 'Oh, please, fix it, fix it', and you feel like helping the person. If, as a singer, I am going to sing with a conductor above me, I don't want to be responsible for it. I want to be completely without responsibility. The only thing I am responsible for is to sing my part and do what I am told. [. . .] This means that I put the accountability upon one person who is then [doing the] controlling. My responsibility lies in knowing the music. I have practiced, I know every note, I know exactly where to enter here and there. And my responsibility also rests in following the signals that the conductor gives me.

Sean's statement is very clear and sort of fundamentalist: if the conductor cannot maintain control and assure the singers, he/she surrenders the legitimacy of the role. Like Sofie and Maria, he wants someone else to take

responsibility, so he does not have to do so. Being in control is hard work, and a designated leader with central control saves effort on the part of the singers. Sean does not abdicate his own set of responsibilities but embraces them. Sean's statement explicitly links the legitimacy of the role, control, and authority, as he delineates the most productive division of labour between leader and ensemble. The authority theme will be covered in section 12.3.

11.1.2. Control as excess

In the preceding section, Sofie and Maria expressed relief about having a conductor in control and described some of the elements of control, but they did not touch upon the *degree* of control that is most appropriate and/or offers adequate relief. Beatrice, on the other hand, laments the assertion of too much control, especially when conductors instruct singers:

Beatrice: That is what drives me crazy: 'When you say flower here, you are supposed to say *flah-oor*', and then one puts a dynamic marking on most single word. Or [this]: 'Here, I want it up, here I want it down, here I want it like this, here you should think a little longer, then a line up, then a line down', and then one is left with a score filled with scribbles and must be a good girl and follow it. And then the heart is dead. I believe that it simply dies along the way.

For Beatrice, a conductor's overly detailed prescription of the musical expression kills the music. She is not saying that these expressive details are wrong or unmusical but that they can result in a sort of signal overload. Too detailed instructions transform Beatrice into a compliant follower of written agreements. Prescription gets in the way of her musicality and reduces her to a passive follower. On the other hand, Sofie has suffered the opposite extreme, where a past conductor gave no instructions, and his rehearsals became both chaotic and frustrating. Eventually, she was driven to seek more instruction from him:

Sofie: And then he said no—no, because he doesn't do that. [. . .] He wanted us to find out [how things went] collectively. After some time, it was completely okay to work with him, though I thought [. . .] the process became too lengthy before we arrived at where we wanted to be. At the same time, I thought it was okay because it was a deliberate idea.

Sofie describes a conductor who deliberately gave no instructions, because he wanted the singers to work things out for themselves, either for his enlightenment or for theirs. Either way, Sofie took some time to come around to this case of extreme delegation. In these rehearsals, the conductor probably controls the use of time but lets the musical expression find its shape as a collective effort.

Beatrice and Sofie's descriptions deal specifically with control in the rehearsing situation, which Sofie then links to control in a performance:

Sofie: I have had many experiences where the conducting itself in concert fundamentally was very bad, because of [the conductor's] nerves, but it did not affect the choir very much. The choir I was singing in was so drilled. She drilled a lot [regarding] what we should do and how we should do it, [so] that we just neglected what would happen during the concert. I experienced that quite often.

Several of the interviewees associated this conductor with tight rehearsal control and micro-instructions about musical expression; rehearsing also often took the form of repetitive drills. This conductor was widely seen to be more in control during rehearsals than she was in concert, partly because of this rehearsing approach and partly because she was not thought to be gesturally very strong. She was often nervous in concert and was not able to add much to the performance beyond what was already embedded in the ensemble through rehearsing. It is important to note that her lack of performance control does not make much of a difference, in that the performance is already secured. Her role, then, evokes the theatrical director who is not even present at the show.

Bob talks about a choir he quit at least partly because of the conductor. He respected the conductor immensely, and he applauded both her rehearsal skills and her gestural skills. His reason for leaving was very straight-forward:

Bob: She did not do good enough concerts, so that there were situations where I, and everyone else, said, 'Yes, this was nice in concert, but we did even better at the rehearsal'. And that is untenable for me.

Bob could not bear the repetitive experience of never elevating the music above its rehearsal level, no matter how high that level that was. Sofie noted that preparation can compensate for even a conductor's visible loss of control during the performance—she seemed relieved and even somewhat proud of the fact that the music did not fall apart. Bob, on the other hand, dismisses even

a good performance where the conductor had full control because it failed to transcend the technical mastery already achieved in rehearsal. This could be understood as losing control on another level, of course—as performing below hopes and expectations, or (at least administratively) as losing a good singer from the ensemble as a result.

Victor also talks about two levels of control, reflected by the two choirs he was singing with at the time, with conductor 1 and conductor 2, respectively. At a certain point in time, he chose to leave the first one:

Victor: At that time, I had one conductor [1] who was very skilled. He could do things that, for example, [conductor 2] could not do. He could beat one rhythm with one hand and another rhythm with the other hand. And it was all so easy and ingenious. But he did not have any ability to communicate musically, and [he lacked] the personal rapport that we now have talked about. [. . .] For me, it was a clear improvement, musically speaking, to remain in [choir 2] and quit [choir 1] at that time. [. . .] My observation is that I went [from superior technical leadership] to a better [overall] leadership.

Conductor 2 is known for his mastery of the concert situation but for variable technical control and at times a somewhat erratic rehearsal process. Conductor 1 was always in full technical control, during rehearsals as well as gesturally in concert, but for Victor, like for Bob, this was simply not enough: control must not only master but also transcend. The statements in this section have described too much control, not enough control, and the wrong kind of control. The impact on the music is not self-evident, as full control may also passify singers and no control may mobilise singers. The following section, we will explore the middle ground, where the degree of control is more of an ongoing balancing act.

11.1.3. Ambiguity and empowerment

Sofie describes a conductor whom she respects highly but does not sing with regularly. She has also been in the audience when this conductor has performed with another choir:

Sofie: She just trusts the one standing there to do what needs to be done—you understand that you won't get a lot, [and] you simply have to do it. She is a kind of less-disturbing element between the audience and

those who sing. [. . .] I have attended a few concerts that she conducted, and she makes very little fuss about herself. Then the music gets the focus, I believe.

She observes that this conductor gives few signals and that the singers know this and step up and take more responsibility. She also suggests that this style derives from the conductor's trust in the ensemble and in fact produces a constructive working mode involving a partnership devoted to the music rather than the conductor.

Trym makes a similar observation about another conductor who is known for his modest ways—this person is not particularly strong technically but manages to communicate regardless:

Trym: The fact that he makes the singers take responsibility by not being completely distinct, which many conductors are, means that he delegates responsibility to the singers, and the result is often very good.

Trym comments that most good conductors are very clear but that sometimes a certain ambiguity can be a vehicle for bringing life to the music. Having said that, however, Trym promptly observes that there is a limit to this ambiguity:

Trym: I have essentially only one demand of any conductor, if I am to do my job. That is that I get a distinct downbeat. Whatever else, if I get a distinct downbeat, I can fix things. Many conductors don't have a distinct downbeat [that is] distinguishable from anything else in the beat pattern.

Trym states elsewhere that he feels responsible for the musical expression and in fact prefers to be trusted to shape the music through his own professionalism. He therefore prefers moderate signalling to invasive or overaggressive conducting, as long as he gets a clear downbeat. Control, then, is not only about the quantity of signalling but the usefulness and relevance of the signals. Sofie also says that she expects the conductor to provide the important cues, and most importantly, she expects the conductor to know which ones are important. She does not condone excessive signalling:

Sofie: [Because in this way] you chop up the conducting a lot, because you give so many signals all the time that you get stressful signalling. In many cases, I think that the conductor believes that we need it, or wishes to give more signals than we really need.

Sofie has observed that conductors tend to overestimate the need for signalling. Arne also talks about what makes a conductor easy to follow. I asked him to

elaborate on what makes a conductor easy to follow. He first described what makes it not easy to follow:

Arne: Movements become a little too big and a little violent maybe, [though] not needing to be. That is perhaps what first strikes my mind, that [the conductor] be calm and balanced yet not so floating that you don't understand what is [being] done up there. That he manage to maintain distinctiveness, even if he doesn't have these big, excessive gestures.

Arne pinpoints the ideal balance of signalling (and control in general): little enough to maintain calm, but enough to communicate what is meant. Conductors wanting to do too much seem to do make a double fault, they overload the singers with unnecessary messages and they create pointless tension as well. Gustav talks about a musicking situation that allowed him to sing freely, as opposed to one that did not:

Gustav: [The conductor] has a way of communicating with the singers that is kind of relaxing; you feel that you get the space to be with the music, that it is not too micro-managed, perhaps. This micro-managing is a specific thing—I have seen it mostly where I have not been singing myself—where things are fixed down to the smallest detail in terms of how it should be. If I hear that from the outside, it seems very polished.

Gustav evokes the notion of space to describe how a cooperative, relaxed state is created, as if the conductor's careful control invites him into the room to take part in a mutual exchange. He objects to excessive control, though he acknowledges the polish that can result from it. It is a dilemma:

Gustav: It is in a way difficult to distinguish it from what's positive, isn't it, because it is very positive when all the technical [work] is good. But when you feel that this is what's in focus [. . .]—you have worked a lot on sound, it all fits very well, you control the dynamics exactly, all are positive things, but it still isn't liberated [. . .]—I think it's hard to find specific words.

For Gustav, the issue is when technical control takes precedence over freely flowing music. Gustav's inability to even express the dilemma doubtless reflects the conductor's own challenges in striking the best balance in the exercise of leadership. Singers want the conductor to have technical and detail control but also expect to be empowered to sing freely. There seems to be a very fine borderline between positive detail control and disempowerment. Conversely,

there is a fine line between lack of detail control and how it may give singers a positive sense of being empowered. It does not make it any easier that the need for control, both type and degree, evolves throughout the rehearsing process and between the rehearsal and the performance.

11.1.4. Preparing and performing

The distinction between preparation and performance, learning and executing, training and competing, recharging and releasing, is common to many human endeavours other than musicking. Even within musicking, the two phases or working modes point towards separate research domains, including music pedagogy and performance practice, respectively. In this project, it has been tempting to treat rehearsal conducting and concert conducting separately. In relation to several themes, however, including control-empowerment, the interviewees tend to link the two or jump from one to the other without much differentiation. There is important insight into the musical leadership phenomenon in the contrast (and transition) between rehearsing and performing. I have therefore chosen not to force-fit the themes into situational categories but instead attempt to engage with the interface between preparing and performing. Here, I will do so in the context of control-empowerment.

While reflecting on what the conductor brings to the ensemble in rehearsal, Maria imagines what it would be like to perform the rehearsed music without the conductor:

Maria. [When we have] a conductor whose way of working is to rehearse everything so that we know exactly what to do, we really don't need the conductor any more. I imagine that what we need is a kind of inspirer or a face or someone who can just be there and be nice [laughs], be a little . . . yes, open something up. But then it doesn't take much [to perform], I think. If we know it really well, there is not all that much that the conductor needs to do. But I have [also] experienced when the conductor might do something other than [what] we usually do. Then having the conductor is a good thing, for it might be that the room does something to the sound that usually isn't there, or that something else happens. Then it is a good thing to have a conductor who focuses us. [. . .] The conductor still probably doesn't have to do all that much [in concert].

Maria thinks that thorough preparation enables the choir to sing without a conductor, because everything has been prescribed already—everyone knows

what to do, because it is agreed and tested. Performance control is ensured through prescription. Predictability is ensured thanks to detailed instruction in rehearsals. Still, she recognises the conductor's responsibility to marshal the ensemble's efforts and bring life to the musical moment. She sees a role for the conductor in releasing the group's collective expressivity. However, with such thorough rehearsing, she has a minimalistic ideal of what the conductor needs to bring. More importantly, she allows for the conductor to play a role in deviating from the predictable performance, due to a change in circumstances, for example. The room and the situation does something to the musicking that cannot be prepared. There is room for the leader when and if something happens.

Jenny describes how moving from rehearsals to the concert means entering a qualitatively different state:

Jenny: Preparation makes you secure, but during the rehearsal process you work a lot on details, with specific elements, vocal things and all the other small things. [. . .] If in concert you are able to let go of all of those details and just let the whole come forward—that is, if the conductor doesn't get occupied by the details and is able to let go and just be with the choir—I experience this as very positive.

She starts with the obvious observation that a sense of security is acquired through the rehearsing process. Her other observation is less trivial, that rehearsing is detail oriented, whereas performing is holistic. Controlling the rehearsing process is largely about controlling detail. Controlling the concert is about controlling the whole. In fact, she says that it is by letting go of the detail-oriented mindset that great musicking can take place. Failing to leave behind the analytic mode of rehearsing is not good for the music.

11.1.5. Death by detail

The virtues of knowing the details and mastering the technical details are easy to understand. The pitfalls of attention to detail may be less obvious. In a dialogue with Jenny, she describes the horrific situation where the conductor cannot shake free of the detail mindset in concert:

Jenny: It [the performance] becomes very controlled; it can be absolutely correct, but it can be very boring and impersonal. You become so obsessed with not making mistakes that you in fact withdraw. [. . .] You

can see it in [acts of] mimicry, posture, ways of breathing, and facial expressions. A conductor can become really hung up on certain details in such a way that you become afraid of singing mistakes, and he starts to overdo beat patterns, and then you start to wonder, am I out of time, or what? If the conductor starts to point his finger up and down, you start to censor yourself and get out of sync with the rest of the choir, because each singer starts to adjust somehow. That is a terrible situation. [. . .] I have experienced when a conductor starts to overdo beat patterns, usually in a rough way in order to try to help, [or] perhaps out of frustration, because he or she feels that it isn't right. And then you start to toil and labour, it is horrible.

Jenny notes that the musicking remains controlled, but not in a good way. The music may sound right, in the sense that the score is reproduced beyond reproach, but an obsession with detail in the performance context tends to worry the singers excessively regarding mistakes. This produces a loss of initiative and proactivity, and the music can lose its soul. Jenny even points to a vicious circle, where singer fear and conductor frustration feed upon one other. When the conductor begins to overdo the beat gestures in an attempt to regain control, it is all over, in Jenny's mind. Asserting control, then, does not always result in control. A related question is whether letting go of control means no more control. We must remember that control is multilayered and various. Letting go of one level of control may secure control on a different level. Conversely, insisting on one type of control, may in fact sacrifice another type of control.

What happens when the control-empowerment balance is clearly not right? Jenny describes a very experienced conductor who is known for great achievements with several choirs but makes her uncomfortable:

Jenny: Personally [I] don't like a conductor who is overcontrolling. At one point, I thought that [the conductor] was very picky and stressed; she seemed agitated and bothered to me. It [the music] became very nice and proper, but it was not juicy enough for me.

Jenny resents excessive control for its neutralising effect upon the music in performance, and its clear reflection of a flailing, likely stressed-out conductor. Lucy brought up the same conductor (though she knew her at a different time):

Lucy: She never did anything surprising, and it was a key point for her never to do anything surprising. [. . .] At that time, I thought this was so in order to make it easy for us to perceive [what she was doing], but in

retrospect I think that it was mostly because she needed it herself. But it works. She has done numerous great things with several choirs, [...] but for me, it didn't work out. I didn't stay very long either.

When Lucy says that there were no surprises, it likely means that every performance was perfectly in accordance with the rehearsed details. She then points out that the conductor's need for control may have less to do with the music or the ensemble and more to do with her own issues. The effect of this rigor on Lucy was that she lost interest in the end:

Lucy: It was probably a number of things. The chemistry wasn't there, that is one thing. I wasn't thrilled about the programming either, but then there is the thing about the concerts being too polished. When homogeneity comes before musical expression, it is wrong to me. Yes, both, please, but musical expression has to come first. Even if I am diabolically obsessed with pitch, I have still arrived at this [realisation], because expression is the only thing that can touch you, and if it doesn't touch you, it is uninteresting. And God help me, I have heard a lot of uninteresting music through the years. I couldn't bother be part of such [a thing] any more.

When Lucy says that the chemistry was not right, she sounds a different note than those interviewees who complain about not being touched by the music. Still, chemistry, as perceived by the singer, is linked to a conductor's approach to musicking. In a sense, the music was too perfect, especially when this conductor prioritised aspects of the soundscape such as tone quality over expressivity. A perfectly homogeneous tone quality requires a certain kind of central control, unless it has been secured already through singer recruiting and common schooling. While expressivity might also result from a concerted effort that is governed by a central will, Lucy's experience indicates that it arises from a certain individuality. At least she has experienced that polished musicking crowds out expressivity. It may even be possible to understand expressivity in terms of individuality, as deviation from the uniformly controlled. We might then wonder whether a completely controlled choir conducted by a very expressive conductor would sound expressive or not.

Several of the interviewed singers experience a certain tension between metrical precision and clarity of signalling, on one side, and ambiguity and expressivity, on the other. They do not rule out the possibility of blending the two, but they do note that there is a trade-off taking place, because not every

blend is viable. When the blend becomes skewed, some conductors tend to abandon meter control in order to attend to expressive opportunities, which in turn empowers the singers to keep the musical flow going. Some, though, go a different direction, as Morten observes:

Morten: It didn't work out, because she [the conductor] was all into rhythm, and other input got lost, so that the choir, or rather the individual singer, was made to choose phrasing and dynamics when this was not indicated beforehand.

This particular conductor prioritised meter over expression. Even though this happened with an amateur choir, or possibly because it did, the singers felt that something was wrong, and some of them quit the choir. Morten was the most senior singer, and at times filled a deputy conductor role, so considered the situation disastrous.

11.1.6. Guises of empowerment

How can we decide when keeping control becomes controlling excessively? What does empowerment without abdication of responsibility mean? Stella elaborates upon this theme while describing how her conductor delegates tasks during rehearsals:

Stella: She is quite unique when it comes to cooperation. She just lets go and says, 'I don't know this—you can do it'. And it might be [to] someone in the choir. Then she steps aside and says, 'Please, teach us, teach me', without losing any of her leadership position. It is very clear who is the authority, but it might be that, in the rehearsing process, we do it differently than another conductor would have done it.

This conductor seems very comfortable with the fact that she lacks some of the competences that might otherwise be expected of her, and she uses openness and honesty to turn the spirit of cooperation in rehearsal to her advantage. In principle, we might imagine that delegating tasks to this degree would harm her authority, but Stella makes it very clear that this is not so, indicating, in turn, how far a conductor might go to empower the choir without giving away rehearsal control.

Is this true of the performing situation as well? Daniel provides a specific example:

Daniel: [We had] made certain agreements during the rehearsals, which, by the way, were very effective; [we] got the music going [in the performance] and found that it worked as he wanted, as it did while rehearsing. Then he stopped beating and stepped aside, left the soloist in the centre, and breathed with us, did endings and phrasing-off as needed. Let's say it was a verse where everyone sings 'o' or 'm' and the soloist has the text alone, we don't need any ending consonants, no common 'kr' or any of that. There were no technical problems, [so] the only thing he could have done was get in the way of the soloist [at that point]. This is what I mean by a good conductor in that situation.

Here we meet a conductor who completely delegates the regular musical flow to the ensemble by removing himself from his central positioning. He does, however, continue to breathe with them. Ultimately, Daniel notes approvingly, he avoided getting in the way—he understood the musicking needs and gave up some of the normal control measures while retaining those few that genuinely contributed to the musicking.

The type and degree of control, as well as the extent to which the singers are empowered, are all choices on the part of the conductor. Birgit compares her regular conductor (1) with a project conductor (2), both of whom she respects greatly, in terms of control and empowerment:

Birgit: It has been incredibly reassuring that he [conductor 1] is such a technically skilled conductor. I haven't really felt it myself, but sometimes people say that he overcontrols things. But I like his way of musicking. I rarely disagree with him. I can appreciate other ways, but I don't disagree with him or dislike the musical choices he's making. And since he is technically incredibly skilful, it is very easy to put yourself in his hands. I am [also] very enthusiastic about [conductor 2], but she has a totally different way of doing it. [. . .] Her fingers are fantastic, she is quite a big lady and maybe not particularly feminine, but there is something very sensitive about her—her face, arms and hands. [. . .] She gives you a lot of responsibility, you have to [accept it], the way she conducts. [. . .] For example, you don't know exactly where the downbeat is [. . .] and I know that people have been frustrated. But I think it's great.

Birgit is comfortable with her regular conductor's interest in the details because she respects his gestural skills and agrees with his musical ideas. Here she illustrates a way in which control may create singer security. It is not clear whether Birgit would put herself in a conductor's hands if she did not agree with his/her ideas, but other interviewees have indicated that this would not

present a problem, as long as the conductor knew what he or she was doing (in other words, kept control). Birgit characterises the project conductor, with her broader expressive repertoire, in terms of a type of singer empowerment that happens when the leader does not give certain signals, is open to some ambiguity, even asks singers to make their own judgements. While Birgit appreciates both conductors very much, despite their differences, she observes that other singers object to one or the other, or both. It would appear, then, that conductors must judge their impact, and their claim for control, according to both the ensemble's musicking needs and each individual singer's flexibility and preferences.

11.1.7. Instructing and learning

I have chosen to treat control as a separate theme that spans various situations and working modes of both choir and conductor. In the rehearsal situation in particular, however, exercising control is clearly a subset of a wider theme that I have labelled *rehearsal management*, which is explored in section 11.2. A handful of examples here, however, will help us to explore the control-empowerment theme in the context of the rehearsal. First of all, Daniel describes the conductor role during the very early rehearsing stage with professional singers:

Daniel: The main task [of the conductor] is to not get in the way of what goes on. In a lot of situations, we know what we are doing, and we might as well ask for a pianist—you could ask to get bar such-and-such played over again, give the tonescorrect mistakes and intervals, get things in place and [then] have the conductor come in later. If the conductor has too much of an issue with putting him/herself aside during the first two days of a project, this [pianist option] would be more efficient.

Daniel does not see much of a role for the conductor in the learning process and takes full responsibility for acquiring the musical material and sorting out initial problems with performing it. At another point in the conversation, he acknowledges that the conductor makes agreements with the choir on performance issues. However, he strongly objects to conductors who prematurely assume control over the musical expression, at a stage where he is still establishing his own sense of the material. Conductor control, then, is

about timing and implementation as much as it is about consistency or strength.

Arne has a different view than Daniel, in a similar dialogue. We have been talking about excessive signalling during performance, and we move the conversation over to about the role of the conductor in the rehearsing situation. I ask him whether too many signals or instructions can come to seem negative or even condescending:

Arne: Absolutely not. I think it's great to get as much as possible. I am very content with getting very small details from the conductor, [...] so that [the conductor] has told us to do so and so beforehand. [Even] if it is perhaps not shown every time he or she conducts, I still know, because I have written it down in the score when it was said. I think that's great.

Arne appreciates every signal he can get. He takes notes, he feels prepared, he is ready, whether or not the conductor gesturally complies with every rehearsal signal during the performance. While this appears to directly contradict Daniel's position, it may be that Arne is thinking of a slightly later stage in the preparations for a concert. More to the point, any conductor obviously has to straddle the extremes of stepping aside (but remaining present) and holding forth at length (but knowing when to stop too). A conductor can miss the target by misjudging the situation or the singers. The instructing-learning pairing is a core theme of pedagogy, but within the context of musical leadership, it is split and otherwise nuanced by the fundamental difference between rehearsing and performing, and by the purpose of rehearsing and whom rehearsing is for.

11.1.8. The empowering mindset

Several singers describe empowerment as what happens when they step up and assume responsibility for something that otherwise would have been centrally controlled. Is it entirely dependent upon whether leadership tasks are done or dropped? Jenny offers some insight into this question, as she reflects on what she experiences as good signalling:

Jenny: There is something about [the fact] that the conductor has to trust the singers, that they have understood what he or she means, that you are left in peace for a while [and] are allowed to sing. [...] You notice it really clearly when you are singing and the conductor looks at you . . . 'It's all right, just carry on singing'. And [...] for example, this is about beat

patterns, you just see that it's there, but it's nothing overcontrolled. And the conductor is with you all along, so you can rest assured that it's okay. He comes in and helps: 'Here I have to do something, here is a new element'. [. . .] He then gives the signs that he has to so know where we are, come in together or land together or continue together. [. . .] And of course, it also has to do with the expressive bit.

Jenny introduces trust as a basis for empowerment, and she experiences conductor trust in the look that tells her, 'I don't need to intervene; I don't need to reinforce my controls'. 'Being left in peace' sounds a lot like 'not getting in the way of the music', as other singers have put it. This is not the same as being abandoned; the conductor is still there with the singers, ready to come in and guide them as needed. One of the advantages of successful control is that the singers feel secure even when it becomes too much, or, alternatively, too little. Jenny continues:

Jenny: I am thinking about [. . .] these small signals; you know that the conductor is in control. You can trust that the conductor is there and it helps you to go on, but it doesn't need to be excessively obvious. [. . .] When one group is going with their stuff, he may initiate something else.

Jenny describes control as signals that are available for her when she needs them but are otherwise unobtrusive. She can choose to ignore them. It seems as if control as a multilayered phenomenon with different levels of required attention. She describes the conductor's mindset as *being with* her. Such pacing enables Jenny and the conductor to move between degrees of control and help. Signalling is unobtrusive enough to be ignored if not needed, but available if you want to take notice—a signalling 'on demand'.

An empowering mindset can also encompass the ways in which musical ideas are shaped and musical meaning is created. Kristine describes her ideal rehearsing process, which allows plenty of space for her own contribution to it:

Kristine: The process is one that it is open for interplay and cooperation—for example, when it comes to reviewing text, which is very important to me. [It should be] that one should go rather deep into the text when rehearsing a new work, and that there is an openness in the choir, that you can contribute yourself also, that not everything is one-way control.

Kristine sees the rehearsal as an open process reflecting community and cooperation. In terms of text, she is not only implying that each singer might be

individually aware of its meaning (and able to express it) but that a deeper understanding will emerge from a shared process of interpretation. Deep understanding in the ensemble cannot be achieved by one-way messaging from the conductor alone. The fact that Kristine seeks a participatory process does not mean that she is piggybacking on the rest of the ensemble in acquiring the material. She takes control over her own learning:

Kristine: I feel as a chorister that when you rise to good ensembles it is your responsibility that it [the music] is in place. And if I make a mistake during a rehearsal, it is my responsibility to go home and fix it. We should not be focussing on how I sing a melisma wrong fourteen times. It is my business to go home and clean it up, so that it is in place the next time.

Without explicitly being empowered by the conductor, Kristine takes it for granted that she is responsible for her own contribution to the ensemble. She exhibits self-delegation. Thus the empowering mindset seems to be equally valid for the singers and the conductor, and it is best realised mutually: power must be assumed and awarded, taken and given. The central control that accompanies the conductor role, whether through the formal position or through its individual execution, is multilayered and highly complex. The conductor has the power to influence singers, but this power only produces sounding music through the empowerment of the singers. The conductor has the ability to transform his or her own *macht*⁴⁷ into the singers' *kraft*.⁴⁸ Leadership power without ensemble *kraft* is completely useless. Real conductor power over the music does not come from control in and of itself, but from how control is retained and abandoned through a constant interplay between the conductor and the singers.

⁴⁷ The German word for power, in the sense of might and potency. The corresponding Norwegian word is *makt*.

⁴⁸ The German word for power, in the sense of force in action.

11.2. Rehearsal management

11.2.1. Agenda and process owner

As singers were describing the overall experience of great musical leadership in chapter 9, the duality of rehearsing and performing took various shapes. Some singers thought about one or the other individually; others thought about the connection between them. Interestingly, this duality brings to the fore the multifaceted nature of the conductor role, which can involve leader and co-musician, teacher and artist. The rehearsal, of course, represents an important arena for the exercise of musical leadership, exposing a number of things conductors actually *do*. Beatrice will introduce the rehearsal theme in the context of a dialogue about the extent of the conductor's responsibility. Specifically, I asked her whether the conductor is responsible for a choir's flattening pitch:

Beatrice: It depends. No and yes. Not that the conductor should keep it [the pitch] up, but when the conductor finds that the choir as a group is struggling, it is the conductor who has the possibility to do something about it, and [to make sure] that the choir as a group does something different. It is the conductor standing there who decides what to do next. [...] You can't say that the conductor always [has] the responsibility, [...] but I believe that the conductor may hold the key, primarily because it is he who sets the agenda, deciding what to do at every point in time.

Beatrice is of two minds: she does not hold the conductor directly responsible in strictly musical terms, presumably because it is ultimately the singer who sings, but she absolutely does hold him or her responsible in general as the overall *agenda maker*. In that sense, and as we saw in chapter 10, the conductor does need to do something about flattening pitch, because once the choir is out of tune, it is an agenda item, so to speak. Beatrice expects the conductor to recognise the ensemble's struggle and decide upon the appropriate action to fix it. The conductor, in a view shared by many of the interviewees, owns the agenda and is accountable for well-run rehearsals. What that means, however, varies according to the person. Jenny has a straightforward punchlist:

Jenny: I think it is really great to work with a conductor who is very meticulous about rehearsing, who has a very good rehearsing approach

to the music material, who is thorough, and [this kind of conductor] is most welcome to be strict and everything.

Jenny reminds us that rehearsals represent a key forum in which the conductor sets expectations for the singers. It is not as trivial as it sounds to note that in rehearsals, as opposed to performance, the conductor may exercise verbal leadership. Rehearsals give the conductor the opportunity to *state* his or her intentions, *articulate* expected singer contributions of every kind, and possibly *converse about or negotiate* the road towards the performing result.

We might intuitively expect a certain intensity in concert, as everything comes together in the present now. However, Arne also uses this word about the rehearsing situation:

Arne: [In terms of] intensity in a rehearsal, I see before me that something is happening all the time. That there is not much dead time, for example. That you move forward and make use of the time you have. That it is efficient. I like that.

For Arne, the individual rehearsal can be as intense as the performance, but in a different way: it is efficient, by which he means that something happens, and there is activity and progress made. It is interesting to note that intensity, which is being used about both the performing situation and the rehearsing situation, seems to involve opposite perceptions of activity. Rehearsing intensity means that time is used, and used well, whereas performing intensity, interestingly, means that time 'stands still'. Despite the existential nature of this ultimate musicking moment, rehearsing is the instrumental endeavour that facilitates it. Rehearsing is all about progress, which, according to Daniel, depends upon three main features:

Daniel: It is very important to me that it is efficient—that I experience that we are working with relevant things. [. . .] I lose respect very quickly for a leader who expects certain mistakes. But someone who permits every mistake [only] once or twice, but maintains efficiency without dwelling on them, so that everything moves ahead, is very good.

First, the rehearsal should be relevant—its activities must be meaningful in terms of the performing result. Second, there is a limit to how much time should be devoted to a particular problem, after which the conductor should simply move on, in the interests of the total picture. Each of these features has to do with not wasting time. Third, conductors should not assume that certain

mistakes or problems will occur and pre-emptively devote time to resolving them. Daniel wants to be heard and dealt with based on what is actually happening, not on the conductor's hang-ups or suspicions.

Arne and Daniel are both commenting on the single rehearsal. But Daniel also describes the most efficient *rehearsing project*, or chain of rehearsals that leads to the performance:

Daniel: You are certain about the direction you are working in. I find it frustrating to work in one direction, only to reject change it. [. . .] You have to build stone by stone. You need a foundation before building a house. [. . .] When you are done with the foundation, you are done with it! If you have completed the technical work and then put the phrasing and feeling on top, you do not expect to go back and change any fundamental things.

For Daniel, progress means moving forward in a clear direction. Rehearsing should be an irreversible process, and he uses the metaphor of building up, stone by stone—the foundation must be laid first, and you cannot change it later. Elsewhere in the interview, Daniel demonstrates that he is not the experimenting type, which comes across clearly again here. For him, rehearsing is a job to be done, and great musical moments will result from it. It is a learning process, but it can also be seen as a project with goals (such as preparing for the concert), milestones (such as getting the basics down by the second rehearsal), and activities (such as error correction). The conductor, as the designated leader, owns the rehearsing agenda across the entire process and within the single event.

Maria talks about progression, and I let her introduce an agenda dilemma that all interviewed singers are very conscious about:

Maria: Should you run the whole piece, or do you need to do it in parts, and when do you need to do the parts in order for the errors not to stick permanently? And when do you need to just let it be, and maybe it will be better next time, by focussing on something else?

When to work on details and when to abandon them in the interests of the whole constitutes an abiding and diplomatically sensitive situation for the rehearsal leader. It is extremely challenging to assess the rehearsing situation appropriately, in real time, with the present singers and the time remaining until the concert in mind. Here, of course, we find the interface between rehearsing as a learning process and as a teaching process. There is always an

instructive aspect to the rehearsal, involving, for example, simple error detection and correction. The conductor is in a perfect position to identify and address any deviation between the sounding music that is in preparation and the desired performed result. Singers see conductors as biased towards a teaching mindset, however, and as neglectful of the fact that sounding music must be produced by individuals who must acquire the music material via their own minds and bodies. The faith demonstrated by some of the singers experience that problems solve themselves indicates that at times, anyway, improvement will occur independent of the teaching intervention of a conductor.

In a dialogue with Maria about poor leadership, she described an inefficient rehearsing process:

Maria: A progression, where you [...] create more frustration and confusion than clarification. [...] It might be that the conductor doesn't hear things that happen in the choir and it goes wrong somewhere because of something that happened, but the conductor doesn't take the signals that could have solved it in a second. And then you are wasting a lot of time, and it is never resolved.

Given the pedagogical dictate of rehearsing, missed opportunities or misguided efforts to fix things can damage the whole process. Simple things become complicated, time is wasted, and conductor interventions lose traction. Later in the interview, she points out that this sort of thing may happen because the conductor does not know the music well enough. When she finds that she knows the music better than the conductor, she dismisses him or her altogether as a sort of non-leader or late follower.

In Maria's statements, not wasting time is seen as key to efficiency. Fanny nuances the rehearsal priority of efficiency:

Fanny: A better expression for me than efficiency is to be systematic. That means that it is important for me that the conductor has an idea of where he is going. It doesn't need to be well articulated, but he must have some sort of idea. And then there are lots of questions that arise along the way, when he is shaping the music. Regarding some questions, it would be important to me that he is authoritarian, that he has a clear and distinct idea of how he wants it, and 'it doesn't matter what the rest of you think'. Whereas regarding other things, questions on the road towards this idea [of where he is going], it might be wise of the conductor to suggest a

dialogue. So regarding authoritarian/non-authoritarian, I believe it is a little bit of both.

For Fanny, efficiency results directly from having a plan, knowing where the rehearsals are headed and taking systematic steps to get there. The plan does not need to be explicit. Fanny even allows for doubt and dialogue on the part of the conductor, at least regarding certain issues, which can produce time-consuming negotiation among alternative ideas. Fanny's statement links a number of themes involving musical idea and rehearsing plan, musical idea and control/empowerment, and control/empowerment and authority. Daniel is much less willing to accept a lack of clarity:

Daniel: I believe that most [conductors] are too poorly prepared. They use my time to test things. That has no place in a choir situation. That belongs to a phase where you know things really well and are going to do things over and over again in several concerts—you are going on tour or something. Then you can test things. But I don't care much for using our energy as singers to test things.

For Daniel, there is no place for dialogue during rehearsing. He values his time as a scarce commodity, and he is hesitant to letting conductors experiment with it. Experimentation with unfinished music in his mind diverts attention and wastes effort.

The interviewees all talked about rehearsing efficiency as a very desirable feature of great leadership. Bob was the only one to explicitly link it to other themes, however:

Bob: [Efficiency] is still something subordinate for me—that is, [it is] a subordinate feature compared to other features. I think that efficient and systematic conductors are great and wonderful to have. And it is also an important feature, but there are other features [that] are more important.

Elsewhere, Bob indicates that he privileges the sounding result and the ambiance in the choir above all else, including efficiency. There is a clear impression between the lines of all of the interviews that singers put up with, and to a large degree accept, widely varying rehearsing styles, including even famously poor rehearsal management. It appears to be the case that if the conductor is able to make a difference in terms of the key dimensions described in chapters 9 and 10, singers are in turn quite tolerant of managerial shortcomings.

11.2.2. Rehearsal ambiance

Ambiance emerges in various ways throughout the interviews. It was also one of the key themes in the overall experience described in chapter 9. Of course, we might well wonder whether choir ambiance is a distinct leadership theme in its own right or a manifestation of a number of other themes. In chapter 12, we will see how leadership themes—in particular, the ways in which leadership is enacted via contact, authority, sincerity, devotion, and so on—affect the ensemble ambiance. Still, ambiance obviously relates to rehearsal management as well. It is what Herman appreciates most about a certain high-profile conductor with whom he has musicked in the past:

Herman: It is her relaxed way of being—[her] calm, pleasant way of being. You feel at ease with [her], whether you are sitting talking with her over a cup of coffee or singing in the choir. [. . .] You are, in a way, taken care of, as a singer and as a human being.

Although this conductor is well known for her musical achievements, Herman highlights the ambiance she creates. He does not talk specifically about how this ease is manifested in the rehearsing or performing situation, but the learning situation that this conductor manages offers more than adequate space for both his person and his musicianship. He has experienced the other extreme as well:

Herman: If [the conductor] is scolding about things that go bad in the choir, I guess it's necessary sometimes [. . .]—'Now, you'd better shape up'—because it has to do with concentration. [. . .] But to scold knowledge into you, or to be derogatory and fling it out [at you], that usually works very badly.

Herman's statements are clear indications that ambiance matters—that learning is affected by how the conductor behaves and the impression he or she makes upon the ensemble. Worst of all, Lucy says, is this disclaimer:

Lucy: For me it could be coming to a rehearsal and the conductor begins by saying that today I'm in a bloody bad mood and have a short fuse [laughs]! It has happened.

She simply refuses to accept bad mood as a threat. It is not that the conductor is having a bad day but that he or she uses it. The conductor may not earn the right to be obnoxious by issuing a warning. Later Lucy observes that bad behaviour like this affects her ability to listen and receive instruction, and that

it makes her feel less secure. The conductor, then, has narrowed the common space, abandoned the trust, and created a negative ambiance—in short, abdicating the role of ensemble leader.

It is important to note that this all happens even without any actual negative outburst related to the rehearsal itself. Morten describes such an outburst and the unfortunate result:

Morten: The sopranos sang a G and were told that it was way too squeaky: 'It sounds like it is the very highest note you are able to sing, and you have to do it better'. Every onset and such was hit hard [after that].

In the absence of positive reinforcement, Morten observes, the singers lost the ability to figure out good from bad. This particular conductor never told the choir what his desired result should sound like. He describes the alternative:

Morten: [There is also the conductor] who is good at building up the choir to begin with and then starts to pick on what can be improved. This has to do with approach. Instead of saying that this is not good enough, you can say that this may be improved if you do so and so.

This conductor sought to improve upon what was already working rather than try to fix what was (loudly) identified as broken. Furthermore, she provided specific suggestions about *how* to improve. Each of Morten's example conductors was demanding, but the demands produced decidedly different results. More importantly, Morten's first case gave no guidance to what good sounds like or how to achieve it. Birgit describes the effect of conductor demands upon singers:

Birgit: The conductor should clearly be demanding, but not necessarily [suffocating] . . . [The conductor might] rather lift the person up, instead of pinpointing that you don't know anything—'You can't do it'. This has to do with self-confidence and belief in yourself [as a singer].

Birgit has experienced that demands may inhibit as well as liberate, depending on how they are presented, and in fact all of the interviews reveal singers as both sensing and sensitive beings. An advanced education or professional career does not make a person more durable when faced with bad conductor behaviour. Kristine describes what constant negative feedback can do:

Kristine: We have a conductor who, I believe, is obsessed with telling [singers] that 'this you sing bad, this is bad, this is off-pitch, this doesn't

sound good during rehearsals'. And I notice that it does something to me. First, I get a negative attitude and I become a little [resistant] . . . and am irritated. Then I think that since there is so much that is good, why not focus on that? Then the other things would blossom. Of course, we should work on what's difficult. But if you hear all the time that 'something is bad, this is off-pitch, this doesn't work out', then something happens in your head.

Kristine has even observed highly competent singers, including experienced soloists, who fall apart as a result of a conductor's continuous refrain of 'this is no good'. She can take criticism, but she can take more of it if her achievements are first supported and then built upon. She makes another interesting remark about what negative feedback does to her:

Kristine: I become constrained and annoyed. And that is not because I cannot face hearing that things are bad, but in my mind, we know it so well ourselves already. You notice that something is not good enough, [. . .] but I still believe that the way to go is to build upon what sounds good—and naturally work on what's bad, without saying that it's bad. You can repeat, sing things again until it is ok, without focussing on the negative words.

Good singers know when things are not good enough—they don't need to be humiliated, and they may not even need to be told. Most of the time, they simply need the opportunity to try to get it right. The conductor who points to the problem always in a negative fashion takes away from the rehearsing progress. He or she wastes time and undermines the ambiance. Kristine knows that it does not have to be this way:

Kristine: [The conductor could say,] 'Oh, there it is, let's do it three times in order for our brains to remember it, exactly that sound, exactly that phrasing'. [. . .] Of course, you need to correct what doesn't work, but you must be left with a feeling that this is good.

Kristine describes an essentially positive way to make a solution stick. It is one thing to solve a problem, she thinks, but quite another to come out of the problem-solving effort with a feeling of positive mastery.

Morten provides an extreme example of an otherwise beloved conductor who sometimes gives intensely negative feedback, though generally as part of a clearly articulated process. This particular conductor prefers positive feedback early on but changes things up towards the end:

Morten: We have been told beforehand that when we get towards the end [of the rehearsing process] she might get a little angry, [...] and the angrier she gets, the closer it is to perfect. Then there is in fact meaning in making her angry, because then it [the performance] is close. [...] The musicking becomes very good. Even if her comments there and then are as sharp and can hurt as much, they are still [made] within an agreement that was established beforehand, making us feel that we have her confidence all along.

Morten knows that this conductor's feedback will change over the course of the rehearsing process, because she has told them it will. She uses the early phases to build confidence and trust and thus earns the right to be more direct, and even downright negative, towards the end. She goes into a different feedback mode as the ensemble gets closer to perfection. There is thus a deliberate progression not only in the preparation of the music but also in the interaction between the conductor and the singers. By stating that she may become angry towards the perfect result, singers may create meaning from her anger. In fact, it almost becomes a goal for the singers to make the conductor angry, because it evidences rehearsal accomplishments. There seems to be an agreed-upon convention here regarding how to interpret this feedback, and basic security is retained throughout the process.

11.2.3. Telling and doing

In this section, the singers will describe the rehearsal as a meeting point of teaching and learning. The teaching-learning pair represents in turn a specific aspect of the control-empowerment duality that was described in section 11.1. Control and empowerment derives from designated leadership, which starts with central control, which to varying degrees may be relinquished or 'delegated' Maria, however, suggests that the initiative or the empowered behaviour may in fact originate with the singer. The following statement arose out of a dialogue about communicating with the conductor about errors are not corrected:

Maria: If you experience as a singer that the conductor has an idea behind [what he is doing], I think that's okay. But if you don't sense that, it is frustrating, because you wonder when he's going to bring it up again. Should you ask, or just wait and see? And how long should you wait and see?

Maria expects conductors to have a plan and, more importantly, to make that plan apparent. This sounds obvious but suggests an important further corollary: competent singers have listening skills that are equal to the conductor's, they may know the music as well as the conductor does, and, thanks to the time they have spent with it, they may even have ideas about how to improve the sounding music. Whenever they sense a mismatch between the sounding music and the score (or their musical idea about the score), they go into a receiving mode, waiting for corrective action from the conductor. In the absence of this action on the part of the conductor, they may then mobilise their own sense of responsibility to fix things themselves. Of course, it is not always clear whether the conductor will welcome or endorse this intervention:

Maria: I don't think I respect the conductor any less if we [as singers must] take responsibility for fixing things. [. . .] If I know that they like to take the high-level view and count on the singers to assume a little responsibility, we will do that. But if I am not sure about whether they want it like that, there will be uncertainty. This has also to do with not being a gnat in the choir, coming up with bothersome interruptions all the time, because they might have a plan and then you have to give the conductor a chance to use the plan. Often, they do.

Maria is willing to be active or passive, but she wants to know the rules—that is, does the conductor have a plan, and does it accommodate singer intervention? Even with some leeway, then, the conductor would be well advised to articulate plan and guidelines as much as possible.

Even when the rules are clear, however, the most productive balance between being taught/told and finding out for oneself can be elusive for both conductor and singer, as Sofie observes:

Sofie: Concerning singing the right notes, I don't need to be told that I was singing a wrong note. But often we have in the choir a golden rule that if you sing a mistake, [. . .] you raise your hand as a signal to the conductor—'I know, it was me, and I am aware of it'—instead of repeating things unnecessarily. I don't really want to be told [laughs] obvious things, like, we are going to have a crescendo there, and here we do so-and-so. I would rather that we just do it and that the conductor is relieved of [the obligation of] having to say it. A great deal of things is written in the score and one can find out for oneself.

Sofie does not want to be told about obvious mistakes or expressive elements that are easy to see in the music. She even prefers to determine a work's

expressive character for herself. Her sense of responsibility and independence is so profound that she feels patronised if she is not correspondingly empowered. She takes ownership of her learning process, and teaching efforts may get in the way.

Trym mentions a similar experience when I ask him whether he has ever been over-helped by a conductor (which he says happens all the time).

Trym: I am not really fond of practicing. I like to get the knife at my throat, [take] responsibility there and then, preferably sightread it. It sharpens me enormously there and then. What we don't fix, we go home and have ready for next time. [. . .] [The conductor] was a good bass himself—he felt compelled to demonstrate that he could sing our part and did it very often, even if we all did it quite all right. This is something that singers never appreciate, when the conductor shows off. Though he may have had an alibi, because one of the basses didn't fix it on the spot, there is no need to over-help.

Trym implicitly describes a four-stage process for learning music. First of all, he enjoys the sightreading challenge and like to try to get it right on the fly. If not fully in place, he stays sharp and then wants to self-correct right away. Then he allows that the conductor might step in to help out. In the end, though, Trym prefers to just go home at this point and prepare individually for the next rehearsal. Trym displays a clear do-it-yourself mindset. He also introduces the possibility that sometimes the conductor will have his or her own motives for a given instruction. In this case, the conductor was showing off, which alienated Trym even further.

Nora reflects on a different aspect of the learning process:

Nora: We are working on sound [. . .] for half an hour. Usually, intonation and precision follow. Or we are working on intonation, and usually sound follows. It all hangs together.

Nora finds that rehearsal problems are interrelated, and sometimes solving one will solve them all. Splitting problems up into constituent parts is, of course, a common teaching approach. The interviewees describe numerous times when conductors lingered over isolated problems, which does not always resolve the situation, whereas a holistic effort—for example, a full repetition in context—does resolve it. Getting it right appears just as much as singer's holistic learning experience as the effect of detailed instruction. Most of the time, it is a balance of detail to whole, instruction and individual experimentation, that does the

trick. It seems as if the ability to make the right judgement is one of the difficult and important features of good musical leadership. The difficulty of striking this balance derives in part from how the singers view the relevance of repetition. Morten talks about a seminar with a voice pedagogue:

Morten: He tried to help shape phrases and sound by having us do the same vowel colour and the right speed of crescendo and such. And every time we had done something right, he stopped and said: 'That was great. Let's do it once more'. And I felt so frustrated. Because when you have made one bit work, I think it is important to build it onwards.

While Morten wants to move on, once the part is right, other singers appreciate the opportunity to repeat and make it stick before moving on. This leads in turn to the question of priorities and timing.

11.2.4. Priorities and timing

The telling-doing dilemma described in the preceding section seems at first sight to be a question of what specific action to take. Yet because there is a need for conductor instruction as well as singer practice, it is probably just as much a question of timing. Herman talks about the worst pitfall conductors can fall into, which often irritates him:

Herman: You are singing and you arrive at a point where things go a little bit wrong, it doesn't work out, or one voice sings a mistake, and then we continue without addressing the problem. [But] you have to find the cause: is it the tenor part, is it the alto part, what is happening and why is it happening? [. . .] But [then] sometimes the right method is to say, 'That was a mistake, but now we proceed, because in fact we need to hear the whole, what happens after this transition, where we are then arriving'.

Even though Herman's first instinct is to address the error on the spot, he does recognise that moving on may also be effective—that is, to privilege the whole over the part. He elaborates further on the consequences of pausing all the time to fix the same passage:

Herman: If you stop at the same spot every time, I notice [. . .] that if we do it too much, the singers get used to [it]: 'Oh, that's a place we can breathe, because we usually stop [there]' [laughs]. It is possible to rehearse mistakes. Unconsciously.

Herman's initial irritation was about not stopping to attend to a problem. He then acknowledges the virtues of the holistic approach, perhaps because of his combined experience as singer and conductor. He also notes that stopping in itself may introduce unintended and undesirable habits. His statements connect the stop/continue pair with the detail/whole pair, a topic that all of the interviewed singers bring up, in one way or another. Morten, for example, talks about when to move on from error correction:

Morten: If you drill the same three bars over and over again, you risk having an aversion, a fear of these three bars becoming so difficult in the minds of the singers that they don't get through them. We'd rather just [go on] when you have worked on [them] a few times and realised it doesn't improve much more. It is important to recognise the point when you hear that the singers are not getting more secure even if you repeat it more times.

Like the cost associated with stopping at the same place too much, there is also a cost associated with working on the same problem for too long. Beyond a certain point, the problem is not likely to improve any further right then. Even worse, the attempt to solve the problem always runs the risk of cementing it—singer insecurity might stick, and the whole passage might acquire a stigma as well.

How to attend to the details (as opposed to the whole) is one of the ever-present judgements conductors are making. Another is at what stage in the rehearsing process to begin to encompass musicality and musical expression. Birgit prefers that conductors are aware of it from the start:

Birgit: The first [thing] that comes to mind is to think musicality from the first tone, and that [if] the conductor is observant about [. . .] whether it says forte or piano, there should be a certain flavour of it [the dynamics] right away. To be mindful about musicality immediately. [. . .] At the same time [. . .] in almost any musical material, there are some parts that are difficult, and then you have to take it seriously, including gathering around the piano and smoking out the difficulties.

For Birgit, musical expressivity is more of a mindset than an activity, and the conductor should demonstrate that mindset from the start, even during the necessary pockets of detail work, including break-out sessions around the piano.

Stella prefers musicality at an early stage in the process as well, though here she describes a high-profile conductor who she thinks waits too long to attend to it:

Stella: The sum of forces and energy is the same anyhow. If you have a lot of tasks to attend to, there is less [devoted to] each task. And musicality often comes in [late], as if it is not supposed to appear until the concert.

She has experienced that the total capacity for attention is scarce, and that musicality will suffer if introduced at a too late stage. She implies that unless musicality is forced onto the rehearsing agenda early, it will be crowded out by constraints of time and capacity for singer attention. She thinks that musicality should even be introduced as the choir is sightreading:

Stella: That's what I prefer. Then I believe the chances of getting a holistic end product are higher. It is like process-oriented writing. If you were to only correct spelling mistakes and layout, thinking about the content only at the end, whether it flows at all, you lose the whole process.

Daniel has strong views about timing and priorities that are quite different from Stella's:

Daniel: If at an [early] stage you focus a lot on small details, like ornamentation or ideas about expression in this portion [or that], before all the technical [work] is in place, [. . .] when everybody is sitting and concentrating on the practical, solving problems, finding the reasons for flattening, getting it into pitch, getting it together . . . that is what I call inefficient rehearsing. If you start saying that here we need to think about Jesus or get in the Christmas spirit, add this kind of emotion before things are ready, that is an inefficient rehearsing situation.

Daniel previously described laying the foundation first and then building up to the performance, stone by stone. In his view, getting the notes in place is the foundation, and moving too soon to ornamentation or other expressive details is inefficient. He went on to compare the music rehearsal to a theatre rehearsal, pointing out that no stage direction happens until the initial reading is done and the lines are in place with the actors. Many high-level choirs, in his view, are accustomed to fast progress but nevertheless move too quickly to the icing on the cake. He believes that most of expressive final result will come automatically when the technical foundation is secure, because most good singers have this ability. Daniel and Stella, then, have opposite answers to a

basic question: is expression meaningful when the vehicle for expression is not finished? Stella's answer is yes, because she is afraid of never arriving at the expressive part. Daniel's answer is no, because he does not want to arrive there until the basics are in place. In addition, he believes that adding emotions to a shaky technical foundation will in fact sustain those faults:

Daniel: [The conductor] should, in any case, not get in the way of what the singers do. But [as the conductor] I wouldn't demand that one puts phrasing and feelings into something that is not finished. Cognitively and theoretically speaking, one has to assume that everything you put feelings into sticks better. So you could say that if you do everything right, you might as well sing it like it is supposed to be. But if you are struggling with the score and the tones don't sit well, and you don't know where you are, and [then you] are supposed to put feelings into it, you put feelings into something erroneous.

Daniel respects those singers who are ready for musicality from the beginning but argues against imposing musical expression prematurely. He wants everyone in the ensemble to have the time and space to learn the music and embody the notes technically; expressivity will then derive from mastery of the musical material. If singers do not have the time, damage can be done:

Daniel: Very often, a choral conductor has the desire to make it really soft or loud and to get to that result too soon. That means interfering with what the singer can do effectively. [. . .] The singers are well aware of the fact that the most difficult [thing] you do is to sing well softly, and that you want to sing it thoroughly a few times, make it stick, and then you can take it down, even if you [first] sing it with a properly founded voice. If you want to go to the soft too soon, you end up with a group [that is] sitting and dithering. If you do that in the beginning of the rehearsal, it is very hard, in most singers' experience, to get to a full sounding result afterwards. If [the conductor] had put himself aside at the beginning of the rehearsing period, had let the singers sing however they can, as they need to, sit as they like, stand as they like, not get in the way of those [who are] doing the job, he would eventually be in the position to say, 'I really want this pianissimo'.

Daniel has experienced many conductors who insist upon their own ideas, wishes and requirements at the expense of the singers' learning process. Conductors often forget that the rehearsal must impact the minds and bodies of the *singers* that create the music—it is not simply a forum for conductor

intentions and activities as such. Singer learning, then, may happen at a different pace and demonstrate different signs of progress than the conductor imagines or expects, based upon goals that do not accommodate the singers' needs. Daniel's strong view is closely linked to the legitimacy of the conductor role—that is, the conductor always runs the risk of getting in the way of competent singers who are taking responsibility for their own learning. Daniel draws the parallel to instrumentalists, whom you never would expect to play a very rapid passage before their fingers are ready. Singing is no different than playing the violin, and Daniel believes some conductors deal with choirs as if it was something different than singing.

Trym also complains about conductors who fail to make the right judgements in their plenary pedagogy:

Trym: It is among other things because they lack rehearsing technique. And many who [are] [. . .] a little perfectionistic and want to drill and have little things concert ready immediately at the first rehearsal, they often fall into such ditches.

Trym suggests that the tendency to make the wrong judgement about what the singers need increases with a conductor's ambition (or impatience). Daniel and Trym's statements hint at how conductors can forget that it is the singers who own the rehearsal, in the sense that it is they who must ultimately master the sound production. Maria also considers a conductor's ability to understand singer needs to be one of the key characteristics of good musical leadership:

Maria: The conductor, in a way, senses what is needed, and the right time [for it]. But it is not always, in my experience, that the timing is right, but it may still be the right time—it is possibly even better to experience that the conductor had an idea that was better than I thought [laughs].

Maria sums up some of the points made in this section. The effective conductor understands singer needs and is able to intervene appropriately with the right timing for tasks in rehearsal. Maria recognises that she may not agree with the conductor's intervention, at least initially, but she gives the conductor a certain leeway and waits for an even better plan to materialise. Maria's acceptance of ideas other than her own is a recurring theme among the interviewees, who only insist upon evidence of a deliberate plan, and of systematic progression.

11.2.5. Rehearsing aids

Since most of the time spent in an ensemble is in fact rehearsal time, most of the themes emerging from the interviews can be viewed through a rehearsal lens, and some through a pedagogical lens as well. However, Ladkin's three-element model, as the primary structural guide the analysis favours other perspectives: the conductor is understood as leader, artist and co-musician as much as teacher or coach. The interviewees comment on conductors' various rehearsal aids and techniques only to a limited degree. In a dialogue about the rehearsal process, Stella talks about the varying sight-reading capability of the members in one of her choirs:

Stella: We have sight-reading locomotives in all voice groups. So, we sight read rather quickly together, and a lot becomes quite all right the first time we sing through. And then we quickly break out into voice groups, and then come back. [The conductor] walks around and in this way familiarises herself with the parts.

Though Stella does not indicate it here, this conductor is in fact quite weak on score reading. The strength of this ability in the group, however, makes plenary sight-reading quite meaningful right from the start of the rehearsing process. They also promptly go into break-out groups, blending different learning techniques within very short timeframes. This particular conductor, with the help of the choir members, has determined a flexible and variable organisation of rehearsal activities.

Conductors and choirs also have different customs and expectations around using the piano to learn the notes, as Sean observes:

Sean: It depends—I mean, there is a golden middle road. It's okay to have a piano available, but a tuning fork may work just as well. It depends on the level of the singers [and] what kind of music it is. If you are going to sing Bach, I think it is very practical to have a piano accompanying to play pedal points and provide rhythmic illustrations. [. . .] On the other hand, if I am to sing Trond Kverno or Knut Nystedt, a piano is virtually superfluous. This is more about listening.

Sean prefers a combination of rehearsing with and without the piano, a pragmatic view that is driven by the needs and purpose of the music, whether tonal or atonal. It is worth noting that he wants to do without piano when

rehearsing free-tonal music, whereas he willingly accepts the piano as a continuo type aid when rehearsing Bach.

In a dialogue with Stella about staying in tune, we talk about a specific choir whose members tend to stay in pitch but produce chords that are often out of tune. She then reflects on the two different conductors she has been singing with:

Stella: They [the first choir] use piano support for so long that the key is completely fixed in people. You get to the muscular memory, in a way. You can't avoid it. In [the other choir] we never use it, but we hear that the men, who have a group leader who is a pianist, have much more intolerance for which key is given. [. . .] Whereas I, who cannot play the piano at all [. . .], only start with a tuning fork, and if I hear that we are singing the right notes, I am not so occupied with having sung above or below [pitch].

Stella suggests that two concepts of 'in tune' can develop, based upon how much the given ensemble relies upon the piano: 'in pitch', when the piano is used extensively, and 'on chord', as a more relative and less objective perception of being in tune. Stella later applauds certain guest conductors who do not use the piano at all and notes that she became more deeply acquainted with the chords and the timbre without accompaniment.

Another rehearsing aid is the singing demonstration, where the conductor shows by doing. Birgit describes a conductor who is not a singer on the level of the choir members:

Birgit: [He] has a quite nice voice, but he is nonetheless not really able to demonstrate the way the choir is supposed to sound. [. . .] There are [also] some conductors who sing out of tune, with an ugly voice [laughs], and then it's difficult. But [this conductor] has a natural, light voice to identify with. And he sings in tune.

Birgit finds his demonstrations to be useful because the character of the conductor's voice allows his intentions to be conveyed. As long as the conductor sings in tune, he or she does not need to match the level of the singers in terms of voice. Morten provides a similar example of a conductor who is much less skilled as a singer than he is. He still prefers that this conductor show things by singing, partly because Morten's ear is stronger than his sight-reading. I ask him why this is so, since the conductor is not able to actually demonstrate the sound he wants Morten to produce:

Morten: I have a musical image inside my head of what this should sound like, so it's not a problem.

Morten does not in fact see conductor demonstration as an expressive vehicle or a sound ideal—he is simply extracting the pitches and supplies everything else for himself. This is yet another example of how singers use what they need and dismiss the rest. Singers are rather generous, they don't need to get everything, as long as they get something.

Birgit talks about the role of warm-up exercises and their relationship to rehearsal needs:

Birgit: It is very important that [. . .] the technical be related to the musical, that when warming up you should think musically. At least when you start thinking about sound and technique, you [have to] think musically. Let's say that we have trouble with a section, finding the sound, [so we] put it aside and go back to sound exercises that we know really well. [The conductor] has said that we should never think that we have done these exercises a million times [already], [that they are] like a ritual you just do. Instead, we should think the other way around. We do them because we come from our different lives to our choral lives, and through those things that we do over and over again, we come home—we come home to [the choir]. I think that is beautifully put. He is incredibly good with [verbal] images—it makes us laugh, it makes us understand what he means.

Birgit knows that warm-ups serve multiple purposes, and that conductors think differently about them, to the extent that conductors are involved in voice preparation at all. For her, preparatory voice exercises are closely integrated with efforts to shape the sound and solve musical problems. They are less an individual drill than a unifying ritual that brings all of the 'instruments' together in the choir.

In section 11.2.3, we saw how singers addressed the balance between conductor telling and singers doing during the rehearsal process. Conductors must also decide *how* to tell or do what they want the ensemble to know during rehearsals. Daniel talks about his experience with a refreshingly direct guest conductor:

Daniel: Everything is in the score. [The conductor] looked down in his score and beat four straight beats. [. . .] He didn't even stop [the music] to give the messages he gave. Four bars before he arrived at a spot where he knew a marking should be made, he took up his pencil with his left hand,

held the pencil in his hand and showed what he was going to do . . . there. And then he put down his pencil and expected that we had written it down.

There are two virtues to this particular example of rehearsal leadership. First, the conductor alerted the singers in advance that something needed to be done at a certain point. Second, the conductor was able to transmit his message without stopping the music.

11.2.6. Responding to singer needs

Despite a lot of attention to the various balancing acts that constitute the choral rehearsal, few conductors manage to intervene in ways that are always right (or always wrong). Those who get it right most often, however, seem to be good at understanding what the singers need in a given situation. Sofie discusses a conductor who makes the rehearsal process more challenging by being unrealistic (or, at least, unsympathetic) about the challenges that the music presents to the singers:

Sofie: I do have some experiences where a conductor thinks you are poorly prepared, and he is upset about it, and when the rehearsal is over [he] becomes resigned and just shakes his head [and says,] 'You are supposed to just know this'. It doesn't help a lot, and you are not able to work well [in these circumstances], even if the conductor is absolutely right in many ways. But [with] some music, you have to sing together in order to make it work. You can't learn all music in the practice studio.

Sofie describes a mismatch between conductor expectations and her own expectations when it comes to learning music effectively. In her experience, some music requires plenary learning rather than individual preparation. She does not say how she had prepared for this particular rehearsal, but the conductor evidently expected something more, and the working situation was affected as a result. Such mismatches might derive from different understandings of what it takes to master the music material, or from who needs what from the rehearsal itself. Here, the conductor might see the rehearsal as an opportunity to make his or her mark on the musical expression, whereas Sophie sees it as an opportunity to understand and master her own contribution to the full soundscape. Despite often differing expectations,

however, singers do expect the conductor to understand their needs, as we will see in this section.

The failure to assess or appreciate those needs can lead to a conductor intervention that may not be wrong as such but proves to be ineffective, as Daniel describes:

Daniel: If you have a technical problem—let’s say that you are flattening in a chorale—and you’re sitting as a singer and feel in your throat and body that the reason for the flattening at this point is that people don’t know it [the passage] well enough. To then stop and spend a lot of time tuning chord by chord and explaining and elaborating upon why this is flattening [seems pointless], when you could have said that bar 32 flattens, please notice this, run it one more time, let everybody get one more chance—that [alternative] I experience as efficient.

In Daniel’s example, the choir needs a single piece of information and a rerun—a more detailed error correction on the part of the conductor overestimates and overcompensates for the problem. Daniel also reflects on situations where not even a rerun is needed:

Daniel: In my experience, the key moral is that rehearsal efficiency is not about quantity, at least not at the level I am working now. It is not [always] that we need it [the detail] one more time. It could be that we should skip it or just say it [instead]. Or we don’t need to fiddle around with the details—just give us the chance to get it in context and then everything fixes itself.

Daniel’s view is that many problems solve themselves, that is, they appear as problems, but will probably vanish during the next run. He suggests that conductors want to solve too many problems sometimes.

The importance of systematic rehearsal processes and conductor preparedness has been covered in preceding sections. It remains to be pointed out here, however, that some singers prefer a degree of playfulness and flexibility in the rehearsal. In the context of singer empowerment, Gustav applauds the discovery of *unexpected* features of the music as a result of the unfettered musicking experience:

Gustav: I am not saying that it should be completely free, [or] to just let it happen—you need some frames and a point of departure—but you should allow for the possibility of [unexpected] things to happen in the rehearsing situation. [. . .] I have experienced this many times, I believe,

that the conductor discovers things that happen, initiatives that are taken when rehearsing, and [then] highlights it: [. . .] 'Listen, something happened here, let yourselves be inspired by it!'

Gustav acknowledges the usefulness of a rehearsal framework and clear goals but also wants ample space for joint learning and discovery as the ensemble moves through the process. Other singers, such as Daniel, prefer a purely goal oriented process. It would appear difficult to accommodate both Gustav and Daniel in the same rehearsal, which is an important reminder that singers' needs are not uniform or unambiguous. Even when a conductor does understand all of the varying needs in the ensemble, he or she cannot possibly attend to all of them.

Sean advocates for conductor empathy nevertheless. (This situation was also discussed in section 9.6 about not wasting time.)

Sean: It is about knowing what specifically goes wrong—how can I psychologically attempt to know what the singer is thinking here? In what way can I resolve it and see to it that we move forward?

Sean insists that conductors make an effort to understand what is going wrong and why. He even expects the conductor to read the singer's minds, in order to find the practical steps to solve the problem. The failure to do so, as mentioned above, leads to futile (and faulty) reruns. Then Sean introduces a very different type of singer 'need', one commonly neglected by conductors:

Sean: I believe most choristers experience, from time to time—at least, I experience it very often—a lack of motivation. I have been singing for two hours and I have become so incredibly fed up, [. . .] for we have rehearsed the same bit over and over again and we are not getting it right. [. . .] [The conductor needs to] know when enough is enough—to combine his or her own musical needs with the choristers' needs, so to speak.

At a certain point, singers simply get tired, bored or fed up, and the conductor must recognise when there is nothing more to be gained by continuing. Sean hints that conductors might have their own implicit goals for covering a certain amount of ground during the rehearsal, but they must balance this against the singers' collective energy level as well.

11.3. Mentorship

11.3.1. Benevolence

How a conductor understands singer needs affects how he or she manages the ensemble, the rehearsing process and the rehearsal event itself. In fact, the conductor's response to the needs of the singers is such a pervasive theme that it crystallises as a distinct leadership theme. In a dialogue about what we need a conductor for, Morten describes how the conductor creates musical meaning by embodying the score through gestures, translating the musical idea into the ensemble's actual execution. But once there is sounding music, Morten introduces another aspect of the role:

Morten: To be a motivator—to assess the group's achievement and signal that you do this well and you do this too poorly . . . yes, a mentor.

Morten sees the conductor as a mediator between idea and sound, but this mediation has two stages—the embodiment of the idea and the guidance toward its execution, including error correction and expressive fine-tuning. He attaches the label of mentor to the guidance role, when the ability to assess the ensemble's performance is key. Morten then elaborates on what he means:

Morten: A guide. Someone with constructive criticism that helps you on the road to achieving the optimal result with the material and the instrument at hand.

There are a number of points here. A mentor is a guide on the path to a great achievement. Criticism is the mentor's main tool, but criticism must be based in good will and shaped to build capacity and confidence rather than exert control or wield power. Lastly, guidance should not be standardised or automated but rather adapted to the singer's level of mastery, and to the music being rehearsed. The singers must receive what they need (and only what they need) to become better. Morten's view of good mentoring constitutes a highly targeted intervention, and he confirms that one of the mentor's most important abilities is to judge the situation correctly—to recognise what the singers need:

Morten: [The mentor must] have antennae, to know in what way to best build on the achievement that was just made.

Again, Morten's notion of constructive criticism implies that this guidance is intended for the benefit of the singers, not for other dubious purposes such as the demarcation of hierarchy or the demonstration of one's own competence. Morten has previously compared two very different conductors in terms of very good and very bad leadership, and I tried to clarify whether a difference in mentor mindset could be part of his experience with them:

Dag: Could it be that you know that [conductor 1] is benevolent?⁴⁹

Morten: Yes.

Dag: But you are not certain that [conductor 2] is benevolent?

Morten: That's how it is.

As he spoke, Morten adopted an almost solemn posture here, as just realising something significant about his singer experience: that conductor 1 genuinely wants Morten to be a great singer, and does everything in her power to make that happen, whereas conductor 2, at best, does not really care.

11.3.2. Helpful demands

For Morten, mentoring partly involves criticism and partly help. Constructive criticism, which is some of both, represents information that singers can use to enhance their own performance through their own insight and effort. Beatrice describes one way to deliver this criticism:

Beatrice: [The conductor got the result] by demanding it. By not giving us answers. He was a little rough; he was a little nasty: 'Excuse me, but my orchestra musicians usually play what's in the score, so I expect you to do the same'. Okay, we'd better do it then. [. . .] [He] just had an enormous influence and wanted us to do well; he simply expected it.

This conductor treated the singers as professionals, first and foremost. He simply required the singers to be prepared and express what they could read for themselves in the score. Thanks to these blunt expectations, the singers became extremely attentive in rehearsal, which was very productive:

⁴⁹ Translated from the Norwegian *vil deg vel*, meaning 'intends good things for you'.

Beatrice: I don't know whether it was a super, fantastic concert. This became completely secondary for me. [. . .] It is not the concert I remember. I only remember the rehearsals.

Beatrice's encounter with this very competent conductor and his no-nonsense demands was a revelation. (According to other singers, the concert was a revelation as well.) The conductor demonstrated his faith in the choir's potential and unleashed it by stating his demands very clearly. He was a good mentor here, because he understood that the singers in this case needed clear expectations above all else.

In Beatrice's example, the conductor delivered strong demands with respect and even benevolence, in the sense that he had no motive beyond unleashing the potential in the choir. Daniel, on the other hand, has experience with conductors whose instruction is too patronising:

Daniel: The most perverse example I have [. . .] is a project with [the choir] where the first thing we did during the first rehearsal, [. . .] where there is a really big leap for the tenors, [was] to stop during the first run-through because [the conductor] was not satisfied with the highest note and asked us to focus a little less on the third in the overtone sequence. [. . .] I understand what he's getting at. He wanted to put us in our proper place, sitting there as a perky young singers: this is level we are aspiring to.

Here the singers were somehow caught off guard, possibly because it was so early in the rehearsal. The conductor attempted to adjust the timbre of a difficult passage by giving extremely detailed instructions, not because this was the best way to go about it but because he wanted to establish a pecking order. To Daniel, this 'help' was not really about help. It was given to mark position, to make the singers fall in line, to make them react on something else than the musical problem itself. This example recalls Trym's description in section 11.2.3 of the bass-conductor who was showing off by demonstrating excessively.

11.3.3. Helpful guidance

Birgit likes having demands placed upon her in rehearsal. She sees herself as responsible and self motivated, even when she is not performing to her own high standards:

Birgit: I have thought that I have fallen short from time to time. But I probably haven't thought that I need help [laughs], which perhaps says something about me. But some singers and groups [are happy to] say, 'We need help in this and that passage, please stop here, we need to do it again'.

Help, for Birgit, involves being given space to self-correct rather than explicit guidance. The notion of 'help', in fact, appears in many of the dialogues. In section 11.1.7, Arne said that he had never received too much help, because he values every bit of helpful information and links detailed conductor instructions directly to rewarding and fulfilling musicking. These alternative views nevertheless fall under the umbrella of the notion of help, which bears further discussion.

The assistance aspect of help is what Sean talks about in this statement about its balance with conductor demands:

Sean: I would say that the right balance between demands and help is conversely proportional [laughs] to the knowledge level and the competence level in the choir. The less skilled the singers are, the less demands [the conductor makes] and more help [they need]. [. . .] The more skilled the singers are, the more demands [the conductor makes].

Demands, of course, derive from and respond to capability, as does help in the form of assistance. Sean later remarks that he has never been given 'too much' help, but he has received help that was not very useful. Jenny builds on the idea that singers have varying needs for help:

Jenny: You learn in different ways. Some find it [to be] okay to get the score folder in their hands, sing it and be content with that. Whereas others learn differently—listening to the music, working on the music, technique and knowing the material are very closely linked for some. I think it is important that a leader have this awareness that one learns in different ways. We are different as people, physically and mentally.

A good mentor, then, must blend making demands and offering help, based upon the needs of the individual singers and the group as a whole. The conductor must also assess the problem(s) correctly in the first place, as we will see in the following section.

11.3.4. Dealing with the real problem

Herman is talking about getting help when you need it—when it is not clear how to proceed with a problem on your own. He then notes that, first of all, the provider of help must recognise the problem to be solved:

Herman: I have experienced conductors who hear the problem and try to solve it, but solve it wrongly, meaning that what the conductor says is not [relevant to] the real problem. You are told to do so-and-so to make it good, but it is completely wrong.

As an example, Herman notes that when the choir is out of tune, it is usually related to vocal technique and specifically how the vowels are shaped, but many conductors nevertheless neglect this. Sometimes, then, the singer will understand the problem itself better than the conductor, making the conductor's help a waste of time. Arne provides another example of help that does not go to the root of the problem:

Arne: The classic [problem] that every choral conductor at some point or other is going to talk about, and I don't mean to mock anybody [in particular], is that the fifths are too narrow. [. . .] And everyone has the sense that the fifths are too narrow, [so the conductor] only confirms what everybody knows. I don't need to know that it is too narrow [. . .] I need one more try to figure out how to place it [so that it is not narrow]. Then it doesn't help when [the conductor] stops and isolates this chord, because I know how it should be, I just missed it in context—I'm coming down a tritone, then going up a seventh and continuing in forte in a high voice range, which is technically difficult. That is the problem, not that I don't know that the fifth is too narrow.

In Arne's view, pointing at the narrow interval is only identifying the symptom, which everyone else can already hear. As with Herman's example, the conductor fails not only to solve the real problem but also to recognise that the singers have understood as much, or more, than the conductor. In these cases, the conductor systematically underestimates the singers. Therefore, the conductor is not giving real help or even adding anything to the rehearsal. A good mentor has a role outside of the rehearsal as well, as Jenny points out:

Jenny: After a concert, each of us has had an experience of the concert, and the conductor has had his experience. [. . .] We should debrief how it has gone. [. . .] If it has been a terrible concert, for example, or we have done well but received little response, or perhaps the singers are tired

after the concert, or the conductor did not have a good experience either, it is [always important] to debrief after the job.

The leader can help to develop a collective understanding of what happened in performance in order to strengthen the team for the future. Jenny thinks a debriefing is particularly important (and challenging) after a bad experience, not so as to place blame or cause guilt but so as to make meaning out of a bad situation.

11.4. Music skills and knowledge

Throughout the interviews, the singers draw attention to the various skills and knowledge areas a conductor should possess. It is striking, however, that for the most part these things are not explicitly talked about, but still assumed to be some sort of tacit part of the experience. One way to understand this is that a conductor's music skills and knowledge are only made meaningful through how they are being put into use for the ensemble. To singers, it is how conductor knowledge manifests itself that matters—how it is fully integrated in the rehearsing and musicking process, possibly even veiled from direct observation. While it is easy to enumerate the successful conductor's various capabilities, depending upon what theoretical or professional framework is being applied, singers meet them altogether, as a whole informing the conducting situation. Reading and re-reading interview transcripts, encountering and then elaborating upon themes, I eventually became aware of the *unobtrusive* presence of competence as a distinct theme. However, I also became aware of the ways in which competences saturate most other themes. Competence was omnipresent but not highlighted as such in the interviews. Ultimately, I found the underlying interview material for this chapter to be thinner and more fragmented than it was for the other themes. There are two plausible interpretations for this. First of all, the interviewees generally reflect on their experiences with very competent conductors, so competence ceased to be a distinguishing feature, and therefore to some degree falls out sight as such. Second, we might apply the evocative interplay between detail and whole, discussed earlier. Musical leadership is primarily a holistically experienced phenomenon, whereas competences (understood as distinct elements that the conductor must master) will appear as details. This is an important insight, in

fact: great musical leadership is more about how the whole comes together than about what specific attributes are in place for it.

Despite the generally veiled presence of music skills and knowledge in the interviews, some distinct competence areas do emerge. In this section, I will highlight six of them:

- Repertoire knowledge
- Score analysis
- Language
- Error detection
- Voice technique
- Gesture

These categories are chosen in such a way that they encompass all of the facets of music competence that appear in the interviews but overlap as little as possible among themselves. These categories are different from all of the other themes in that they map easily onto specific subject matters, even in an educational-curriculum sense. Each category represents a large scholarly discipline by itself. For this reason, and because there is limited interview material for some of them, these categories should be seen only as constituting one possible way to structure the music skill and competence set of conducting, not as any statement of meaning in that regard.

11.4.1. Repertoire knowledge

To some degree, conductors have repertoire preferences that are openly apparent. Project conductors may have their specialties, and regular ensemble leaders may build their teams by focusing on certain music styles or eras. Amongst the conductors that the interviewed singers talk about, different conductor profiles take shape, such as the contemporary music expert, the baroque specialist and the romanticist. To a degree, singers also join choirs that fit their repertoire preferences, though most choirs have a fairly wide repertoire. A conductor's general repertoire knowledge clearly plays a role in his or her success, but there is little in the interview material that indicates exactly how important it is to the singers. General repertoire knowledge, for

one thing, does not appear to be considered a critical competence. This may be because the interviewed singers are well educated and experienced enough to possess a good overview already, but it may also be seen as a given that a conductor at this level will know his or her stuff. It is simply no distinguishing factor. They don't need the conductor to propose ideas or advise them on programme selection. This is not to say that the singers don't appreciate fresh ideas and unexpected repertoire. However, it seems as if it is the conductor's openness to embark on new and unfamiliar musical material that is valued, more than the knowledge of a wider repertoire itself. Also, once a programme is chosen, expectations centre more around the knowledge about the specific piece of music. We saw previously that Kristine expects the conductor to bring 'knowledge' to the musicking situation beyond what she is able to bring herself (section 10.4). For her, this creates meaning both in and of the musicking situation. But this conductor knowledge in fact encompasses multiple aspects, such as the contents of the text, the significance of the music material, the context of its creation and the present performing situation. Perhaps a specific knowledge of the repertoire is best viewed as a key component of sensemaking from the perspective of the singers, but one that merits little specific commentary.

11.4.2. Score analysis

Written music is the basis for the choral conducting tradition that the interviewed singers talk about. Improvisation and the vagaries of notation play a part in the musicking process as well, but the score is the key document. Morten links leadership and the score very directly:

Morten: I see the conductor as a leader, an interpreter of music on paper, who tries to re-create his interpretation of the music.

Morten's ideal conductor deciphers a code by converting a written idea into sounding music. The ability to understand the score, in whole and in part, is therefore a core conducting skill. Stella observed that her regular conductor is unusually weak on score reading (section 11.1.6), but a collaborative rehearsal style compensates for this lack of ability. While Stella's case is somewhat extraordinary, it reminds us nevertheless that singer expectations of conductors are both variable and negotiable.

Score analysis is also linked to other themes, such as preparedness:

Kristine: I expect [...] that the conductor [will] have a full overview of the work to be performed.

As mentioned above, Kristine's expectation likely goes beyond score analysis (or repertoire knowledge) alone to include the written music, its context, and the sounding music in performance. Sean, on the other hand, lists some disqualifiers related to the successful conductor:

Sean: Uncommitted. Little authority. Doesn't know the music. [...] What doesn't work for me is when [...] the conductor consistently makes mistakes: 'Oops, oh, look what I did now'. [...] That is in fact destructive for me.

Sean accepts the fact that the conductor will make mistakes, but when they happen over and over, he wonders if the conductor knows the music, is prepared for the rehearsal or is incompetent. The interviewed singers, then, recognise score analysis as a conductor skill in general, but it is less prominent (and more negotiable than it is for opera and symphony conductors).

11.4.3. Language

Vocal music differs from instrumental music in the fact that it usually involves singing a written text. Choirs also sing in multiple foreign languages on a regular basis. Thus conductors have to deal with language(s) in terms of how it sounds, how it is pronounced *and* what it means. Language affects musical phrasing as well, either deliberate or otherwise. Victor recognises its impact:

Victor: [One conductor I sang with] had a lot of faults that I wished he didn't have. [...] For example, his relationship to text. Being good at languages is a fantastic advantage when it comes to musicking.

Victor considers language facility to be a very useful conductor skill in relation to the overall process of musicking. It is not imperative, however:

Victor: I have also experienced a very good conductor who did not have a particularly good relationship to language, but he was smart enough to realise it himself and made use of someone in the choir to help [everyone] out. So to recognise a weakness and take the consequences [of it] is a very good feature in a conductor, because nobody is perfect.

As we have seen elsewhere, singers seem to accept a conductor's faults, as long as arrangements have been made to address them. Kristine, who earlier voiced her high expectations of the conductor's knowledge of the composer, the score and so forth, chimes in:

Kristine: We often get help when it comes to textual issues, at least in [the choir], by people who know [these things], since there is a limit to how much a conductor can cope with.

Kristine does not view language skills as central to the conductor role and therefore welcomes help from other sources in this regard. Regna, on the other hand, is more critical:

Ragna: This can be irritating [. . .] yes, understanding of language. [. . .] When a conductor can't even pronounce correctly, you end up a bit [resigned]—[I mean,] do you have to raise your hand and say something: 'Should we try to do it like this?'

In Ragna's view, the conductor's inability to advise singers on pronunciation casts his authority into question. For Ragna, language is an important and integral part of both musical sound and phrasing.

11.4.4. Aural skills and error detection

The interviewees do not bring up aural skills at all. This may be because it is such an obvious basis for almost everything a conductor does. In addition, the conductors in question will almost invariably possess sufficient mastery of it. Most of the leadership themes covered in part III are difficult to imagine without active listening as well as a certain level of formal aural training. Birgit adds:

Birgit: I think it is great if a conductor can spot each individual singer. Perhaps you don't do this the first time, but after a while. That [the conductor] can say that now you're out of line. It doesn't have to be each individual, but [for example] the alto group who sounds a bit too metallic right there.

Aural skills allow the conductor to be effective in detecting and remedying errors, and specifically to fully exploit his or her unique physical positioning in relation to the gathered ensemble. Beyond this, there is no data in the interview material to support any further elaboration.

11.4.5. Voice technique

Some interviewees specify voice technique as a valuable part of the conductor skill set; others do not. There is a recurring complaint about how *orchestra* conductors often do not understand the needs of choral singers, in terms of paying proper attention to the singer or voice group and understanding the voice as an instrument. While singers recognise the importance of voice (obviously), they do not always know what to expect of the conductor. Herman thinks that conductors ought to know what technical interventions to make regarding, for example, pitch problems, and they ought to be able to assist at every level:

Herman: Within a voice group—for example, an alto group—you have perhaps four different suggestions for how an ‘A’ should sound. Here, there are many conductors who lack competence [in this regard]. Then it doesn’t matter how beautifully you do the beat patterns or how radiant your personality is. There is other experience that is needed.

If the uniform positioning of vowels is the key to unifying the choir, then Herman thinks that the conductor know how to bring this about. He clearly implies that voice technique is a critical competency for a conductor, though he does not say whether this would encompass actual singer training. Birgit knew a project conductor who fit this bill:

Birgit: [She was] very clear about how she wanted it to be and was quite distinct in her gestures. [. . .] She is a tremendously skilled singer herself, [. . .] and she used this during rehearsing, [. . .] although I don’t think she did it [sang] that much, she was [obviously] able to.

This guest conductor was able to demonstrate vocally what she wanted, to her advantage (and the ensemble’s). I asked Birgit how crucial this particular ability was:

Birgit: I don’t think it is that important, really—it is just one technique among many.

Birgit is thus realistic about the conductor skill set. Daniel, on the other hand, is downright negative about conductor voice technique:

Daniel: He [a conductor he does not like] is a singer, who leads on the singers’ terms.

Daniel has observed this conductor but not sung much with him. However, he has seen that something is different when the conductor is a singer. *Leading on singers' terms* probably means that the various interventions are done with deep understanding for what singers need, what is useful for them, and what is disruptive. In other words, a singer-conductor may be able to judge his or her impact on the choir when deciding an intervention, whether this is a rehearsal step or performance signalling.

Exactly what constitutes appropriate or relevant conductor vocal knowledge is generally not covered in the interviews. Some singers, however, comment on what happens when the conductor is either more or less competent than the choir when it comes to vocal technique. In terms of the latter, there are examples of conductors giving useless help, or giving help at the wrong time. Herman has also experienced misguided solutions, as was exemplified in section 11.3.4. When the ensemble is met with challenges to intonation, timbre, or verbal/vocal dexterity, the under-informed or under-experienced conductor would be better off to simply acknowledge the problem and allow the ensemble the opportunity to self-correct. In Herman's example, the conductor's error *correction* should have stopped at error *detection*, possibly with a simple statement about the desired outcome. Arne describes a gentler and more effective type of technique-related instruction:

Arne: He [the conductor] has, of course, [an] enormous [breadth of experience] when it comes to choral sound. He gives you a few tips for how you might think as a singer to get a better sound. [. . .] There was one time when he led a warm-up exercise, and he wanted a softer sound [from us], and he used the word fluffy. Just using the word fluffy—it turned on a switch, at least for me.

Despite this conductor's prodigious toolbox, Arne remembers best the time he used a simple metaphor to communicate his wishes. Metaphors, of course, live in that grey area between what is vocal technique expertise and what is shaping sound by describing the desired outcome. In my own experience, I have long found the language of voice teaching to be very metaphorical. It does not lack substance but rather relies upon metaphors to carry that substance. Arne demonstrates that an indirect intervention like a metaphor can make as much of an impression as a direct intervention, especially if, as in Herman's case, the direct intervention was misguided.

Ultimately, although the conductor may be an expert on vocal technique—that is, he or she knows the voice as an instrument quite well in principle—each individual singer will always be the best judge of his or her own instrument, if not in physical terms than at least in psychological terms (how it feels). Sean remarked upon the rather deep involvement he expects from the conductor, as described in section 9.6. In Sean’s view, error correction requires knowing the singers but also understanding what happens in their minds and bodies when things go wrong. Beatrice agrees:

Beatrice: I want [. . .] that it [the music] somehow should vibrate. [. . .]
Then I would very much like the conductor to know a great deal about choir and body . . . these kinds of angles. That they have an interest in, an understanding of, the connections in a human being—I believe that is smart if you are going to build [choral] sound.

Beatrice thinks that good choral sound emerges from whole, well-integrated individuals, to whom the conductor should be committed as people. Both Sean and Beatrice, then, see a link between the voice as an instrument and the human being behind it, and a further related link between the conductor’s recognition of this fact and effective error correction. Technical interventions are meaningful only to the extent that they connect with the singer’s perception of him/herself.

11.4.6. Gestural skills and mode mix

In the performing situation, musical leadership is visual and corporeal. Unlike most other leadership roles, the conductor is a body, in an exclusively gestural signalling mode. But the iconic nature of conducting makes it more difficult to uncover what is actually going on. The obvious physicality of the conducting phenomenon seems to escape the singers’ attention throughout the interviews, aside from a general acknowledgement of the gestural variations among conductors, which the interviewed singers observe, reflect on, and largely appreciate. While the singers understand that conducting gesture represents a core skill set, it is something few have ever experienced as lacking, thanks to the quality level of the interviewees’ experience base. In this section, I will consider two particular aspects of conducting gesture: its nature as a distinct tool, and its place in the overall communication between conductor and ensemble.

Lucy again compares her regular ensemble leader with a project conductor she has sung with multiple times:

Lucy: We have a musical leader who is diabolically good at conducting—he gives an enormous amount of information with his hands, and he is gesturally very skilled. Which is not necessarily the case for [the project conductor, but] there are other things about her that make it very obvious what she intends.

Lucy describes good conducting as being able to convey precise information with hand movements (and often little else). But she acknowledges that there are alternatives to this as well, as her project conductor proves. Sean provides further detail about this project conductor, whom he considers to be both powerful and effective:

Sean: It is her posture.⁵⁰ She doesn't have to do so much with her hands, because all of her is there through body and eye contact.

While conducting gesture is about hand movements, both Lucy and Sean indicate that a much wider notion of gesture is required, to the extent that hand movements even may be superfluous. Like conducting gesture goes beyond hand movements, the overall interaction between conductor and ensemble goes beyond gesture, most importantly including verbal dialogue. (A number of singers also describe conductors who talk too much.) Gustav still privileges gestural technical mastery, though:

Gustav: I have also seen the choral conductor who fully masters gestural technique—perhaps not so many. But those who do, and who really are able to shape things with their hands, without saying too much—[they are] quite fantastic to experience. But I think there are [only] few of them.

Despite his admiration for gestural mastery, Gustav also recognises that there are other ways to get results and brings up his regular choir, which is directed by a peer who is a pianist and organist:

Gustav: [I would] say that the gestural technique was rather weak, whereas [general] knowledge and ideas about how it should be, and the

⁵⁰ Translated from the Norwegian word *holdning*, which has the dual meaning of posture and attitude.

instruction, were very good. At the same time, he is a good inspirer, [so] that, in concert, his face and such will link it [the performance] to what we have been working on, [. . .] but this thing about the hands is not very good. But the result is good [even so].

Interestingly, when singers were asked if they have ever experienced a conductor who talks to little, they all smiled or laughed, as if to say that this would never happen. Arne appreciates speech, in fact, especially if there is some question of gestural proficiency:

Arne: I think I like a conductor who talks a great deal, but who talks about how he wants it. Because it is not necessarily as easy to read [the gesture] every time. But if the conductor has said that so-and-so . . . at least I am making notes of everything being said, so that I know it the next time and understand better how the conducting is meant to be. Because it varies from conductor to conductor how they will show what they want.

For Arne, the key point is that speech is related to the desired musical outcome. He sees speech as a necessary complement to gesture, indicating that gestural leadership alone is not sufficiently complete or precise. The value of gestural signals is enhanced by preceding verbal dialogues or agreements.

Some singers indicate that the pure, speechless gestural leadership is more difficult than combined signalling. Having fewer tools in the box puts stronger demands on the one tool available. When singers admire gesture-only leadership, it seems to be for two reasons: it is a difficult thing to pull off, and it tends to waste less rehearsing time. However, preferences on this matter derive from a number of factors, including how the individual singer views the relevance of the text, how he or she wants to receive contextual details, and how he or she feels about rehearsal efficiency. The desired speech-gesture balance therefore reflects a wider set of priorities.

Arne sees a limit to what gesture can express. On the other hand, gesture can also contain superfluous information, as Daniel sees it:

Daniel: It is very rare that you actually need to see each beat. The ideal, as I see it, is someone who gets it going and who can use the frame of the beat pattern to show the music he or she is conceiving underway.

Daniel mentioned elsewhere that he would like the conductor to step back and restrain his or her signalling when there is no need for it, thereby empowering the ensemble members to do what they know how to do. Generally speaking, a straight four-beat gesture is unnecessary and even distracting. Some

conductors, however, will use it as a platform to convey a lot of information. He tells a story about guest conductor who conducted a rather lengthy piece with no changes in meter and tempo, apart from a few *ritardandi*:

Daniel: [I] saw [the conductor] conduct [a very long piece] and he was in a straight four beat all the time, but not one of them was alike. There were not two in a row that were the same, because he always had something [new] he wanted to show.

It is as if the straight beat figure were a musicking frame: if the frame is empty, it is useless, but if it is filled, it is very useful. Birgit focuses on a particular aspect of the beat gesture while describing a conductor whom she likes very much:

Birgit: You don't necessarily know where the downbeat is, for example. She is much more like this [showing a combined hand/eye/breath gesture]. And I know that people have been frustrated. But I think it's great.

Birgit does not always get an unambiguous downbeat from this conductor, which does mean that there is unclarity. Birgit finds what she needs and wants, recognising that though other singers may experience this differently. As she demonstrates the conductor's beat gesture in the interview, it becomes clear that the downbeat may not be as ambiguous as she thinks: though the hand does not indicate the precise start of the measure at a particular trajectory point, eye contact and breathing appear to more than make up for this. Herman knows this conductor as well:

Herman: [She] is very free with her technique. She never beats the song to death. She more leads the singing and the music. [. . .] Or she lets the music lead, following the music, the musical lines, rather than the straight four beat or three beat or whatever.

Herman allows for the possibility that some conductors in fact beat songs to death, and that, like Daniel, he finds this to be counterproductive. Both Birgit and Herman indicate that the notion of gestural (and specifically pulse) precision is complex, and that singers and conductor ultimately must negotiate the most constructive sense of timing, gesturally and otherwise, for the music in question. In contrast, Trym finds that a clear downbeat is the *only* truly necessary signal:

Trym: I have essentially only one demand of every conductor, if I am to do my job. This is that I get a distinct downbeat. Almost whatever [else happens], if I get a distinct downbeat, I can take care of the rest. Many conductors do not have a distinct downbeat [that is] different from anything else in the beat pattern.

Trym does, however, dismiss the conductor who insists upon a straight beat pattern when it is not needed, so here again, conducting gesture must strike a delicate balance between providing useful information while not disrupting the musical flow. Arne takes up the thread:

Arne: Gestures perhaps become a little too large and a little violent, without needing to be. That is what I probably first and foremost think about, that one is a bit calm and well balanced but still not so floating that you don't understand what happens up there. That one manages to maintain clarity even in the absence of large and exaggerated movements.

Arne sums up using the key phrase *clarity without excess*. In general, then, singers feel that conductors gesture too much (and too dramatically), just like they talk too much. For them, the conductor's gestural facility is not only about conveying the right signals but also about conveying measure (not in the sense of music notation), balance, and proportion. Kristine notes that orchestra conductors tend to rely way too much on the beat pattern, which is primarily where she has met poor choral conducting technique: :

Kristine: It is perhaps orchestra conductors who are least able to bring forward the nuances of a choir. There is too much beating, and a lot is missed. I believe that a conductor can conduct with the eyes only.

For Kristine, beat patterns easily get in the way of the music rather than enable it, and she prefers a combination of hands and eye contact, or even only eye contact, at least in the choral context. Her statement is an example of the potential conflict between hand movements as indexing gesture and other modelling needs. Eye look is a much more subtle and less disruptive signalling mode. Eyes only may be enough.

The significance of the conducting gesture in general and the importance of gestural facility in particular are obviously slippery topics. It may come down to individual singer preference as to whether, for example, a clear downbeat is absolutely necessary or utterly distracting. It is certainly clear that the 'gesture' encompasses a range of physical accommodations to either (or both) the pulse of the music and the expressivity of its execution in the musicking process. For

the interviewed singers, the notion of *time beating* is generally secondary aspect of conducting gesture, it is even often in direct conflict with the gestural leadership they are really looking for. What's more, the importance of gestural facility is extremely relative, and within a given conductor's 'mode mix', if other qualities compensate for a lack of gestural facility, they do not seem to miss it. No singer puts gestural skills at the top of the conductor priority list, even though overall communication and integration with the ensemble are always crucial, and gestural facility might be expected to contribute to them. Musical leadership, then, involves ways of communicating that encompass a range of expected and unexpected blends. The singers exemplify how almost any mode mix can be made effective.

Trym discusses the notion of conductor communication in terms of what is not said or does not need to be shown, in the context of an internationally acclaimed icon conductor who ran short and effective rehearsals, said relatively little, and largely left the singers to fix unresolved problems on their own at home. Given such extensive delegation of responsibility, the singers in turn came to rehearsals extremely well prepared and were more attentive than usual as well. I suggested to Trym that this conductor was communicating with his reputation as well as his actual management of the encounter with the ensemble, and Trym agreed. We might therefore add reputation and public image to the mode mix at a conductor's disposal, because singers' receptivity is evidently influenced by prior expectations about authority. Trym adds another conductor's example to the discussion:

Trym: He is very cloudy, not particularly distinct, gesturally speaking. He talks in pianissimo. He is not always clear about what he means, so the choristers sit on the edge of their seats to catch what he says. And you are left to interpret [altogether] once in a while, simply because he hasn't said it, or you didn't hear what he was trying to say.

This conductor lacks the typical characteristics of a good communicator. He is not known for his gestural skills and he can barely be heard in rehearsals. Often, he even struggles to find the words to say what he means, so singers' responses to him are at times based on guesswork. The effect of this conductor's mode mix, in sum, is an extreme attentiveness and a lot of assumed responsibility on the part of the singers. The only reason this conductor is effective at all is because he is able to express a deep devotion to and knowledge about the music he conducts, and the singers respect this. In this

way, this conductor represents a clear example of how challenging it is to posit robust requirements for effective musical leadership. Sometimes, in fact, *breaking* with all of those standard expectations and normal criteria is in itself creating fertile ground for singers' self-empowerment. But there needs to be enough attraction of the overall profile for singers to want to take part in such a musicking process. This dialogue with Trym also indicates, as an aside, that conductors utilise a larger mode mix during the rehearsal process (including verbal interaction) than they do in concert.

From the interview material, it is difficult to isolate gestural skills as a stand-alone theme, because they are clearly linked to other aspects of the conductor role in at least three ways. The first link appeared in those statements which indicated that hand movements are only one aspect of gestural leadership and, by extension, overall communication, which also takes place outside the performing situation. Sofie differentiates between conducting gesture during rehearsals and in concert:

Sofie: If you were to consider conducting gesture in general, [. . .] it may in many ways appear as choppy, [. . .] but if you don't look, if you close your eyes and don't look, I don't think you would notice it from the choir. That I believe lies in the rehearsing.

Here Sofie reconnects conducting gesture to the wider domain of the conductor's impact upon musicking. Rehearsing primes the choir to sing in a certain way, but not necessarily to respond to concert gestures. More importantly, singers are not passive followers of conducting gestures but active responders who process a complex and comprehensive set of signals. They must both filter and choose from an array of presently perceived and previously memorised instructions. Of course, an embodied leadership carries with it a decided impact all on its own, as will be described in section 12.6.1 about mirroring.

The second link is between conducting gesture and personal profile, understood in terms of artistic personality as well as school of training. Nora describes the most noteworthy aspects of a particular conductor in relation to another conductor with whom she has worked:

Nora: The beat patterns, perhaps—[. . .] this is something she has from [a music academy]. She has stated that this is her thing. Collect the beat figure in one point—all beats begin at one point. While [the other conductor] uses these 'wheels'. He essentially keeps the beat point in the

same location, but it is not so rigidly at one single point. He lets everything be more circular, and it is in a way weightless on the top, then the hand falls back down. He has made his own method in terms of which direction the beats go.

Nora indicates that training shapes the conducting profile, and different schools imply different ideals and practices. At least one of these high-profile conductors has developed a very personal style, demonstrating, importantly, that conducting gesture is not only a skill as such but also assumes the guise of artistic individuality and expression. More than a tool, it is indistinguishable from the artistic process, and even the artistic product (sounding music).

The third link is between gesture in particular and a much larger integral way of being and communicating. Gesture, ultimately, is the matrix of movement, breath, posture, and eye contact that singers experience, and this matrix reflects a way of being as much as a 'skill' as such. This matrix is further experienced in combination with verbal signalling, at least during rehearsals, which clouds the issue still further. The integrity of the conductor profile in relation to this matrix is presented as a distinct theme in section 12.6, called corporeal congruence.

11.4.7. Summary remarks

Music skills and knowledge constitute one of the four main themes within the mastery category that differs from the others because it is at once less talked about and more directly represented in scholarly disciplines with extensive research traditions. In other words, there is a lot that could be said here, but the interviewed singers were not inclined to say it. Gestural skills are particularly difficult to situate within the overall notion of great musical leadership. Conducting gesture is the dominant topic in the conducting literature, both research based and experience based, as well as in most conducting education curricula. With this bias, we might have expected a stronger presence of gestural and corporeal themes in the interviews, not least because scholars question the canon of leadership theory based upon the absence of the body within it. If gesture and body are so important, why is there not more about it in the interview material? As mentioned, they likely take them for granted. They may also have a hard time specifically extracting the corporeal aspects of musical leadership from its lived experience. The conductor body is not

perceived as such; instead, it is a vehicle for the entire encounter between conductor and singer, through which every aspect of conducting is experienced.

The control–empowerment duality seems to represent the most fundamental feature of mastery in musical leadership. Through it, the legitimacy of the conductor role is translated into an interplay between leader and ensemble. The control–empowerment blend applies to rehearsing as well as performing. Rehearsal management and mentorship are about how the conductor masters the conversion of the musical idea into the desired sounding music by building the ensemble and its means of expression. Music skills and competence constitute one of the tool sets, but not the only one, as we will see in the subsequent chapters. We take for granted that competence is good, that is, but Stella suggests that there is a limit to its value in relation to other features of leadership. She finds that it can interfere with making sincere and moving music:

Stella: I notice it as [an instrumentalist] that to [. . .] really give a genuine musical experience to someone is way more difficult for someone who is well educated and has a lot of ‘should be’, and ‘must’, and ‘oh, now it was a little out of tune, what do I do?’ The more tools to correct, the more accurate you are. The more things you actually are able to catch on the way, the more goes wrong. And then you correct. [. . .] What makes us cry? Isn’t that genuineness, I ask myself? And some of this genuineness may vanish in ‘can’. That they are capable. Knowledge.

Stella is a professionally educated instrumentalist within an instrumental tradition where correctness is exaggerated, which is likely why singing is more liberating for her. In any case, what makes her statement interesting is that all the ‘can’, ‘should’ and ‘must’ that result from competence may deviate the attention from what it is that moves the listener in the first place. The two other main categories, *coherence* (chapter 12) and *intersubjective space* (chapter 13) will cover themes that put *mastery* at the service of musicking and great musical leadership, as Stella, it appears, would prefer.

12. Coherence

The coherence themes deal with how the conductor comes to the musicking situation and engages with the ensemble. Coherence is characterised by contact, sincerity, authority, devotion, vision and will. Coherence is about the integration of the conductor's ways of being and doing, and the fit between the music material, the musical expression and the embodied leadership.

The various *mastery* themes, covered in chapter 11, deal primarily with the specifics of the musicking process—what happens within it and how the conductor might intervene. The *coherence* themes, described in this chapter, deal with how the singers meet and view the conductor as a person, and how the appearance of the conductor comes together as a whole. These five themes share a certain immediacy in terms of how they are perceived, and how quickly singers are able to make sense of them. Also, the singer's expectations regarding coherence seem in general more absolute and less negotiable than various rehearsing styles and competences that constitute mastery. The coherence themes act as invitations to a deeper involvement on the part of the singers, or, conversely, they act to inhibit effective leadership and block musicking. Coherence is sensed before, outside and independently of music as well as within the musicking act. The coherence themes are experienced during the initial moments of an encounter with a new conductor but may also be reopened and confirmed over and over again. The coherence of a conductor's leadership is not locked in place right away but must be renewed over the course of the conductor-singer relationship.

12.1. Contact

12.1.1. Immediacy

Singers identify immediacy with a good conductor experience, in the sense of being acknowledged quickly and of interacting without interference or confusion. Lucy talks about one of her best experiences with a guest conductor, whom the choir had not met before:

Lucy: [The conductor] was bang on from the first moment. It was perfect match; it all fit so perfectly with him right there and then. [. . .] It was his way of meeting us, I think. It fit from the first word. [. . .] It was like we had known him all our lives, in a way. [. . .] He was so calm and secure with himself and the situation. [. . .] It was a heavy programme we had . . . and he was [. . .] humble towards the choir and the task he had been given.

Lucy describes an instant connection, as if with an old acquaintance, even in the context of an extremely challenging project involving a difficult contemporary work that the choir had not done before. Through his own humility, the conductor appeared to empathise with the choir, but he also conveyed the impression that he knew exactly what to do. The rapport between the conductor and the ensemble seemed to arise the moment he entered the room, by his look and his posture, and it was deepened by his opening verbal remarks. In sum, the choir felt very quickly that solid contact was established.

Herman has also noticed how immediate some new conductor contact experiences are:

Herman: There are some [new acquaintances] where it works so very well immediately. I don't know if there is a textbook answer to that. It has to do with personality—it's got to—radiance, eye contact.

Immediacy seems to require eye contact but is of course not limited to the visual—it is as if eye contact confirms a deeper desire to commit. Fanny in turn describes a conductor who was able to perpetuate the sense of immediacy and rapport with the ensemble:

Fanny: I think he has the right level of intimacy. I feel that he addresses each individual as well as the entire choir. The whole choir is, in a way, one person, but at the same time every individual is very important.

This conductor manages to maintain a rapport with the entire group but not at the expense of one-to-one contact. Other singers have also responded to this sense that the conductor really wants to engage with each of them individually, even though this is impossible in the context of a large group. Contact as a perceived phenomenon has to do with intent or willingness—Fanny feels part of one ‘shared person’—the choir—because the conductor manages the ‘right level of intimacy’. The contact theme, then, evokes both the physical connectedness of, for example, eye contact and the existential connectedness of intersubjectivity (which was introduced in section 1.1.4 and will be returned to in chapter 13). Both literally and figuratively, then, connectedness and its inverse, distance, impact the potential for leadership in the musicking context.

12.1.2. Distance

Beatrice reflects on how common it is to feel close to a conductor:

Beatrice: There are a lot [of singers] who fall in love with the conductor, the same way as they would with their therapist or their boss at work. There is something about the one who is supposed to see you, and has to see you, and has the power that goes with it. You feel, ‘Oh yes, I am being seen, yes, we are close’. But then it’s not this kind of relationship after all. This is something that is needed but where there is a limit. Or you have to understand what it’s about.

Beatrice observes that the powerful impact of *being seen* can even resemble a romantic (or at least social) attraction, though she understands that there is a limit to the nature and extent of the intimacy in a music ensemble. We talk about what happens when there is too little distance (or too much intimacy) between the conductor and the choir:

Beatrice: Then I believe there will not be enough tension, [or there will be] too little energy. [. . .] But I think it is possible to lack [the appropriate] distance and then go up [on stage] and have it.

Dag: So there is no conflict between friendship and [. . .] distance in the musicking situation?

Beatrice: I think you need some distance. Perhaps it is just about having clear roles.

Beatrice sees distance as giving rise to fruitful tension—that is, as something that energises the musicking act. She also thinks that it is possible to be close friends in rehearsal and then recover a professional distance in performance.

Morten introduces a couple of new angles on the same topic:

Morten: I probably prefer that the conductor be not too isolated from the group. I understand that there needs to be a relationship [defined by] a certain authority; [. . .] if the conductor becomes too much part of the group, discipline and order will suffer. [. . .] But the remote conductor who keeps going on his own gives me very little [to respond to]. The feeling of working together disappears a little, maybe.

Morten connects an appropriate sense of distance with authority and too much distance with isolation, which is bad. Singers will not feel like they are working together with the conductor if he or she is too distant, as Morten knows from experience:

Morten: The distance [between the conductor and the choir] became too big. We got the impression that being a conductor here [with this choir] was a duty. We did not get the feeling that the job mattered. And we felt no communality with the conductor. Then the joy of being together disappeared, and then the motivation for showing up disappeared.

For this choir, social bonds were particularly important. The conductor came in with a duty-only mindset, at least as she was perceived by the choir. She apparently did not commit to the communality of the group. When Morten links this reserve to the relative importance of the particular job, he associates *contact* with *devotion*, which will be covered in section 12.4.

Beatrice felt she could work with distance or intimacy, but Bob sees an overly personal relationship as a direct threat to the conductor's execution of the role:

Bob: My opinion on this is that there needs to be a certain distance in the personal contact between conductor and singer. For me, it has to [be this way], so that I can take the conductor seriously and perceive his musical communication in every moment in an objective way. I don't want to perceive the conductor in the concert moment in a subjective way, where I am thinking subjective things about him: He is so-and-so old, he is my friend, yesterday he said this, he is so-and-so, or things like that. He [needs to have] the distance that in the [musicking] moment presents him as [nothing more than] an expression of the music which he wants to convey to us.

Bob wants the conductor to exploit some sense of distance in order to best embody the music for the singers, not a host of irrelevant information about the person. The trivialities of a friendly relationship can interfere with this musical communication, which Bob prefers to be objective and uncontaminated by the subjectivity of a too much intimacy. In a way, Bob objectifies the conductor role itself, wanting it to represent only the musical idea. Bob's statement implies that there may be a conflict between the type of intersubjectivity associated with friendship and musicking as an intersubjective experience.

12.1.3. Intimacy

Bob's wariness about intimacy derives from a desire not to know things that could interfere with the musicking. Fanny tells about a situation where intimacy went much further than that:

Fanny: I quit a choir because the conductor became too private, went too far with his approaches. I admired his conducting capacity and competence, but it became too messy for me. It became way too disruptive. I actually felt insecure for this reason.

This conductor made sexual advances that fell short of harassment but were nevertheless inappropriate and eventually drove Fanny away. Immediacy as contact requires a certain openness that can in turn be exploited for purposes other than musicking. In that case, the contract is broken, regardless of the professional ability of either the conductor or the singer. Fanny contrasted the previous individual with another conductor whom she believes balances distance-intimacy very well:

Fanny: [The conductor] has a very respectful way of balancing the personal [and the professional]. He is personally very committed without being invasive or private. He can be very private [with the singers as well], but without being invasive or demanding in any way. It is just that he gives of himself. He doesn't expect anything in return.

Fanny points out the virtues of personal commitment and generosity that stay well clear of intrusiveness. Fanny feels that she has a personal relationship with this conductor, but it does not extend beyond the musicking. Ragna also talks about a conductor who balances the appeal of being personal with a respect for what is private:

Ragna: He is personal. In my mind, that also applies to contact outside [the choir]. He is absolutely personal, but he is rarely private.

Neither Ragna nor Fanny makes clear what ‘the personal’ entails, exactly, but private, invasive intimacy is easy enough to imagine. Ragna cautions against excessive distance as well:

Ragna: In this case, I have experienced that the conductor is distant both on the personal and the musical [levels], and then there is nothing left. Then you are left standing there singing like a machine.

Ragna describes a dead end. This was a conductor Ragna previously had good experiences with, but she left the choir for several reasons. Lack of contact was the decisive factor and it was no longer possible to make music as Ragna wanted.

It is interesting to note that the singers tend to talk about the instantaneous sensation of contact rather than contact as the result of an evolving communication process. One way to understand this is that lack of contact disables every process, contact itself is experienced as a more fundamental theme than ongoing communication. It may also be true that an evolving communication process like speechless musicking, is described by a different set of words; we will return to this in chapter 13 about the theme of *intersubjective space*.

12.2. Sincerity

We saw in the previous section that contact between conductor and singer depends upon a certain willingness to be involved, and that the distance between the parties needs to be balanced appropriately between the professional and the personal. While intimacy can be exploited, sincerity represents a straightforward and generally successful means of establishing and maintaining contact, as Leif indicates:

Leif: I believe that a lot of the things he [the conductor] does well do not have to do with the gestural or the musical. They have to do with the person, [. . .] who is incredibly genuine. There is nothing fake—he doesn’t have an image of himself that he portrays, [such as] ‘Look here, I am like this’. At least, this is how I experience it. I find that he shows his good

sides, and often we also see a lot of the bad sides. I think this is very human; [it is] a very attractive feature for me, at least.

Dag: Does this mean that his bad sides almost become a virtue—that it's quite all right [to have them]?

Leif: I believe so.

Leif introduces genuineness as an attractive feature of this conductor, who reveals both his good and his bad sides without consequence because he is so sincere. In fact, because Leif perceives him to be so genuine, his bad sides simply complete his credible and authentic profile. Kristine has a different perception of same conductor, however:

Kristine: I feel that his ego blocks a lot of the musical communication. But I know of many who adore him, who sing in [the choir], but I feel that he has such an ego, that it is he who is promoted first and foremost, and then comes the rest.

She acknowledges that many people love him, but she reads him differently, raising the following question: does egocentricity conflict with sincerity and genuineness? Leif and Kristine are talking about the same person, but they may be seeing different things or judge them differently. Leif does refer to this conductor's bad sides, and egocentricity may be one of them. But whereas Leif still sees a fallible yet real human being, Kristine sees someone who cannot communicate about the music because of his ego. This may be because Leif has worked with him on a permanent ensemble basis, whereas Kristine has only worked with him on a particular project. Leif has therefore lived through and coped with all of this conductor's facets and is now able to see him as a complete person. Kristine has only seen his more immediately recognizable egocentrism.

In general, the notion of sincerity plays out with much more nuance than the above story would indicate. Trym is talking about inspiration in relation to being appreciated as a singer, and he both qualifies and modifies his notion of inspiration in an interesting way:

Dag: How do you experience that you are appreciated? How do you notice it?

Trym: Usually you see it through the conductor's inspiration. At the same time, I appreciate conductors who are not inspired too soon. If my ears don't agree [with the conductor's enthusiasm] or tell me that it's possible

to become so engaged and to give such positive feedback, then there is a discrepancy, which makes me not take off.

Trym wants to be inspired by the conductor, but he does not want to be *prematurely* inspired or inspired by an enthusiasm that is not grounded in the progress and quality of the musicking. He does not want overly positive feedback when it is not deserved, or as a motivational gimmick. Any discrepancy in this regard between the conductor's feedback and Trym's own perception signals a lack of sincerity on the former's part.

It seems as if questions about sincerity lurk where there is some uncertainty about the conductor's motives or positions. Kristine describes an impersonal style and lack of contact as signs of a poor leader:

Kristine: Impersonal—does not easily establish contact with those around him. He has a private agenda, in a way, where the choir is just a tool to achieve it.

She assumes that the conductor's 'private agenda' blocks the immediate contact. She further links even the possibility of an agenda with the idea that the choir will be reduced to a means to fulfil it, and nothing more. This is a pretty harsh interpretation of a situation with no hard data, but when there are no data, imagination comes into play. Any lack of personal contact and openness on the part of the conductor, who is, of course, in a position of power, leads to questions about his or her motives and sincerity. Lucy talks about what builds trust:

Lucy: Honesty builds trust.

Dag: What does it mean that a conductor is honest?

Lucy: [There is a] correspondence between what is said and what is done. It is about human relationships just as much as [what] goes on musically. Because it has to do with trust also when it comes to the relational. It is about security, and that is important anyhow, I believe.

For her, honesty means a correspondence between what is said and what is done, which is perfectly straightforward. In light of Kristine's reflection, however, we sense that Lucy is thinking mostly about situations where speech is involved, as opposed to the entire conductor domain from rehearsal through performance. Choral singers in the musicking situation are in a highly perceptive mode from the start, thanks to the nature (and virtues) of musical

communication. The imperative of sincerity for conductor–ensemble rapport applies throughout, to acts that are spoken as well as those that, later on, must be unspoken (literally ‘speechless’). The hidden agenda that Kristine sees as responsible for an impersonal impression and lack of contact also can arise throughout. I asked Lucy whether she has experienced conductors with hidden agendas as well:

Lucy: [laughs] Yes, or at least [I have experienced] that I am left with a big question mark inside. What is this? What are the motives here, really? [...] I have always been the type that is not at all able to go into the motives behind this and that, how to interpret it—I am a little thick skinned, maybe.

Lucy portrays herself as not very perceptive about hidden agendas, but here again, if she notices something like that, it will undermine sincerity, deter contact, and therefore affect the impact of the conductor. Lucy is also touched upon the sincerity theme in the context of another kind of miscommunication:

Lucy: [In some rehearsals] you get the feeling of a battle between us and the conductor. It is when the listening has stopped. I believe so. They become more preoccupied with their own beating than with listening to what goes on . . . [more preoccupied] by their own skills as a conductor [laughs], to put it hard and brutally.

Dag: Have you experience that a conductor’s self-obsession turns into vanity, that the conductor becomes a poseur?

Lucy: Yes, I have. And I have also thought this at concerts where I’ve been [in the audience].

Lucy describes a disconnect between what the conductor does and what the music needs that she assumes arises in the conductor’s self-interest at the expense of the ensemble. Lucy describes how musical expression suffers as a result of an ensemble leader’s vanity:

Lucy: For me it is very important that we have a musical leader who is there for the music’s sake, not for [his or her] own sake, for that I have also experienced. You get a feeling that, in this case, it is the conductor who is going to show off and who is not there to create musical experiences for the audience and us.

Dag: What happens then?

Lucy: You don't touch the nerve. It may be technically good and grand and fine, but it touches no one. It doesn't touch those who are singing either.

The ability to touch and move people with music requires the conductor (and the singer) to give themselves up in the process—to be sincere, of course, but also open and vulnerable. A conductor who is unwilling to do so comes to be seen more as posing as a conductor than actually leading the music. Vanity is at odds with sincerity and seriously harms the music.

Stella describes a well-established conductor whom she sang with in a choral clinic setting. She was clearly hesitant to say exactly how she felt about him. She avoided being explicit about what was wrong. Still, it came across through this rather erratic dialogue:

Stella: He is a [conductor] that . . . I like what he says, [but] I don't always like what he does.

Dag: What . . .

Stella: I like [his words], I mean to say, but I am not so fond of what he does.

Dag: Are you thinking about the gestural?

Stella: No, that is fine.

Dag: Then what do you mean?

Stella: I don't find him entirely . . . he preaches . . . I don't think he is quite . . .

Dag: . . . that he is not sincere?

Stella: He might [in fact] have a good objective and [maybe has] not gotten through—I am open to that, because I have not had him long enough.

Dag: But there is something that is not right for you?

Stella: Yes, for me it is strange that it is he who [teaches] at [the institution], that it is he who travels around showing and telling. It's like that with [conductor 2] also [...] with [conductor 2] it is incredibly far [between practice and teaching].

For Stella, there is nothing wrong about the verbal message itself. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the content of what he preaches, however, she still does feel uncomfortable with the actual leadership. She does not want to

take the word sincerity in her mouth, even avoiding my yes/no question, but confirms by continuing as if she had said yes. Stella has on several occasions through the interview shown her relational orientation in the musicking situation. The key point about this story is that everything about the leadership apparently is fine, and then there is still something not right. Stella perceives a mismatch between words and action, her perception of his *preaching* is seen as lack of sincerity. The conductor is posing as something he isn't.

Another conductor from Stella's past brought a different kind of challenge with him:

Stella: He has charisma—you can't resist, can you? [. . .] There is an authority in his body, saying that here [in this situation] it is I who've got [it]. In the silence that [he] can create . . . it is completely . . . you just [sighs] . . . I just need to think about it, then I feel it in my body. But I could not have had him as a conductor for long [. . .] because I believe that he has a different view of humanity than I do. I believe that he thinks it is okay to look down on people. [. . .] Sarcasm has its price, now and then. Too much sarcasm has a price.

It is not entirely clear from the interview whether the conductor's sarcasm is the only evidence of his distance from the ensemble (and apparently from people in general). But sarcasm is enough to disrupt Stella's experience there, and her impression of the conductor, no matter how much charisma and competence he has.

Charlotte provides an opposite example, where just about everything feels wrong about a particular conductor *except* for his genuineness and attentiveness:

Charlotte: We forgive him, but why do we do that? He obviously has some rehearsals that are so unpedagogical that it drives me insane. And he can be so nasty with us [in certain situations during rehearsals] . . . it brings out the worst in me. At the same time, I have never experienced someone . . . at least not conductors, and maybe not other people either, who has understood me so completely when I've been so down and out that I should never have been at the rehearsal or on tour either. But still I was there. And he understands and he has a genuine concern for those choristers who are a little on the outside and who he knows are struggling. He has [. . .] a personal concern for people that extends far beyond the musical. And then one simply forgives a lot. But this says something about leadership being a lot more than about music.

What reconciles Stella and Charlotte's experiences is the basic fact that the conductor's personal approach to his or her fellow singers can outweigh either technical brilliance or technical shortcomings. This is as true, moreover, of acclaimed, high-profile conductors as it is of community choir coaches. While neither of these excerpts tells the *whole* truth about the conductor in question, both indicate the impression made, in terms of what their singers needed and received in turn.

Ragna adds another perspective on sincerity as she links genuineness to openness:

Ragna: It has become much more interesting to be there [at rehearsal], because [the conductor] gives more of himself. I [have been] talking about conductors who are genuine—that this was very important to me. They can be as clever as they like, but if they don't give anything [of themselves], I feel that what I am giving is wasted, because it is not going to come out anyhow, this genuineness.

A conductor who gives of him/herself is open—therefore the agenda is open. Ragna demonstrates how genuinity is not an inside thing, it must show. The important implication of Ragna's statement is that for her to give, the conductor must give (which is closely linked to devotion, covered in section 12.4). For Ragna, musical reciprocity depends upon mutual skinlessness. Sincerity is opening the gate to musicking and lack of sincerity is blocking her personal expression.

12.3. Authority

12.3.1. The cause and the self

The theme of authority underpins many of the interviews. It is something that is taken and given, strengthened and undermined, and connected to both power and humility. The purpose of this section is to describe its different guises. Charlotte presents a typically nuanced view of it:

Charlotte: [I] need to make the classic distinction between being authoritarian and acting with authority, because I perceive these to be two very different things. When you are authoritarian, it indicates a self-

centred person. And that does not create [a sense of] security, and for me, it doesn't work with authoritarian leaders. But it works really well with leaders who act with authority, because then it is not about the acting person but about what they are aiming at, the idea they are pursuing, and the clarity around [the objective]. It is a positively charged word, while being authoritarian is negatively charged. [...] It is, of course, my own experience that I am talking about—I didn't look anything up in a dictionary before coming here. It is my experience. It is an important distinction when we talk about [...] musical leadership.

Charlotte understands authority to derive from clarity of vision and will, whereas being authoritarian indicates a self-centred markation of own position. The first is about the *cause* (music and musicking), the second, the *self*. Gustav describes an authority figure whom he knows:

Gustav: He is that typical kind of conductor with authority, who has lots of knowledge, who knows a lot about the background of the music, knows what it means, knows the music-historical context. He has a full overview [of the situation] and you can see that he really loves what he is doing.

Here, authority derives from knowledge *and* passion. Gustav sees knowing what you do as the prime source of authority. This particular conductor knows the musical material, even more so, he is passionate about it, and he understands the position and context of the music. Arne finds the same thing:

Arne: [This conductor] had such extensive knowledge about this work that he could act very freely. He was not unsure about what to do or what to work on, or about what the meaning of this movement was. He had it under his skin, so he was free, and he was so easygoing and so easy to follow. He was nice and pleasant, also. That helps.

This particular conductor was a foreign baroque specialist who came to Arne's choir for a specific project. Arne found his authority to be liberating for the ensemble, and he led easily. There are two implications to this remark. First, one aspect of authority is that it creates a willingness to follow. In choirs, anyway, following is voluntary and *authority is awarded* by the follower. In this situation, authority does not need to be formally decided. Authority derives directly from how the singers come to perceive the conductor, and how the singers want to be led. Second, authority based on competence translates to exceptionally effective leadership, because the conductor does not waste much

time or energy on anyone's part. Likability, of course, only cements the rapport that has already been established by the above.

12.3.2. Will power and humility

Sean has indicated that he prefers strong leadership, because of how he grew up. I asked him directly whether he expects the conductor to be an authority:

Sean: Absolutely. I do expect that, in fact. It is my demand. The demands go both ways [too]. I demand that my conductor is so experienced and has such authority that I don't have to worry about whether this is going to go well.

Sean associates the knowledge base applauded by Arne in the previous passage with a safeguard against failing in performance. Authority, in this case, makes it possible for the singers to put themselves in someone else's hands.

Arne talks about another conductor:

Arne: [He] is the kind who knows exactly how he wants it. He is very stubborn, very determined. He is a bit different [. . .] in a way—he conducts a little differently, though I am not able to pinpoint what he is doing [that is different]. [. . .] He certainly knows how to conduct, but he has his own style, sort of. [. . .] Yes, I like his way of working.

Here, musical vision is combined with the will power to get there, and Arne sees this conductor's authority as deriving from both knowing and wanting. The fact that the conductor is seen to be gesturally unique only adds to his authority in this situation.

The preceding statements look at authority's *sources*; next we will turn to authority's various *appearances*. Herman describes a particular character with whom he has worked:

Herman: [This conductor] has a much tougher style. But I have learned a lot from him as well, because sometimes you need to be tough as a choral conductor. He is a bit more, shall we say, loud—he is more chest up and bang bang [showing expediency], but he is also a well-rounded conductor. [He] also has a sparkle in his eyes and a sense of humour. [He is] a very solid conductor.

Interestingly, this conductor's very visible and audible presence does not seem to read as authoritarian, but as a legitimate manifestation of his competence

and his stature. Perhaps this is because, as Herman indicates, singers learn so much from him that they are able to forgive his behavioural eccentricities.

Beatrice elsewhere discussed an orchestra conductor who led her choir in a very successful joint project (see section 11.3.2). He had complete control over the music material and was also extremely tough and demanding with the choir, but they all thrived with him. Several singers described how quickly he was able to establish his authority:

Beatrice: [The experience with the conductor] was on multiple levels. That he was such a distinctive leader could possibly be perceived as unpleasant, I'm sure, but he was extremely demanding and I was digging it enormously. Especially his text focus. His point of departure was extremely delightful—from someone who is primarily an orchestra conductor!

This conductor's credibility was enhanced by his unexpected attention to choral issues, such as text meaning, pronunciation and diction. This particular conductor seemed to have more than usual authority as an orchestra conductor, but when the choir realised that he was a better choral conductor than most choir specialists, the admiration for him went further up.

In the preceding examples, authority manifests itself by vision, will, and a type of forcefulness. There is no question about who is in charge. However, there are also examples of authority remaining intact even when conductors demonstrate humility or even make mistakes. Maria talks about singers who step in to solve problems that the conductor does not address, which she endorses:

Maria: I don't think I respect the conductor any less if we take a little responsibility for fixing things.

To Maria, taking responsibility herself seems as natural as expecting help and leadership from the conductor. Stella describes the authority that remains with a conductor who is known to lack certain conducting skills, such as score reading. I ask her why she stays so comfortably in charge:

Stella: In my mind, it is her quite unique personality, for there are not that many [conductors] I know of who are able to step aside and step back in again—go in and out of the leader role at no personal cost. She doesn't . . . well, yes, she does . . . find it a little troubling, because it shows that there is some competence she doesn't have.

This particular conductor possesses the humility (though she has no choice) to lead or allow others to lead depending upon what aspect of the rehearsal is underway. Her ability to recognise the singers' competences in counterpoint with her own competences works to solidify her authority as their leader. It is interesting to note, however, that Stella acknowledges how difficult this can be for her at times, as though the risk of undermined authority lurks here as well.

Sean talks about how repeated conductor mistakes eventually erode authority, and how this will happen more quickly if the conductor is making excuses the whole time:

Sean: If the conductor consistently makes mistakes—'Oops, oh, look what I did now'—[...] that is in fact destructive for me. Because I lose the ability to take the person seriously.

Dag: Authority is weakened?

Sean: Weakened simply by recurring, clumsy mistakes. [...] I could not have been a conductor, for I make so many clumsy mistakes, and this would have ruined my authority right away.

Sean knows that indulging some margin of error is the right thing to do but does not have that generosity inside him. He seeks a strong leader, and clumsiness appears weakish at odds with authority, while we keep in mind that, for Stella, humility is compatible with authority. Authority seems to survive an acknowledged lack of competence, but not arbitrary shortcomings when they are not expected.

12.3.3. Public image

Authority is obviously affected by how the conductor goes about filling the leadership role, as Sean indicated above. Beatrice finds that authority is likewise affected by information and events outside the musicking relationship itself, as she describes her reaction to a certain well-respected, established conductor who had some professional disappointments. I asked Beatrice if the conductor's status had diminished in Beatrice's eyes because he had struggled:

Beatrice: This [conversation about the conductor's failures] sounded very nasty. I didn't think that in my mind. But I feel that it's a bummer that I know this. Somehow I am to the point where I pity him, and that is a bad starting point. Maybe it is.

Dag: To pity someone is not good for authority.

Beatrice: No. There's something there. Oh, this is nasty, but this is how it is.

Rationally speaking, Beatrice does not want to be affected by her awareness here, but emotionally, she is affected regardless. It seems as if the authority she awards or attributes to the conductor constitutes a perceived position, and therefore, she cannot discount her perceptions—in this case, of the conductor's failures. Public success (or failure) is part of the perception.

Stella even associates conductor investment with prospects for public success, which, of course, undermines authority when discovered:

Stella: [It] is, for sure, not easy to be [this conductor], who has the brand he has, for I sense it for myself—the more I know about something, the less I want to put my name on something that is not good. I believe that he, to a larger degree, thinks that his name is on it [the music he leads]. It is his name there, while [that conductor] thinks that it is our [the choir's] name on it.

Stella feels that the first conductor has a reputation to protect and tends to distance himself from the ensemble when success is not certain. Stella does not like this kind of withdrawal at all. She implicitly respects the first conductor less than she initially did. The original authority is in a sense modified by a stain of vanity or a reservation of commitment. Consequently, Stella identifies less with him than with the the other conductor who sees the choir's collective name on a given performance.

12.3.4. Peer relationships

The kind of peer relationship that Stella described in the previous section did not undermine the conductor's authority. Gustav also reflects on the potential for a peer relationship, in this case when the ensemble's conductor comes from the group itself as a first among equals:

Gustav: To some degree it will be different, I believe. [. . .] I look at the situations I have been in, and there is a difference. It doesn't necessarily mean that there has to be a big difference. But if you work with projects where the starting point is being peers, your authority will not be as strong.

Dag: Is there a conflict [...] that if [the conductor] is part of the gang, is it more difficult to establish proper authority?

Gustav: Yes, in a way. I don't know whether I like to say it, but yes.

A conductor's internal position, then, can matter as much as his/her external position and reputation. This relates to knowledge base as well, because singers are less likely to attribute transcendent knowledge to one from their midst. Whereas authority, again, is about the *cause*, and authoritarianism is about the *self*, Beatrice and Gustav each, indicate that it is in fact difficult to completely disconnect authority from some kind of hierarchy, whether it is defined in terms of hard power or public image. Gustav, however, prefers the peer authority option:

Gustav: Because of the musical freedom, I would say that I prefer it. But I see clear advantages in those situations where there is a stronger authority in front—I do. But because of my own focus—what I believe to be important, or most important—I would prefer the other situation. I would. For I find the spontaneity . . . there is something that [...] is difficult, almost a little impossible in a choir. [...] It 'must' be controlled in a way, but then again, it doesn't have to be, at least not completely. I think it is very good that spontaneous things can happen, and that it doesn't need to be controlled.

Gustav sees the benefit of authority but subordinates it to the freedom to musick freely among equals. Leif demurs:

Leif: I don't believe in the buddy form of musical leadership. I find it too loose. [...] I may not be as obstinate about it anymore. [...] But for me in a choir, it has been very important that the conductor is authoritarian, that the conductor makes the decisions. I don't like the situation where he is too cooperative.

Leif wants a forceful decision maker and is not afraid to characterise him/her as *authoritarian*, as opposed to *an authority*, as all of the other singers have put it. He does not describe the role itself beyond firm decision-making, but it seems likely that how the control position *is used* associates the particular conductor with authority for Leif.

Beatrice's ideal situation of musical leadership touches upon several features of authority via several balancing acts:

Beatrice: I dream of a communication where the conductor is not too democratic about it when it comes to the musical. I dream of conductors

who know what they want, but who have not necessarily found it. Can it be worded like that? Because it is fine to be dynamic and listen and learn along the way, but [the conductor must] still be clear about . . . 'There is something that doesn't work out here, so I will . . .' I want them to place very high demands upon the choir. I believe the bar should be put a little higher than the choir believes [it should be], whatever level the choir is on. I believe that we need to stretch. But it has got to be in a way that is not unpleasant, [meaning that the conductor is] communicating well enough to make it warm. These are highly immeasurable entities, they are.

Beatrice negotiates the tension between the democratic mindset and the single decision-maker when it comes to musical choices. She also pinpoints the tension between the musical idea as a clear goal and the musical idea as the result of an uncertain discovery. Lastly, she wants the conductor to stretch for choir but keep things positive, even 'warm', as well. Beatrice links authority to vision, control and empowerment, but its most effective practitioner will balance those qualities with an interest in collaboration.

Contrary to the contact and sincerity themes, which are perceived completely within the confines of the musicking team, authority is determined in some ways outside those confines, and even in the public domain. Authority must be recognised (and is exercised) in the intimate sphere of the choir, but the authority figure's history, image and reputation colour the singer's perception. Singers award authority to a conductor who deserves to be looked up to. But conductors also may assume authority through the fact that they make a difference in terms of unifying the ensemble around a musical idea. The overall legitimacy of the conductor role and the authority of a conductor are closely linked, but while legitimacy is described more in terms of the meaning of the role itself (see chapter 10), authority is mostly described as an individual characteristic.

12.4. Devotion

Sincerity has been described as a type of openness or vulnerability, an absence of protective shields and beautifying appearances. This quality of genuineness is closely linked to one's depth of involvement in the role and the music. The singers use several words with partially overlapping and complementary

meaning when they describe the various ways conductors appear to be committed to what they do. I have chosen *devotion* to denote the deep conductor involvement that singers associate with great choral leadership. The interviews reveal multiple facets of devotion, including, in particular, passion, faithfulness and generosity.

12.4.1. Passion

Several singers commented on a well-established and well-recognised conductor who is not known for his technical skills. Gustav attributes his authority to his intimate knowledge of the music material, and to the enthusiasm it engenders:

Gustav: He has a full overview [of the music], and you can see that the man really loves what he is doing. He does not have any fantastic conducting techniques, but that's fine—that's not where it happens. He doesn't necessarily say very much either. He is the kind of conductor who can mark the beats, and you see him . . . it is being worked out inside [his head]. He is very intense, but then he is not even able to say anything—it doesn't come out [shows struggling effort]. 'Let's take it one more time', [he says,] and then something happens anyway [laughs], without him having said anything. He has just counted off and then stood there and appeared to want to say something—and then something happens.

Dag: He still communicates, one way or the other, which you understand.

Gustav: Yes, he does, doesn't he? He probably wanted to extract more . . . enthusiasm, or I don't know what.

Dag: Is there something about his devotion that mobilises?

Gustav: Yes, I absolutely believe that has something to do with it. Absolutely. [. . .] We were, for example, singing a great deal of Bach back then, and I could disagree violently with how he did that, musically speaking. [. . .] But still, he really loves that music. You see it by watching him. All the time. Not only in concert. And that is very inspiring.

Gustav may disagree with the conductor's musical ideas, but he has no doubt about his love and passion for the music. This passion, coupled with the authority arising from music knowledge, seems to be a particularly powerful combination. It motivated Gustav despite the fact that he disagreed with the conductor's musical ideas, which he finds too old school. For Gustav, the

conductor's combined authority and passion and even compensated for mediocre gestural skills as well as the inability to express ideas in words. The conductor made things happen without uttering a word, struggling with articulating anything at all. On the surface, we could easily say that he was a poor communicator. Still, something was understood. The fact that the conductor struggled with saying what he was thinking even seems to have contributed to the intensity. Passion shines through the verbal blockage, making his passion appear in the form of intensity. In short, we have a conductor who exercises great leadership by loving what he does, making his shortcomings of less importance. Morten describes his experience with the same conductor:

Morten: He doesn't give a whole lot in terms of body language. But there still is something about the intensity with which he shows things, he rehearses things, which makes you absolutely accept everything he comes with. [. . .] [It is] because your part seems so incredibly important. [It is] such a nice part of the whole. As he tells you to do so-and-so, and you do it, it feels so refined and clarified right there and then. I am left with the feeling that, ooh, at least he knows what he's doing. You've got to pay attention so that you catch some more bits of it.

Dag: So he makes what you do important.

Morten: He extracts the essence. It hit me right in the heart.

Dag: So there is an intensity that is not very outward but has to do with what he thinks and intends, and you perceive through it.

Morten: Yes, it is a form of non-verbal communication that I have not yet found [with other conductors]. It is unbelievably impressive—[you are] just sitting there and hearing four precise instructions, and you feel that you have received a wide range [of input].

This conductor validates and elevates each singer's efforts by how he rehearses. Both Gustav and Morten note that he shows more verbal and corporeal restraint than most other conductors, but he transmits his intensity and passion regardless. If those qualities are truly there, it appears, singers will recognise them no matter what.

Kristine describes some exceptional experiences with another conductor who has a completely different profile and style though displayed the same consummate devotion:

Kristine: I believe that here we were involved with a really arduous human being. A person who really loves the music that is communicated. He is the kind who engages himself 110 percent with everything he does, whether it is positive things or [. . .] negative things. And when you experience that—there stands a human being who really wants to give something to the audience and wants to bring forward the best that this music has to offer, and [then he] tries to extract it from each of us as individuals, without too much gesture, movement, and beats—it's very special.

Dag: So you link it to his commitment or devotion to music, is that what it is?

Kristine: Yes, I believe so. [. . .] And of course, it also has to do with personality. But I think it mostly has to do with the feeling of a conductor who loves the music we are performing, and [who] genuinely wants us to help convey this [music] to the audience.

Here we have a fired up conductor with outgoing style and temper. However, it is not the extrovert aspect of his leadership that Kristine appreciates the most, it is his love of the music and desire to engage the audience. She is able to perceive the strength of his devotion to the music when there is no gestural excess. She internalises his devotion as an invitation to take part in the musical communication with the audience, an invitation which is accepted even in the absence of excessive gesture, and this conductor succeeds in producing reciprocal devotion among members of the ensemble. Gustav, Morten and Kristine have been talking about intensity as a sign of passion. Should the notion of intensity, which clearly is a facet of conducting, be understood as separate theme? As the singers talk about intensity coming from or being directed at a passion for the music, I have chosen to view intensity as something embedded in passion, as one of the appearances of passion.

12.4.2. Generosity

Bob associates one conductor's improvement with an increase in commitment to the ensemble and the music:

Bob: I think that he gives more—he is more alive. He is more engaged—[more] passionate in his conducting than he used to be. [. . .] His conducting used to be plainer. It was a little more boring before. But now

he really wants to give, really show what the music may convey, [bring] more intensity.

Dag: And you experience this as a good thing?

Bob: Absolutely. It is much easier for me to mirror it. [. . .] I need a conductor who does this. The more he does it, the better.

Here, passion is linked to generosity. Passion is consequential, it leads to the desire to give and to share. Bob finds that the conductor's renewed passion has made it more interesting to sing with him. The conductor's generosity directly affects Bob's ability to give of himself, so that Bob mirrors his intensity.

Ragna applauds generosity in rehearsal as well:

Ragna: Conductors who give something—who are genuine—[are] very important to me. They can be as clever as they like, but if they don't give anything, I feel [that] what I am giving is wasted, because it is not going to come out anyhow, this genuineness.

Ragna makes an interesting link between generosity and authenticity. The conductor cannot give just anything—he must give of himself. For Ragna, being generous with only one's competence and skill is not enough. She believes that whatever *she* has to give is not going to come out unless the conductor opens up and demonstrates his passion.

Why do singers have such high expectations of the conductor's willingness to give of him/herself? Fanny offers one answer:

Fanny: [I] think I want to the kind [of person who] puts some of your life into what you do. When you're into music, it is not a secondary thing or a sidetrack. It is about . . . it is a personal expression. So it is important that the conductor is personal and puts some of his life into it. This is where I am as a choral singer.

For Fanny, music is not a parenthesis in life, it is expressing yourself, and therefore life itself. She wants to put her life into music and expects the conductor to do the same, using the word *personal* to describe such generosity.

12.4.3. Faithfulness

I asked Fanny to expand upon this sense of 'personal'. She replied:

Fanny: I have a personal relationship with [the conductor] when I am standing there as a singer, without being too private, necessarily. But it is

a personal relationship, and he has expectations for each individual person. [When] there is this kind of faithful relationship that exists no matter what happens, you can quarrel and fight—and he can be terribly inefficient at times—you still endure it, because he is so faithful in many ways.

Fanny makes some interesting linkages. Beyond saying that generosity means being personal, she sees a personal relationship between conductor and singer as one of faithfulness. As was described in section 12.1.3, Fanny draws a distinction between personal and private. She is here clearly talking about a personal, but non-intrusive relationship. Following the statement above,, but the personal has taken on an interesting new dimension here. I ask her to whom or what the conductor is faithful:

Fanny: He is faithful to me as a choral singer, as a person. And then he is also faithful to his musical ideas. He has very clear ideas about what he wants to do—some sort of meta-idea. He knows very well what kinds of projects he wants to do.

Fanny uses a rather unusual word faithful to describe her regular ensemble leader. The important observation is that she sees the conductor as faithful to people as well as a cause (that is, his musical ideas). He will neither desert his team nor his musical ideas. He is committed to something beyond the single musicking moment. His involvement is characterised by consistency and permanence. He even appears to implement a 'meta-idea' across all of the various works and styles he leads, and he extends this commitment to all of his people relationships in the choir as well.

Devotion measures the depth of the conductor's involvement. It is a commitment that presents itself with intensity, is outwardly directed, and represents a lasting way of being. It is also closely linked to sincerity and authority, which we will return to at the end of this chapter in the context of general coherence.

12.5. Vision and will

12.5.1. Vision as work

As was described in chapter 10, the legitimacy of the designated leadership rests on unifying the sounding music in a meaningful way. The conductor, then, needs to know what that would sound like and how to get there. Singers simply expect the leader to have a musical idea. The various music skills and knowledge described in section 11.4 enable the conductor to conceive musical ideas and shape their realisation. This section deals with the role of the musical idea itself. Gustav talks about shaping the music as something visual:

Gustav: The [conductor's] musical solidity, the competence, the experience has a lot to say for how it is shaped, how the conductor is able to see . . . if it is a large choral work . . . [how he/she] manages to shape the large format.

As an authority on the musical material, the conductor represents a shaper or architect of the larger structure—a visionary who sees the big picture. In this, Gustav likewise implies that it is easy for singers to lose sight of the big picture—that they need to be lifted out of some sort of myopia when singing their parts. This vision goes beyond the score, of course. The fact that shaping a musical idea is *work* also reinforces the legitimacy of the designated leader. Even if the singers have the competence to deep-dive into the shaping of the work, it is more efficient to have the conductor, as the one designated leader, to do so on their behalf. The notion of the conductor as a visionary, then, is coherent with the fundamental rationale for the single designated leader.

12.5.2. Vision as will

In the preceding section, Arne talks about the ability to see the big picture. But what is it a picture of? Lucy links it to a *goal*:

Lucy: One thing [about a good rehearsal] is that we agree on the goal. I like that we have a musical leader who knows what he wants in the rehearsing phase, who has an idea about the result, where he wants to go. But it may change [while we are] underway—it depends on what sort of music one is doing.

Here Lucy recognises that a musical idea will have little impact if it is not coupled with the will power to execute it. She therefore connects both vision and will with authority. Arne attributes will to a particular conductor who is valued by his ensemble despite being seen as gesturally quite weak:

Arne: He is the kind [of person] who knows exactly how he wants it. He is very stubborn, very determined.

Arne takes Lucy's point a step further, applauding this conductor's insistence on getting what he wants. He describes a determination that extends beyond simply wanting to reach the goal. He sees stubbornness as part of being visionary. Beatrice, as quoted earlier, extends will power to the ability to persist amid distraction as well:

Beatrice: I dream of conductors who know what they want, but who have not necessarily found it. Can it be worded like that? Because it is fine to be dynamic and listen and learn along the way but still be clear.

Later, she clarifies that will power is a virtue in its own right:

Beatrice: [When conducting situations are not successful,] it could be the personal match or rather mismatch, but also simply that [conductors] don't have enough will.

Dag: You want a conductor to be strong willed?

Beatrice: In essence, yes.

The link between vision and will is not self evident as such, given the former term's general ambiguity and sprawling, 'buzzword' status. Vision is one of the most widely used buzzwords in business academia and organisations.⁵¹ Often the implementation of a vision or strategy is seen as separate from the vision itself. This is not the case here, of course: the interviewed singers see them as inseparable and find that will power can even serve as a proxy for the vision itself as a musical idea is explored.

Charlotte provides another interesting link between vision and authority while distinguishing between authority and being authoritarian:

⁵¹ Minzberg (1978) is one of the proponents of this view.

Charlotte: But it works really well with leaders who act with authority, because then it is about—not the acting person—but what they are aiming at, the idea they are pursuing, and the clarity around [the objective].

In section 12.3, Charlotte saw authority as linked to *the cause* and being authoritarian as linked to *the self*. Inverting this relation, she also seems to see the musical idea as protection from authoritarian behaviour.

In general, then, there needs to be a will to make the vision happen, to transform the musical idea as an intellectual abstraction into the actual soundscape. This is the will to *lead*: singers want conductors who have a strong desire to shape the music and drive the ensemble toward their goals.

12.5.3. Evolving vision

Many of the singers engage with the question of how the initial musical idea is conceived, and potentially changed or evolved through the rehearsing process. Lucy talks about her regular ensemble at length in terms of how they experiment with styles, vocal technique, and even the instrumentation of canonical works. She sees this as a benefit of a lasting relationship between choir and conductor:

Lucy: That's what you can do with someone who is there all the time. When you have shorter projects with another conductor, [. . .] it still applies [that it is useful] to know where you are going and [that you] don't talk it to death, but rather do [it]. [But you also] have ears and senses for what the ensemble or choir does. Because if [the project conductor] doesn't, it will clearly ruin everything.

Lucy is very comfortable with a changing vision (and a participatory approach) as the musical outcome is shaped, even very near the time of the concert. She associates this spirit of experimentation with an intimate knowledge of the ways and workings of the ensemble and conductor reciprocally. For the single-project conductor, on the other hand, clear goals are vital. However, she also expects the project conductor to be sensitive about how these goals play out in practice, and to adapt them if needed. Rather than articulating the musical idea, the conductor should let the ideas and the ensemble meet as the music takes its final shape as sounding music. A musical idea, as expressed by Lucy's

statement, is primarily not a verbal statement, but an encounter between a musical material and an ensemble situation.

Jenny also talks about the relationship between a clear vision and the path the music must take to its final shape:

Jenny: Even if a conductor has a clear musical idea, possibly having done it with other choirs before, it may become evident that ‘with this particular ensemble, I have to do it differently, because it doesn’t work out the way I had thought’. That [realisation] I experience as positive, that a conductor is in fact able to say, ‘Yes, here are other singers, here are other possibilities’—that it is absolutely necessary to do it [in a way that is] different from what he had envisaged. After all, it is artistic work.

For Jenny, a musical idea is not about the single objective but about multiple, related notions and processes that may pan out in different ways, depending on the situation and the ensemble. Vision will not acquire meaning absent the specific circumstances of its realisation—musical meaning is shaped through a meeting of text and context. Lucy and Jenny both imply that a musical idea is some sort of initial concept in the conductor’s mind that awaits its finalisation in the musicking situation. Jenny allows the conductor the freedom to develop this idea, however, as long as the understanding is mutual:

Jenny: I believe it is okay [when the conductor does not know everything right away] as long as the conductor understands that I as a singer cannot be entirely sure about what to do [either]. [. . .] If the conductor is equally open to what I am doing, it is okay for me. But if the conductor expects determination from me, I demand determination in return. It has to be like this, in my mind.

Jenny accepts that not everything will be fixed or clear all the time but hopes that this understanding is extended to the singers as well. Clarity of singer expression hangs together with lucidity of the conductor’s vision. Jenny, as a singer, cannot see beyond the choices the conductor has made.

12.5.4. The person and the music

Birgit has previously criticised a particular conductor with whom she has worked occasionally, but there is something that makes Birgit like him anyway (and find him effective). I asked her to elaborate further on his leadership:

Birgit: First, I believe that he sticks to the repertoire that he knows and likes. He clearly has deep knowledge of it, [and] you [as the singer] understand that. You get a lot of respect [from him]. I don't know much about it, but I know that there have been conflicts and criticism [in his regular choir], but the little I have experienced that he conducted us was very exciting. Not exciting as with [my regular conductor] and some others, but absolutely exciting enough, because it is so good.

Despite this conductor's shortcomings, he knows what he is doing and it shows. She refers to hearsay about problems with his regular leadership and acknowledges that her regular conductor is more exciting. However, Birgit finds his leadership sufficiently interesting, thanks to his knowledge of the repertoire he focuses on—that is, to his musical idea. Birgit's statement is a reminder of how closely linked musical competence and musical idea are. I asked her to go back and think over her objections against him again. She continues:

Birgit: Maybe I like it a little more dynamic in different ways. [My regular conductor] is very expressive, let us take Bach that they both do, [. . .] whereas [the other conductor] likes slow tempi, it should flow like this [showing] It is quite interesting—we were once in [a city], where he conducted us. And when the concert was over, [. . .] he played a piano piece for us. [. . .] I think it was something modern. And this was not dull, that I can promise you. I don't mean to say that his music [conducting] is dull, but it is less [demonstrative], but on the piano, it was really some experience, [especially] after this concert where everything was in slow tempi and everything was so 'proper'.

Birgit misses the expressivity she is used to with her regular conductor. But she did experience enormous expressivity from the other conductor, as he was playing contemporary music. She realises that his idea of how Bach should sound is simply different from her own and different from her regular conductor. Nevertheless, she respects him for his knowledge of Bach and the fact that he has a vision of Bach's music. The other conductor's musical idea reopens gates that otherwise would have been closed by an impression of weakness or non-compliance with Birgit's preferences.

Jenny has also commented on this conductor's restraint and even temperament:

Jenny: I noticed that he was able to get out some sort of forte, [. . .] that within the little he did, he still managed it. His span was [small], while

others have larger. But then again, he is older than [the regular conductor].

Jenny finds this conductor's restraint to be a consequence of generation and era of performance practice. She also links it to his musical ideas, which resonates with Birgit's association of her regular conductor's relative extremity of behaviour and personal carriage with his highly expressive musical ideas. There is a link, then, between the musical vision (how the music *is seen*) and the leader who *sees* it.

Musical vision seems to start with an understanding of what the material offers, which suggests avenues to pursue. The conductor is positioned to make use of the ensemble at hand to shape, modify and grow this vision. At the outset, musical vision is textual (as the idea), but as an *idea in use*, it becomes contextual. As conductor preparation, conceiving the musical idea is about making sense *of* the material. As a musicking activity, implementing the musical idea is about making sense *with* the ensemble. This is why we may see vision and the visioning process a matter of coherence, music material and musicking activity are connected and unified.

12.6. Corporeal congruence

As a broad category, coherence is about how it all comes together. It derives from the integrity of the leadership—how its various facets enhance (or disrupt) the overall effectiveness. The themes discussed in the preceding sections are elements of a coherent musical leadership. They are clearly related and may partially overlap, though they are talked about with a certain conviction and an assumed precision in the interviews. They are related principally because they are perceived by the singers, for the most part, via the conductor's bodily expression. Coherence is therefore also about the *embodiment* of the leadership, both within and beyond the body itself. In this section, singers describe various aspects of corporal congruence, including the fit between various modes of expression and the fit between embodied leadership and the music. The theme draws on many of the experiences that were described in section 11.4.6, concerning gestural skills and mode mix, and the distinction between gestural skills and corporal congruence is shifting but nevertheless pertinent, as we will see.

12.6.1. Mirroring

Singers describe various ways that the conductor's body and gestures affect them. The effects are immediate and very concrete, as if the conducting body were being imprinted on the singing body. Jenny discusses this virtual symbiosis:

Jenny: It is just something you notice. And conductors are different. Some do a lot [of physical display] and some do very little. Still, you are able to read [it]. [...] It could just be a facial expression, a look in the eye, or you see that the conductor is breathing and is well at ease, and you feel that he is with the choir. [...] I notice it very clearly when [...] the conductor is breathing poorly—you sort of get the feeling that you are not able to release your body. I easily adopt this.

Jenny notes that she mirrors the conductor's physical demeanour, the impact of which goes beyond what the conductor actually does. Corporeal congruence is about the singer *reading* the conductor in the widest sense, making use of every sign that is made available. For Jenny to feel good about her own contribution, the conductor must be at ease with him/herself and with the ensemble. For Jenny, *reading* the conductor is indistinguishable from *being written* on—she is looking for signs, and once they are perceived, they have already affected her.

Kristine describes a similar experience in relation to the way some conductors elevate their arms too much:

Kristine: It has to be a relaxed conductor, but of course there has to be a power and strength and energy—but still, [it is important] that the basic movements are relaxed. [...] If a conductor conducts in a very uptight way, it goes straight to my neck.

The conductor's tensions become hers. She makes an important distinction between being tense and being energetic. Kristine describes the relaxed foundation upon which leadership might be built. Trym provides a similar example of negative modelling on the part of a particular conductor:

Trym: This is why I mentioned these fisted hands, which get in the way, in my view. And some conductors [conduct] in such a way that even experienced singers find it tiring to sing, because you don't get any breathing help.

This conductor's fisted hands at times, which makes it difficult for Trym to accept this otherwise respected and high profile conductor. Gesture that

liberates breathing is energising. According to Jenny, in order for conducting gestures to be helpful, the conductor must ‘allow space for breath’:

Jenny: [It is important] that you get a feeling of release, that the conductor releases the beat, that you are not held back in tension. This can be done technically [. . .], it has a lot to do with posture, how the body and the arms are used. [. . .] I have sung with a conductor who is really high up here [shows high arms], and when you are [singing] high pitches it becomes very tight and [seems] even higher, and in fact you have trouble getting your breath down [in you body].

Jenny makes two points. First, she suggests that tension arises from forces that are not released, and arms that are too elevated seem to signal unreleased force, physically and metaphorically. Second, elevated arms, as unreleased tension, conflict with deep breathing.

Whereas Jenny includes posture and movement in her statement, Sofie reflects on the difference between the two while comparing conductors:

Sofie: A lot of conductors have lots of beats and [. . .] have larger movements, show more to get more. But I have the impression that [the conductor] shows very little, as if she doesn’t want to disrupt the music. [. . .] It may have to do with her posture. [. . .] She ‘broadens’ herself, maybe more than she makes large gestures, and I believe this has to do with her thinking regarding how you fill yourself with air and how you inhale—it reflects this, maybe.

Sofie has experienced conductors who use big hand movements to embody signal magnitude. This particular conductor, however, uses her posture to signal magnitude instead. It is as if she uses the body to depict an air reservoir, encouraging the singers to create the physical conditions for the musical intention.⁵²

Beatrice, on the other hand, comments on movements specifically. In a dialogue about conditions for improvisation and playfulness, she is making an interesting link between concentration and movements:

⁵² Durrant (2003:147) refers to such gestures as supportive, serving a purpose beyond coordination and expressivity. This will also be discussed in chapter 15.

Beatrice: There is [...] a shared concentration. You notice it concretely with regards to conductors' hand movements, [...] that the conductor is highly present on the micro level.

Beatrice sees minute, precise hand movements as a sign of being present in the musical moment and being with the ensemble. She introduces the term micro level to describe this presence, indicating the value and significance of the smallest movements.

While Sofie focuses on posture and Beatrice on hand movements, they are both describing conducting with conscious, moderate, possibly even minimalistic hand movements. Nora talks about the strong linkage between gesture and sound as well:

Nora: It has to do with weight and centre of gravity. It has to do with depth of beats and it has to do with tension and release. [I have] worked with dance and there is [...] a dance technique called [...] contract and release, which is exactly the same [thing]. It is so physical, and especially in church contexts, there are not many conductors who have worked with dance.

The words *weight* and *centre of gravity* evoke the way Jenny talked about getting the breathing *down* and Sofie talked about *broadening*. Nora does not see this grounding tendency as static posture, however, but as related to the contract and release of hand gestures.

Common to all of the statements in this section is their acknowledgement of a mirroring aspect in relation to the conducting body—that singers' bodies bear the conductor's corporeal imprint in a number of ways. The conductor impacts how singers produce sound even before he/she guides the musical flow and expressivity. This may help to explain why there are conductors who are very effective despite their weak gestural skills—while those skills are. This is not to suggest that gestural skills are unimportant, only that they are not sufficient, and not even always necessary.

12.6.2. Musical-corporeal congruence

In section 11.4.6, gestural skills were described as somewhat slippery, given that they are so intimately linked to other features of musical leadership and are so difficult to distinguish from the conductor's overall presentation. The preceding section about mirroring indicated how the overall appearance of the

conductor affects the singers, and this section is about the fit between the various aspects of the conductor's appearance—that is, how it all comes together. Singers find, for example, that conducting gestures such as beating time often appear to conflict with the character and flow of the music. Herman, for one, uses the somewhat common phrase *beating the music to death*:

Herman: As a musician, I would say that the technical, the arms, often can get in the way of the music. And there are conductors who beat too big and too much and too often. [They] beat the music to death sometimes. The optimal is to let the music sound and speak for itself—you just lead the little that is necessary to lead. That is what I believe is optimal.

Gesture is a means of shaping the sounding music, but it is not the only means. The music, to Herman, is something delicate, even breakable, and the overaggressive beat patterns represent an inherent danger of disrupting the music, if they are easily at odds with musical flow. He elaborates:

Herman: The freer you can be in terms of hand gestures and body movement and use of eye contact, the better, really, when you have good communication with the singer.

In Herman's view, ensuring a good fit between the music and the gesture demands an unfettered use of hands and other modes of corporeal expression to support the musical flow. The beat pattern is as much a hindrance as a help in this regard, and Herman has sung for too many conductors who are a little too hung up on their beat patterns. One stood out, though, for letting the music lead:

Herman: She does what she has to, but [she] is very free with her technique. She never beats a song to death. She more leads the singing and the music.

Achieving a good fit between the character of the music and the conducting gestures means easing the tension between the fundamental idea of time beating and other musical modelling needs. I have chosen to denote this fit as *musical-corporeal congruence*. This term is meant to capture the ideals that (1) the embodied leadership enables and enhances the musical intention, and (2) the various modes of conductor expression are mutually supportive. The second point also implies in turn that all of the other coherence themes become part of an overall congruence—for example, authority may be perceived through posture and gesture, sincerity may affect eye contact, and vision/will

may be shown with hand movements. When gestural skills were covered in section 11.4.6, singers seemed to find it difficult to detach skill from way of being. Musical-corporal congruence, as one of the elements in the broad category of coherence, overlaps with the skill domain in the same blurred fashion. Jenny reflects on how much technical skill matters and whether she has experienced gestural skills as a weakness:

Jenny: If you sing a difficult piece, for example *Wie ein Kind* of Nørgård, that is rhythmically challenging, and the conductor is able to capture all of those beats, but still there is no flow, it doesn't hang together, or it becomes very chopped up and partitioned, [then though it might be] technically correct what the person does, there is no music in it.

It is possible to do everything right but still not get the music right. Jenny considers whether this is the result of technical competence as such:

Jenny: I [do] believe that technique should be there all the time. I have understood this more and more by being a choral singer—that it's not just being nice and inspiring. You need, in a way, to know what you are doing technically also.

In many ways, classifying corporeal congruence as either a question of being or a question of skill is meaningless; based on the interviews, the two sides cannot be properly separated. This is why I have included a corporeal theme in the mastery category as well as the coherence category. There needs to be congruence between music and conductor appearance, as well as between various modes of conductor expression.

In addition to corporal congruence, this chapter has covered six themes that constitute coherence: contact, sincerity, authority, devotion and vision/will. These themes are strongly related, and may in fact be partially overlapping, although they are talked about with a certain conviction and an assumed precision in the interviews. Sincerity and devotion often appear in combination. But there are also examples of devoted conductors who are not seen as honest and sincere. Contact is experienced as something direct and immediate, but there also examples of apparent poor verbal and gestural contact, while there nonetheless is contact on another level, enabled by devotion to the music and the mere authority arising from in-depth musical knowledge. In my judgement, greyzones The grey areas and overlaps among these themes are not an issue as such, because they acquire their meaning from

each other, or how they are often used in combination. The key point of this chapter is that these themes collectively constitute coherence and acquire meaning in juxtaposition that would be invisible if they were kept apart.

13. Intersubjective space

The mastery category deals with the most visible aspects of the conducting role, at least in the sense that the mastery themes are observable as things conductor know and do. Some of these themes may even be experienced outside the ensemble itself. The coherence category deals with the integrity of the conductor role—how singers perceive consistency among the conductor’s various modes of appearing as evidenced through his/her involvement with the music and the singers. The coherence themes seem to represent gate openers to the deep musical experience that singers seek—that is, the very purpose of the musicking activity. The notion of purposefulness, which Donna Ladkin proposes to be one of the three key elements of leading beautifully, is not something that is limited to the mind of the conductor alone. Purpose and meaning in a choir are necessarily co-created within and around the musicking act. Various aspects of such sensemaking are described by the singers as an intersubjective experience, where the self and other selves are sensing together. The themes of this chapter constitute what I have chosen to denote as intersubjective space. These themes cover what takes place in this metaphorical common room. The choice of wording is discussed in part IV.

13.1. Zest–Security

Singers talk about feeling secure and being confident in a number of different ways. Though the theme appears to have multiple dimensions, its integrity is retained by the way the singers talk about it. They talk about the confidence that comes from knowing the music material. They talk about having confidence in the conductor, and vice versa, as well as the feeling of insecurity that arises from not being trusted by the conductor, to the point that their

singing is inhibited. These various aspects of security have different depths of impact. For example, Arne describes a specific senior conductor who is rather moody:

Arne: He is okay, but it is a little difficult to know where you have him, in my mind. [. . .] He is skilful, but you don't really dare to ask all of the questions you might have, for fear of getting an answer you'd rather not have.

Arne's only insecurity about this conductor, however, does not seem to impact the musicking relationship very much. Herman, on the other hand, thinks security has a profound impact:

Herman: Yes, it is important, because you as a singer always have a little sensation of things that might go wrong—you may fall out, you may sing an error, you may lose [your orientation]—'where are we now?' So, security is absolutely essential in order for you to excel as a choral singer, or else you use your strength and energy in a way that harms the musicking.

The notion of the attention trade-off was introduced in section 10.2, and here Herman provides one more example of how attention may be diverted to the detriment of the musical expression. Feeling secure (in whatever way Herman imagines it) helps him to stay focused and to concentrate his efforts constructively. Security is good for the musical expression and the musicking experience; insecurity is destructive. The Norwegian word that the singers systematically use is *trygg*, the most literal translation of which is 'secure'—however, there is a further sense of confidence and trust in the word that is not as present in the English word.

13.1.1. Knowing the material

Birgit is talking about leadership, in the rehearsing process as well as in concert. As she is reflecting on leadership, she is also inward looking, describing how she wants to be led:

Birgit: [It is] very important that you are secure when entering a stage. You know that you know it. You know that the ensemble knows it, and that the ensemble is willing to step up and give something extra. If something negative were to happen, you will hang in, carry on, not withdraw.

Conversely, then, a lack of security will disrupt the musical flow, as singers lose their own will to persevere. Knowing that you know indicates self-confidence, and knowing that the ensemble knows indicates trust in one's fellow singers. Birgit does not frame any of this specifically in terms of leadership behaviour or even her expectations of a leader, though she recognises the conductor's role in making this security a reality. However, her line of reasoning started with praising her current ensemble conductor and how well he prepares the choir. Interestingly enough, she also makes the counter-argument:

Birgit: I have [also] entered the stage with [the choir] and known that I don't know this so well, or that so well, so that is also a quality.

The ability to cope with ill-prepared material reflects another level of skill and preparedness, not a lack of mastery. In general, then, Birgit's notion of security emerges as a result of subject-matter mastery.

Nora relates a similar experience as she describes what it takes to create that magical meeting between singers and conductor that in turn allows for a safe space for musicking:

Nora: A lot of preparation. Security. And familiarity. But such familiarity doesn't necessarily have to be built up through years of security. [. . .] I have experienced this [. . .] in professional ensembles. Everyone is secure in their roles, and the conductor knows, 'Here I have a top notch ensemble in front of me, I know what kind of material I have to work with, so it's just [time] to get going'. This awareness can be there, and then it all sticks, well after the rehearsal hour. But in an amateur choir, we may have to work for half a year before such familiarity is there. But [it is great] when you are so secure with the material that you get back in even if you fall out [. . .] or that you are able to concentrate on communicating the music, instead of just concentrating on getting back in.

Nora links preparation, security and confidence in the contexts of more- and less-experienced ensembles. Part of it, as well, is knowing your role, both among the other singers and in relation to the conductor. If there is enough security, the musicking will go well.

Arne also linking several facets of security, in terms of where it comes from and what it means:

Arne: As a singer, I have worked with a great many conductors, and some are more prepared than others. And I soon see that when a conductor is

clearly prepared, it works much better than if the conductor is as unsure as I am [...] with regard to the music to be rehearsed.

Dag: Why do you think it means so much?

Arne: I think it perhaps has to do with creating security in the group. It depends a lot on the level of the choir. I believe it will vary. But I think it contributes to creating security for the singers.

Dag: Security is important?

Arne: Yes, it absolutely is, in my mind.

Dag: What do you mean by security?

Arne: As a choral singer, I envisage that you should feel good in the choir as a group, but also feel good in relation to the conductor—that you feel that you are taken seriously, or taken care of as a singer. That you are not overlooked or looked down upon. [That you] feel welcome in the group.

Arne knows from experience that security comes with preparation; while the singer might be unsure of the full score or whatever, the conductor should not be. Here Arne relies upon the division of labour between conductor and singers (described in section 10.3 as one of the sources of conductor legitimacy), which assumes that the conductor knows more than the singers and has decided already where the music should be going. When asked to elaborate on the meaning of security, however, Arne introduces a completely different set of perceptions related to how it feels to be a group member. Security is equated with feeling good, and, by extension, being seen and appreciated. In contrast to Birgit's focus on subject-matter mastery, Arne's interest in the relational aspect of security supplies the segue to the next section.

13.1.2. Trusting the leader

During the conversation with Trym, we are talking about unproductive conductor behaviours and practices. He describes the most destructive feature of the role:

Trym: I don't know whether it is my word or where I've got it from, but I call it 'failure to assure the choir'. When the conductor makes the choir [feel] unsure, it will never sing well. And this happens a lot with the more ambitious conductors.

Dag: What kind of things make the choir not feel assured?

Trym: [One thing is when] the conductor picks on individuals in the choir. At times, you could make people sing alone, but it is rarely necessary, because even if you are a half-good conductor, you can let two and two sing together and still hear how the one you want to hear sings. [. . .] Another [thing] is to drill over and over again, and especially with only a few of the singers in the choir.

Trym's reflections are specifically related to rehearsals, and he coins a verb from the adjective *trygg*, which encompasses a blend of the English words secure, confident and sure. I have chosen to translate this verb as *assure*. It is Trym's strong view that targeting single individuals is destructive as well as unnecessary, and the negative effect comes from the immediate impact on the targeted singer but quickly spreads to the rest of the ensemble, since anyone could be next. The same goes for the unnecessary repeats and drills. Trym implies that this kind of destructive conductor behaviour might arise from a lack of competence. 'Help' in the form of individual targeting and picking on is no help at all, because the side effect is singers who feel more insecure.

Stella reflects on trust in the performing situation as an asset to a conductor who lacks formal training but is respected nevertheless. Having talked about some of the features of this conductor, she adds:

Stella: We trust her. So unbelievably.

Dag: This is interesting. Because here you trust a person whom you know is not going to give the detailed instruction that [another conductor] is going to give you, but still you trust her.

Stella: I trust that it will be magical.

Dag: Right. You don't trust that you will get all the entries . . .

Stella: It is not certain that I will get all [of them] . . . or any entry at all. Yes, I do, but this is not what is important, because we know the music. Maybe I know the music better because I have to.

Stella trusts this conductor to create musical moments. She does not need her help with the technical aspects, but she needs her motivation and inspiration. Stella knows that she will experience a transformative musicking space. Elsewhere, Stella has indicated that she prefers conductors not to force her to look at them—here, at least, the intersubjective relationship does not derive primarily from visual contact. It is, however, reciprocal:

Stella: I do my best when I can trust and be trusted. It may be just as much the security coming from someone trusting you, [that the conductor] doesn't have to give you [something]. Sometimes you can feel it if they [conductors] don't let you go when you are cued in. [I think,] 'You need to look at me two bars in advance': is that because you don't trust me to come in?

One aspect of security, again, is knowing that the conductor knows, and that the conductor acknowledges this mutual understanding. Stella finds this to be a tricky balancing act. She wants to be seen, but not seen too much. She wants to be led, but not because the conductor is obliged to. Help must not appear to derive from distrust or be patronising. This aspect of security is linked to the theme of control–empowerment, which was covered in section 11.1. Stella appears to be a rather fine-tuned singer, who is sensitive to a number of nuances in conducting behaviour. Her reflections are therefore a good introduction to the next facet of security—that is, how personal the singing voice is and how delicate some of the balancing acts around it can be.

13.1.3. At the heart of singing

In relation to a young, talented and highly acclaimed conductor with whom she sings on a regular basis, Stella considers whether a discrepancy in competence level between conductor and singer is a blessing in disguise or a potential threat. This particular conductor is very attentive to the soundscape, and during performances he becomes demonstrative when he hears a singer who is off pitch, off beat, or deviating in some other way:

Stella: He just wants to show that he is with the team, that things are okay. But if things are okay, why does he need to tell me that he has heard [something wrong]? And in the course of a full concert, there are rather a number of us who have done such a single [flawed] note, I guess. And what are we left with afterwards? Isn't it the look from the conductor that will linger until doomsday, even if I count the number of tones I actually sang correctly?

Dag: Could it be possible that he gave you an understanding look?

Stella: Is this a situation where you do that? Was it so bad?

Dag: . . . that you need [laughs] . . .

Stella: . . . that I need immediate care underway? [smiles, then frowns] I don't buy that, but I believe this is how he thinks. This is what he expresses that he is thinking: 'You should know that I know, but you're still one of mine'. I imagine that he puts [this] into that look. And I think, why even make an issue out of it?

When singers value contact with the conductor, they generally want it to persist throughout the musical flow, regardless of what happens. But if you are seen and recognised for the contribution you are making as a singer, you will also have your faults exposed. My rumination about a caring look (as opposed to a damning one) brings an equally vehement response: for Stella, a caring look is just as bad, because it exacerbates the mistake by perpetuating it. She feels patronised and unnecessarily badgered. One of the key sources of conductor authority (framed by the singers as an unequivocally desirable feature in sections 12.3.1 and 12.5.2) is the ability to know, hear and see everything. Stella appears to indicate a tipping point, beyond which this omniscience longer contributes to good leadership.

As Trym indicated earlier, criticism or undue attention affects not only the singer who is being picked on but the rest of the ensemble (as potential future targets) as well. Morten also discusses individual versus collective responsibility:

Morten: I have not been singing for that long, so a lot of what comes as criticism of my voice group, I take a bit too personally at times. I've had to bite that [bullet] a few times.

Morten takes responsibility for more than what is meant for him. His statement above comes after a lengthy reasoning around inappropriate feedback, unproductive error correction, and unfair criticism. Regardless, though, it seems that conductor feedback has a collective and even cumulative effect when it takes place in a plenary rehearsal. Like gestures, plenary speech also tends to spill over, even when directed initially to an individual, thanks to the public setting of the musicking space.

Jenny also draws attention to the personal and sensitive nature of the singing contribution. She responds to a question about what the worst thing a conductor can do:

Jenny: As a singer, you use your voice, which is very close to you. It is incredibly personal. And if you don't receive recognition that what you do is good, or you are consistently picked on or hacked at or controlled, it

does something to the personal side of the singer. Without the conductor necessarily intending it, it may be a trap that [the conductor] falls into where [he/she] becomes so eager to help or so keen to get it right that [he/she] picks and picks at things that there and then are really difficult to get right, and that you'd rather let go of and resume at a later point. [. . .] Singers simply may get too afraid. [. . .] You become so obsessed by what pitch is a little up or down in a chord and what vowel colour you are going to produce that you barely dare to sing, because you are afraid [. . .] and then your entire instrument becomes rubbish.

Given the personal nature of the voice, a conductor's response to the singer's contribution is of particular and existential importance. What a conductor thinks is a perfectly neutral error correction, a singer may perceive as criticism of their person or their contribution overall. What's more, a conductor's continued effort to fix a certain problem may in fact worsen it, if the sustained pressure hinders the singer's ability to execute the correction. Fear of failing soon becomes fear of expressing. From my own conducting experience, I know it is hard to leave a problem unresolved, but as a singer, I sympathise with Stella's observation that a problem is sometimes best handled by coming back to it later. Both Stella and Jenny know that what is well intended can be disastrously received. It is possible, of course, that conductors do not always realise the sensitive nature of their signalling and its impact. Judging from the interviews, it is the rare conductor indeed who will abandon his/her problem-solving mode at exactly the right time and leave the ultimate resolution of the problem to homework or some later plenary session. Conductors are trained to understand the musical impact of their gestures but not the emotional impact of their rehearsal technique.

13.1.4. Fear of falling

Stella is well educated and is proud of both her orchestral and her choral experience. She trusts her knowledge. Nevertheless, she finds that a conductor can affect her self-confidence significantly. She sings in two choirs. The less professional of the two (choir 1) features more unpredictable rehearsals with more performance variation and less technical guidance during performance. In a sense, there is more danger in this musicking situation, but Stella finds there is further to fall in the more professional choir (choir 2), in fact:

Stella: It takes much less [to bother me] before I only remember what went wrong [in choir 2] than it does [in choir 1], where I very often think of the things that went well, because those things are embedded in the soul in a different way.

We talk about why this is so, and she refers to the generally higher standards of the more professional choir. Though things are more predictable and better prepared, they are also fraught with high expectations:

Stella: It is the feeling you are left with afterwards. How little it takes [in choir 2] before I think that the whole piece was bad. It could be one note I did wrong, because maybe I was told, or I heard it. He [the choir 2 conductor] has a look that is there immediately.

Dag: Do you experience this as poor leadership?

Stella: Yes, and I've told him so. The certainty that he displays makes me insecure. I have no leeway. And [then my] self-confidence becomes so small.

While Stella knows that the conductor of the professional choir is very good—she deliberately sought him out and auditioned for him—she does not consider it great leadership to draw attention to mistakes during performance, for example. This recalls some of the quotations discussed earlier. In these situations, conductor competence is not used to help, but to mark position. Thinking that the conductor knows better makes Stella insecure, and that unfortunate consequence is his fault, because he *shows* it so emphatically.

Stella found that low self-confidence affected her pleasure in musicking, and its rewards, though she did not go so far as to say that it inhibited her singing. Herman, who is both a singer and a conductor, wonders why this has to happen at all:

Herman: [What happens if] the conductor chooses a way of giving feedback that makes the singer uptight? [. . .] What happens if you say: 'It's off pitch, shape up'? What happens to the singer then? Well, he gets nervous the next time you get to this point. Instead, you've got to figure out why it is off pitch [yourself, as the conductor].

Herman describes a casualty of awkward or harsh feedback. Singer security depends upon the right solution to the tug-of-war between demanding and assisting, a judgement call on the part of the conductor that was denoted

mentorship in section 11.3. This solution encompasses the type of intervention *and* how it is delivered.

Throughout his interview, Trym returns to the importance of *assuring* the choir, above and beyond anything else the conductor does:

Trym: Back to my favourite words: assure the choir. There are several ways to do this, I believe. First, you need to make sure that there is good communication—that every singer feels good. And I believe rehearsal technique is important, and with this technique you have to learn most of the basics and not least let the singers sing longer sections at a time. Because if you get to do [a longer section] a few times, you learn more than if you repeat [only] half a line over and over again.

Trym thinks that assurance is more likely to arise from longer stretches of music than from a narrow fixation on problem points. Here we again meet a crucial musicking dichotomy between the details and the whole. As with demand–help, there is no right answer here, but the conductor’s choices in this regard impact singer security: an embrace of the whole might obscure the smaller mistakes, to everyone’s eventual detriment, but a focus on the parts can be intimidating and discouraging. Singers appreciate the opportunity to create security through establishing their own mastery of the material. The conductor’s mastery, in the form of error detection and articulation, is of course useful but more so if it is translated into a good feeling in the singers.

Morten talks about the alternative: an unpleasant rehearsing style.

Morten: I’ve had problems with self-confidence before. Rather harsh criticism really hurts, for my part.

Morten acknowledges that he is particularly sensitive to criticism, but he finds that some situations do more damage than others:

Morten: Sometimes it just makes be fed up, and sometimes it makes me angry.

Dag: Why do you get angry?

Morten: I feel that it is unfair at times. I feel that he perhaps demands too much too early in the process. [. . .] A certain degree of growth is wanted, [but] he wants it great right away. Of course, you can’t get cross with him because he puts the bar so high. But then I feel that he perhaps is a bit too anxious to be productive so early in the process. When we are further along in the process, I [also] believe that he is not good enough at acknowledging our progress. Even if it gets better, there is still only

picking [at things], no 'approved' attempts. There are no approved performances, there is only 'this you can do better, no, this is not good enough, that is not good enough, [and] that is not good enough'. But [. . .] it ends up like music. I [just] believe that he perhaps could have done better.

Unfair criticism creates singer resignation and resentment, even when it is meant well (or at least framed as in the best interest of the ensemble). Morten does not object to ambition as such, but he wants expectations (and rehearsal management) to be in line with development. He also looks for confirmation and recognition of intermediate achievement rather than a continuous obsession with what is yet to be done/fixed. Interestingly, Morten does not state directly that his singing is affected by these circumstances, beyond a general reference to impaired choral sound.

13.1.5. Zest for flying

In the preceding example, Morten criticises his conductor at length for what he perceives to be poor rehearsal leadership. I became very curious about the musical result:

Dag: Does it lead to great musicking [regardless]?

Morten: Yes, in the end I guess it does. There is no doubt that these projects have been successful in a way. It has been highly praised and all, but I am not sitting back with the good feeling and the desire to do it again afterwards.

All in all, Morten considers these projects as successes, at least seen from the outside. Even Morten has to admit that great music was made. Still, he appears somewhat saddened, and the experience did not fill Morten with joy. He is hesitant to embark on another project, despite the fact that he had a prominent role in the project and was part of the success. Morten also has more positive experiences, he knows how it affects his singing when he feels secure:

Morten: It makes everything so incredibly much easier. It is easier to remember everything that has to do with technique, head up and forward, chest up and correct breathing. And I feel that instead of [just] standing there, having to sort of reach the A and make it really beautiful, I have such a zest for just jumping up to the A, and it's not high at all! [. . .] In the heavy situation, it would be such a struggle, and the joy would

[only] come afterwards . . . yes, I did in fact a solid piece of work, it was okay in the end, after all. But in the good situation, I know it's okay right now, I'm in the middle of mastering it, and now we're just about to do a great job. And then I feel that it just flows along by itself. The job is nearly done before it even starts, and I have only to do it.

When Morten is secure, he feels free, light and unrestrained. His brain is working, his body is responding, and his well-practiced technique comes easily into play. He is filled with the desire to tackle any technical challenge. In the 'heavy situation', though he may feel good about the end result, at least in retrospect, there is little joy along the way. The process is a burden, whereas a good process is meaningful in its own right. He is carried along, he does his job with ease. Morten has described how the security and confidence of a singer is the difference between the fear of falling and the zest for flying.

13.1.6. Yearning for leadership

All of the interviewed singers recognise the legitimacy of the conductor role, which was awarded when the conductor brought unique contributions to the musicking situation, as was described in chapter 10. But legitimacy is affected in turn by how the role is exercised. Poor execution undermined legitimacy, while great execution brought out the best from the singers, providing direction and unifying the ensemble. These are relatively objective criteria. Legitimacy also pulls on the heartstrings, however: some singer descriptions indicate not only an interest in and appreciation of leadership but a yearning for it, for the intersubjective sensation that in turn enables the great musical moment. Beatrice gives a rich and dense description of musical leadership at its best:

Beatrice: I can describe it from many angles, I believe. The first that comes to mind is eye contact, and [. . .] I have experienced [. . .] that conductors, for I'm now talking about choral musicking, [. . .] that I get such a desire to sing to them. When it works really well, I get such a zest, such intoxication of joy, such a desire to give to the conductor who is so receptive. And then eyes quickly come to mind. There is something about eyes. There is something about a face that I want to give something to. Then a lot of energy arises. And then I experience [. . .] that there is a kind of lift-off being the communality of the choir, that in a way I am immersed

in it and at the same time carried by it, but still I am very much an agent myself. It is a kind of flow feeling, perhaps, that really carries me.

Great leadership mobilises a strong desire to respond to it—receiving, interpreting, and acting on the guidance therein. It is no exaggeration to call Beatrice's experience a *zest* (her word) or *yearning* for leadership, particularly as it is embodied by the eyes and face, in her case. She experiences a 'lift-off', a metaphor for feeling light and being able to move with ease. There is no resistance, flow is unobstructed. She also combines the dichotomy *immersed-carried* and indicates her utter immersion in the collective experience by using the Norwegian word for drowned. She is surrounded by something that carries her forward. Furthermore, she remarks that she is not carried passively, she takes part in the movement herself. Beatrice admits that she has thought through this before, hence, she is unusually articulate about her experience. She continues:

Beatrice: I've put words to it before, to myself, that you are carried by the sound, yes, the mass [of energy] there is in a choir—it could also be an orchestra, for that matter—and I experience it as an upward energy, which lifts, which I could call joy. Even when it is sad, I would call it joy, because it is a strong, positive energy.

The joy produced by the soundscape of the choir has little to do with fun and jollity as such but with a much more fundamental sense of gratification.

In a discussion about the legitimacy of the conductor role, Birgit describes what happens when she genuinely embraces the leadership:

Birgit: You put yourself and the musicking in the hands of the conductor.

Dag: But what makes you do that? I mean, you don't just put yourself in anyone's hands?

Birgit: First of all, it is a concert you really want to sing. There is a repertoire and a programme you desire. And then there is an ensemble you enjoy singing with and that you think sounds great.

Several singers use the metaphor *being in the hands of the conductor*, both as a concrete statement, because choral singers subject themselves to the conductor's gestural flow, and as an expression of yearning for intersubjective sensations. Birgit notes that, beyond the conductor, the concert event, repertoire and ensemble contribute to the intersubjective nature of musicking.

Great leadership is very desirable, but Birgit recognises the mobilising power of the music itself as well.

Herman talks about what gives him energy and makes him want to perform at his best:

Herman: It is that you enjoy what you are doing. You like the music and you have been part of a process towards something you expect to be good, where you build up to it, and the release comes in the concert situation, the service, or whatever.

Herman appreciates the process as well as the results, not only because the activity is enjoyable but also because it creates anticipation and even mounting tension.

Elsewhere Daniel talks repeatedly about preparation and basic technical mastery as prerequisites for every great musical moment. He further resents conductors who demand expressivity too early in the process, if the score is not properly learned or the voices not warmed up:

Daniel: What it takes for that [the musical moment] to happen, I believe, predictably enough, is that the technical [knowledge] is in place. You know it sufficiently well, you think the same, you really want to do [it]. [. . .] I don't believe that you can ask for magic. [. . .] All I am saying is that the singers want to do well, don't they? If we have everything in place, and we still respect each other when we get to the concert day, and we still have each other's goodwill, I have the desire to give everything when you [the conductor] turn you soul inside out and do the movements that bring us together around the really great things. Then, magic arises.

Daniel insists that singers *do want* to excel, and when the conditions are right, they will. He is prepared to give of himself and even become vulnerable when a great conductor meets a skilled and well-trained choir. But this yearning for leadership depends entirely on his confidence in the choir's mastery of the material. Daniel finds a particular joy when he discovers that the conductor has an extra gear. He subsequently elaborated this point by saying that an extra gear means discovering something he hasn't yet seen. In addition, he adds later, it is best when the conductor steps aside and allows room for the singers to excel in their domain.

13.2. Presence

Some of the themes covered so far deal with experience over time—rehearsal processes involve multiple work sessions and conductors build up ensembles over several years. Themes like mentorship, authority, and devotion suggest a certain permanency but are also often sensed in passing, then go away again. In fact, much of the dialogue with each singer has concerned observations of single moments, and often, perceptions of musical leadership can be dense and rich experiences even within very short time frames. The significance of the ‘present now’ seems to be key to understanding the intersubjectivity of the conductor role, and the conductor’s ability to be in the present moment emerges as a leadership theme in its own right. The purpose of this section is to understand how this presence affects the musicking, and what it means when the conductor is not fully there with the singers. Conductor presence has been described in terms of concentration and focus but also withdrawal and hesitation, as we will see.

13.2.1. Concentration

Sean remembers when a conductor lost control of the ensemble, then tried to regain it:

Sean: I have experienced when the conductor had been distracted and simply fell out and was not able to bring himself back in. And the measures get all mixed up, and you’ve tried to save yourself [but] you lose people—they fall off the wagon, so to speak. You see panic around—‘now I don’t know where I am!’—and you don’t manage to catch up, then you don’t have the energy to see the people or show dynamics, so it simply becomes a desperate search for ‘where am I?’ and a half-hearted waving of hands. You lose the singers immediately. Very sad when it happens. It doesn’t happen often, fortunately, but it has happened.

Sean’s description is a reminder that the conductor as leader owns the present moment, but this is the only moment he or she owns. If the conductor loses the present moment, no leadership can be exercised, or, more precisely, only destructive leadership can be exercised. The present moment accommodates the intersubjective space where musicking can take place, but it is also the split second when leadership legitimacy can vanish.

Lucy is a very experienced singer who has had exposure to a number of prominent conductors in semiprofessional and advanced amateur environments. She is also a conservatory-educated music teacher, though her current working position is outside the culture sector. While she touches upon a number of themes, she returns to the notion of presence at several points in the dialogue. She sees the musical moment as a state of mind, or an awareness of what goes on. I ask her what the conductor does to create or enable this state:

Lucy: It is about focus. [. . .] You have confidence that the one in front knows what he is doing. [He] has the ability to go into the music, and that this [ability] is the point of departure, not trivialities outside.

In describing focus, Lucy makes use of the spatial metaphors *inside* and *outside*. She and Sean both associate conductor presence with the temporal aspect of being within the music flow and a directedness of attention towards the music, and the music only.

Concentration and focus may also be understood in very concrete terms. Maria has experienced conductors who take too much space in the sense that they do too many things, which has made her aware of her own conducting practice:

Maria: I have been thinking, when I have been conducting, that to do everything in front of a choir, play the piano, conduct, sing solo, be stage host—to do all of this is not the best thing. Because you are not able to do all of those things well. Then the conductor in a way also becomes a total entertainer that happens to have a choir as a backing group. And then, in my mind, it is not so interesting to be a singer.

A conductor who takes too many roles is not fully present in any of them, and certainly not in the one that matters most to her.

Lucy's story about a meeting with a young conductor was used to elaborate upon the contact theme in section 12.1. It is relevant here as well, because it links contact with presence. The choir was about to start rehearsing a very difficult piece of contemporary music, and everyone was worried about the project:

Lucy: The challenge was the commissioned work that we had been given, because it was rhythmically intricate as well as tonally challenging. But he [the conductor] sensed it immediately, and he said so, that he was really excited to meet us in this very work [of music]. [. . .] But what it was

... if I had had my nerve cells on the outside ... but everyone were sitting smiling and embraced him completely.

Lucy describes a conductor who was immediately, deeply, and fully present with and for the choir. She felt that she was extremely vulnerable, in fact skinless, seemingly as the rest of the choir, and the conductor sensed exactly where they were and responded to it. The conductor's mastery of the present moment was crucial to his leadership. Here we have (1) linked contact and presence, and (2) used contact/presence in all of the main categories: mastery, coherence and intersubjective space. Is contact/presence such a pervasive theme, then, or is the model less helpful with regard to it? Before answering this question, I will consider two facets of non-presence.

13.2.2. Hesitation

In Lucy's story in the previous section, presence was associated with the conductor's ability to sense *immediately*. There was something about the conductor's real time understanding and way of being. Sofie provides some further perspective on this desirable timeliness:

Sofie: [Good leadership in the concert situation] is that the leader is able to enter the music immediately, and convey it also to the singers in the present moment.

Dag: Immediately—what does that mean?

Sofie: Well, in many concert situations, you feel that it's getting there after a while, for there are many things in play—there are, of course, nerves, with conductor and choristers, and if we have a big concert with lots of pieces, it could be that we at times keep sensing each other [too much].

Sofie expects the conductor to be within the music from the very first moment. In concert situations where there is catching up to do—where the music flow is ahead of the conductor or the choir—the performance will muddle along at first but eventually come together. Sofie's experience exemplifies very well the concept of musicking as the interplay between three constituents: the conductor, the singers and the music, the latter of which acts as an agent too. The key point here is that hesitation to immediately immerse in the music flow may be read as a lack of presence, especially if the continuous sensing and signalling in the musicking is disrupted somehow. Sofie continues:

Sofie: [They become] insecure with respect to the music—they simply are distracted. It is heard in the choir right away.

Dag: So that the conductor from the first millisecond . . .

Sofie: . . . doesn't hesitate about anything in terms of expression and musicking—'there you are'—and he is very confident in the musicking. I believe that this is very important—not to go on sensing, wondering 'will they enter here, do the altos come, or what?' but just showing 'there you are'. Really a leader, essentially.

Coordinating the concerted beginning of a piece of music is likely the oldest and most basic function of a musical leader. Sofie extends this responsibility beyond marking the beginning and setting the tempo to ensuring an atmosphere of trust in the singers to do their part. Regardless of the existing level of preparedness and security, the conductor must demonstrate the determination to reduce risk for the singers. Sofie's statement describes the dual nature of sensemaking: (1) sensing as perceiving and *taking in* the present now, and (2) sensing as *directing out* and affecting the present now. This perspective will be developed at length in part IV.

13.2.3. Withdrawal

Hesitation, Lucy found, was about getting behind and fumbling the temporal flow. Kristine describes another way to lose contact with both the music and the ensemble: by coming up with less than expected in the performing situation, even if the rehearsal process went very well:

Kristine: I have experienced conductors who have surprised me by playing it safe in concert. I think that is a little sad. [With] things that have been difficult and that we have worked on, instead of throwing yourself into it and taking the risk that it will all work out well, you play it safe and it becomes boring instead.

Dag: What is it that a conductor does when playing it safe? How does it show?

Kristine: He withdraws a bit. He withdraws when approaching [a certain point in the music] . . . just like we do at times—you just hope that it will go over and that it will be okay.

Dag: Are you thinking about expression?

Kristine: Expression, yes. In a way, the entire bodily posture.

Dag: More withdrawn . . .

Kristine: More withdrawn, yes.

Kristine describes the conductor as someone who leads the ensemble into battle, meaning that they together have to face challenging situations. Whether rhythmic complexities or expressive extremes, it is disappointing to the ensemble when the conductor lacks the courage to go all the way. Kristine struggles to find the right words but eventually locates signs of this withdrawal in the conductor's face, posture and hand movements. Courage may not guarantee success, but a lack of courage pretty much guarantees failure:

Kristine: Sometimes you feel that [. . .] this is a stunt, the next section in this piece is a stunt, we have never really got this right. But when you see the conductor really trying to squeeze the most out of us, of course you do everything to make it [happen]. But if you see someone who withdraws, it obviously doesn't make you think that now you're really [going to make it].

In the sense that presence is the opposite of absence, withdrawal from the ensemble and the challenge is a way to lose the present moment. Singers must have courage as well, but it is the conductor who inspires them. Kristine is implying that there is emotional risk associated with a difficult music performance, in which case we may speak of courage to remain in the present now, living with the fears and joys that come by. Kristine also describes another aspect of the distance between conductor and ensemble, as she talks about poor leadership in a performing situation:

Kristine: When I have a feeling that things are bad, it is probably [due to] a conductor who in a way works alone, who doesn't have antennae either for the audience or for the singers—that [the performance] is a private thing for the conductor, that you are there just to help the conductor achieve his or her private goal.

Kristine's picture of poor leadership emerges from the feeling of a disconnected conductor, which engenders suspicions about motive as well as competence. Few singers are surprised by conductor ambition, but no singer likes being reduced to a means to fulfil that ambition outside of the musicking moment. For Kristine, the lack of antennae is the visible sign of disconnection, disabling the sharing of the present moment. Kristine's statement thus makes a noteworthy

link between the conductor's presence and his or her sincerity. Other singers have also observed that a lack of sincerity, expressed at times as vanity, does not cohere with presence. Lucy talks about the consequence:

Lucy: You don't get the nerve [tension]. It may be technically good and grand and nice, but it touches no one. It doesn't touch those of us who sing either.

The self-interested conductor may have full control and deliver on all fronts except in terms of touching people, which is related instead to openness and vulnerability. Vulnerability can only be exposed in the present moment, which ties back to Kristine's notion of risk and challenge.

13.2.4. Summary remarks on presence

When writing and rewriting the interview interpretations, the presence theme emerged in each of the main thematic categories: mastery, coherence and intersubjective space. Since the purpose of the categories is to allow for workable distinctions among phenomena, this ubiquity might indicate a less useful thematisation or a weak overall model. Yet some value remains. Mastering the present now, for example, is how singers are given access to every other aspect of mastery. The conductor's presence is the window into his/her storehouse of skills and capabilities, and presence goes hand-in-hand with the ability to establish immediate contact with the ensemble. But presence and contact do not overlap fully. There are aspects of presence that deal with being *in* the music and have nothing to do with people, and there are aspects of contact that stretch beyond the present moment. In short, within the interpretive frame of the interviews, contact is primarily experienced as a relational theme, whereas presence is temporal, relational and corporeal. The counterintuitive fact that neither contact nor presence is talked about in spatial terms is only because the singers probably want to underline the metaphorical content of the themes.

The concept of intersubjective space is simply a metaphor for the place where musicking happens. Presence is thematically part of this intersubjective space because we must be in that place to take part. Because this place is not physical but metaphoric, the only access to it is through a shared awareness of it—that is, presence. If the presence theme pervades the entire model

structure, then, it is because it is central to our understanding of musical leadership and its impact.

13.3. Intersubjective sensation

13.3.1. Connectedness

The intimacy and immediacy of the musicking moment and the intersubjective nature of singing together constituted a point of departure (see section 1.1.4) for articulating the research question. Given the way in which the interview topic was framed, we would expect the singers to talk about contact with the conductor, and it is indeed a prerequisite for several other themes. Yet the singers also talk about contact as a distinct theme or an experience in its own right. Contact encompasses both the instantaneous, immediate opening perception and the impression continued connectedness.

Arne discusses contact with the conductor:

Arne: Contact is important because, again, it has to do with security, I believe. Without contact, we disappear a little from each other.

Dag: Disappear from each other. What happens then?

Arne: If you don't have contact, the conductor is in his own world and the singers are in ours, we are not able to connect, and the result is not going to be like the conductor wants or we would have wished.

Arne uses spatial words figuratively to describe what happens when there is no contact. When singers disappear from each other, they are out of reach of the conductor as well. They are still standing within arm's reach, but they are not accessible to each other for the needs of musicking. There are two disconnected worlds, neither of which will be as its inhabitant(s) desire it, the conductor's world and the singer's world. No simultaneous intentionality will take place, the result will be other than intended in both separate worlds. He is also implying that neither will get it their way, and that only through connection will the worlds become redeemed. When Arne uses the word contact, he is describing what Holgersen called intersubjectivity. Maria considers the conditions of connectedness:

Maria: It has to do with shared focus. Clearly, the conductor has a role [to play] in achieving this focus, in what goes on [in the rehearsal]. Not necessarily that we all stare at the conductor all the time, but that we are on the same line, or networked.

Maria says that contact is possible without continuous visual contact. She uses technical telecommunications terms to describe aspects that transcend simple visuality. Arne and Maria describe intersubjectivity as a connectedness that may be visual, but that goes well beyond the visual. Morten even wonders if eye contact indicates overdependence or weakness:

Morten: If I have a bad day, [. . .] I need to look at the conductor and be fed all the time. But if it is really good, both the conductor and I have the time to look elsewhere.

At its best, then, connectedness even eliminates the need for visual contact. Using different words, Arne, Maria and Morten all describe a sensation that is broader, richer and more impactful than seeing with the eyes. Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons, in a similar way, has little to do with vision but a lot to do with somehow overlapping or coinciding minds. Whereas the fusion of minds in a hermeneutic sense does not require simultaneity or face-to-face presence, the kind of shared sensations that both Maria and Morten describe are in fact a real-time transcendence of the self. These two singers find themselves *intra*-self as well as *inter*-self. Simply put, by understanding together, they can go on together, and they can make the music go one place as well.

13.3.2. State-space-time

In the course of her interview, Lucy repeatedly links great leadership and musicking with a state of mind.

Lucy: I experience it as a state of mind, I do. I don't know of any other word I can use. [. . .] It is this state of mind I seek every time.

Dag: What characterises this state of mind?

Lucy: Full concentration. And then being present in what happens. Completely present in what happens. You read the musical leader, of course, but even again, it is a symbiosis.

Here leadership sounds like a way of being rather than a set of actions. Obviously, the conductor does things, but Lucy still frames her experience according to what it does to her mind, rather than what happens. She elevates the sensation of the present now above all else, as the place where intersubjectivity becomes palpable. She even indicates that this state must be mutual and symbiotic, via a shared involvement in the musicking at hand. She does not mean this notion to undermine the distinct role of the leader, whom she recognises as the source of what must be 'read'. But the experience itself only matters—only means something—when it is both collective and fully concentrated, or *realised* in a literal sense.

Nora considers the relevance of the conductor to such moments and intersubjective states:

Nora: It could be a pianissimo that works, that is truly a pianissimo, and then a crescendo where you feel, 'Oh, this is a crescendo', like a Platonic ideal or something [laughs]. Everyone follow suit, [and there is] the mutual experience where you as a chorister feel unique but at the same time there is shared musicking. This is what I find most fascinating about choirs. Choral singing must be [done] together with someone, mustn't it? You can't musick as a chorister alone, and this interplay is to me the most fascinating [thing]—when it works out with a conductor and with the music and with people, and an encounter takes place. It could be so many things. It could be an entry, it could be an ending, it could be a fantastic opening—and there it is, oh yes!

Nora perceives herself as independent and dependent at the same time, contributing uniquely while nevertheless immersed in a shared space and her fellow singers. Though she has performed as a solo singer in the past, she finds a particular joy in the 'encounter'—that is, the intersubjective space of the ensemble. Maria tries to describe this encounter as well:

Maria: I think it has to do with how we as singers understand the conductor, with what he tries to show us. It also has to do with whether we have seen it before, what he is trying to show—perhaps we recognise it. And that we experience a shared reaction to it. It has something to do with communality, with those situations where you recognise that now it is working, when everyone understands it at the same time. And that we see that the conductor has the same experience, that it goes both ways. [. . .] And then you are mutually inspired.

Dag: What is it that the conductor understands?

Maria: [He or she] listens to what we need, perhaps. [. . .] What we need in terms of a little extra cue, or a little finger here, or a hand movement that does the small adjustment, gives the little extra, sharpens us a bit, or relaxes a bit.

The key word in Maria's statement is *understanding*, as an attribute of intersubjective experience. She first observes that singers must understand what the conductor is showing. She then observes that a shared singer response requires that everyone understands in the same way, and, more importantly, at the same time. The etymology of communality in the French *commun* (*comme un* = as one) sheds further light on the intersubjective aspect of understanding. To fill out the matrix of understanding, Maria lastly observes that the conductor needs to *understand that the singers understand*. Because musicking centres upon the present now, Maria's image of sending and receiving is somewhat misleading in comparison to Lucy's 'state of mind' evocation of no elapsing time and a simultaneity of understanding. Maria also recognises the simultaneity of experiencing peak musical moments:

Maria: The choir has a shared understanding that this [musicking] is really nice. And then it's just like we feel it when we get there. And sometimes [. . .] it has something to do with communication with the audience, that we see that they feel the same as we do, or it is they who affect us. [. . .] It is [also about] things that you haven't really got right before that suddenly are in place [for] everyone at the same time. That is neat, whether it is in relation to difficult harmonies or rhythms or transitions or things like that.

The simultaneous sensation of a great moment may be a one-off or a recurring experience. Maria has experienced that mastering a certain musical challenge brings with it a special satisfaction, and most importantly, she talks about collective and simultaneous mastery. Maria also encompasses the audience in the shared musicking experience and recognises the give and take there as well. She indicates that that peak moments are sensed before they arrive. Although the peak moment occurs in time (and therefore can be anticipated), Maria still applies a spatial metaphor to it—it is a beautiful place to be, somewhere singers long to come back to and recognise when they do. While we could consider musical time as a directional flow, the way the singers see the experience of distinct musical moments as places they may return to, is

somehow circular. Meaning is created by applying a sense of attainment or closure to the ongoing experience.

13.3.3. Being seen

Several singers have talked about contact and connectedness both within and beyond the domain of eye contact. Clearly, singers such as Kristine use the verb *to see* both concretely and metaphorically:

Kristine: I think the best conductors I have experienced are those who see each individual chorister. [. . .] Sometimes this is very concrete, like [. . .] this thing about eye contact, when I feel that I get a message [through it] about what to do or what not to do. But it could also be that the whole group is uplifted in one way or another, by all together standing for something that we hear is good and that we perceive to be very important in the musical context.

The *conductor who sees every individual singer* is one of the common sayings among singers. There is no question about this being meant as a literal, physical experience. In a perfectly literal sense, of course, eye contact is one of the conductor's most powerful signalling tools, and it is striking how easy it is for singers to interpret it. But for Kristine, when the conductor sees the singer in a figurative sense, he or she appreciates a given contribution. Hopefully, such appreciation is also mutual appreciation in the choir as peer group. And finally, *being seen* not only recognises any contribution, but also that it is of essence, that it is important.

With regard to great musical leadership, Trym also talks about being seen as a form of recognition:

Trym: [There] is a [desirable type of] cooperation between conductor and choir as a collective, but especially [between the conductor and] each singer. It is an organic process where everyone is working in the same direction, and it feels rewarding for all parties, so you feel that the conductor has a sense and a direction and something that he wants to convey, and you feel that what you contribute as a singer is received. That it is appreciated.

Every interviewed singer somehow touches upon the importance of being recognised and valued for his or her contribution. Without that form of acknowledgement from the conductor, the musicking process will not feel

complete. They literally feel they are giving a part of themselves, something that is precious for them and that must also be appreciated by the conductor, in order to make the musicking process whole.

13.3.4. Intersubjectivity as wilful act

Intersubjectivity has been introduced as a way to understand the connectedness that can arise in moments of great musicking and great musical leadership. Although every singer must place him/herself within intersubjective reach, it is the conductor who must establish the common space they will share. It is one of the rationales for wanting and accepting the role of the single leader. The intersubjective sensation can then be sought rather than simply awaited. In an elaborate dialogue with Beatrice about what aspect of her choral life makes her tick as a singer, she says:

Beatrice: I believe that music in its own right can make me tick, and [so can] direct contact with other choristers who I am very fond of, for that matter. I am one of those who love to stand in a ring and like very much to work with immediate contact, [the way] that you almost can pick the sound from the mouth of another or from the eyes of another, in a way, and flow with it.

Beatrice enjoys all of the communicative aspects of being a choral singer, in terms of the human relationships as well as the musicking process. She welcomes every available signal from her fellow singers and seeks interaction in a very purposeful way, at least most of the time. She portrays herself as a communicative person, however, with some reservations:

Beatrice: I'm quite torn on this. [...] I believe that I am very communicative, but also not so much in some situations. It depends on the setting for me. I can simply struggle with it. I can struggle with it, but I can also be very direct.

Dag: Whenever you meet a conductor who responds really well to your communicative dreams, for lack of a better word, this is a very good experience for you, isn't it?

Beatrice: Yes [smiles].

Beatrice's basic wish is to be close. It is not clear from the interview why she sometimes struggles with communication, but the point is that she prizes the conductor who is able to match her in terms of intersubjectivity as a wilful act.

Birgit offers a similar view as to why intersubjectivity matters so much for a choral singer:

Birgit: In a choir you put yourself in the hands of a conductor, you do, even if you don't consider yourself as merely a key [on a keyboard], to put it one way. But still, it is very important that the roles are clear.

Putting yourself in the hands of a leader is strong wording, even considering that the wording is metaphoric. Brigit brings up the interesting duality between singing at the mercy of a conductor and becoming a puppet on a string. This is a pregnant metaphor, given that singers literally act and react according to the hand gestures (among other things) of the conductor. A choral singer is also in a literal sense in the hands of the conductor. In the musicking situation, the singer has entered a room where conducting gestures rule. Singers want to be inspired and swayed by how the conductor moves and move with the music. The choice to involve in any kind of musicking implies a self-disciplining, as captured both by. Choir singing involves surrender—recall Bergson's words about how music can 'suspend the normal flow of our sensations' as well as Gadamer's notion of being 'played by the play' (see section 4.1.2). Somehow, intersubjectivity reconciles the sense of being a key on a keyboard with the sense of agency that motivates the singer on a daily basis. Brigit's point about not considering herself as a passive key on the piano reminds us that the active, independent, and intentional mindset of the singer is retained. Being *in the hands of* and still being *an agent* seems like a contradiction. Maybe Brigit's brief statement captures extremely well an essence of intersubjective sensation.

Stella reflects on what she seeks from her choral experience:

Stella: That we can be a team, that I am not only on my own—that is one thing. If [I wanted to be on my own], I could have been a soloist, if that was the only thing. [. . .] Two parties who meet with an equal affective force, in a way, although she [the conductor] has more power than I.

Stella is describing a deliberate mutuality. It is not enough to be involved alone, there needs to be an encounter of matching powers. The parallel to Brigit's statement lies in the recognition of the conductor as the primary decision

maker, wanting and accepting that the singers always relinquish some of their free agency as voice follows gesture..

13.3.5. Playfulness

In section 13.3.3, Trym described how connectedness enables direction and momentum within the musical flow. The intersubjective sensation during musicking is not a meditative, passive receptiveness: there is something to be gained, and the musical flow creates its own purpose, the ensemble is driven by the music as well as drive the music. Beatrice describes what happens:

Beatrice: If it works really well, I feel that the conductor may do whatever he wants along the way, that we never have rehearsed before, you can notice it and then something usually happens, suddenly they invent something, linger a little longer there, which they have never done before, and it creates a magic mood through the [simple] fact that it is working. You notice it right away, that the choir is following—he hasn't done it before—and then we know that we are paying attention. Now we are in the position to shape something beyond what we have rehearsed up to then.

Beatrice notices that the conductor may decide to deviate from the agreed-upon course, and that she is prepared to follow. She uses the word magic to describe the realisation that she senses this intersubjectivity. In a dialogue about mutuality in the musicking situation, Trym also talks about magic:

Trym: Then the great conductors may get in the spirit and do something there and then. It could be dynamics, it could be tempo, it could be anything, really. And if the choir is awake, which it should be, in concert, it will follow. And when everyone follows, it becomes an organic whole and music [comes] out of it. The fact that something becomes different in the concert situation . . . yes, that is rather necessary. There should be something that makes the music magic—that lifts it above the technical. [. . .] What makes this situation so good is that you feel that you are pulling together—you want to pull where the conductor wants, and you notice that the people next to you want the same, there and then, almost in real time, and you hear that it happens. This is the main reason why I'm singing. I would say that [. . .] the source is in the conductor—[it is] the conductor who is most important for a performance.

Trym suggests that, given a strong existing sense of mutuality in the ensemble, any musical element could be played around with in real time. He describes intersubjectivity as being awake and seems to agree with Beatrice that it is characterised by the ability to go anywhere and yet remain a unified ensemble. Beatrice calls the resulting ambiance magic, whereas Trym calls the resulting music magic. Both singers take great pleasure in the intersubjective sensation of musicking as one, suggesting an existential dimension to the experience. If even a hardcore professional like Trym says that he sings only to achieve such magical moments, something powerful is going on. Both Beatrice and Trym associate the conductor with the foundation of and the motivation for the musicking experience as well.

Morten also reflects on those magical moments when it all comes together, thanks to an intimate knowledge and a mastery of the music material:

Morten: My thought goes to what you see at the New Year's concert from Vienna, where everything flows. Where performers and conductor all know what goes on but still trust each other enough that if someone were to improvise a small section, others are prepared for it. I notice that I see it as a situation of confidence, perhaps, where both trust that all are within what is agreed upon beforehand, but there is some open space. [One time, we had] tried out innumerable variations on the ending, the last big note, and had not really agreed to anything before the start of the concert, so we just did it, and nonetheless it all fit so very right.

Morten's 'situation of confidence' is characterised by the double aspects of set frames and openness. The ability to instantly sense both compliance and deviation appears to be a key characteristic of intersubjectivity. Where this awareness exists, the ensemble is also able to anticipate, and the real-time musical flow will always be right. Morten elaborates on his experience with mutual anticipation:

Morten: You catch the nuances in the way the conductor shapes the orchestral sound, for example, and you know that 'okay, so this phrase goes a little faster', and then you build up a tone. We manage it somehow, whether it has to do with shared experience or what, I don't know, then we agree that 'we keep this for so long', and then we progress and immediately find the tempo again, dynamics and such—you align dynamics without really having agreed to it.

Dag: Is this a two-way process, this perception we are talking about now?

Morten: I think it is. I like to think that I have this kind of impact. [pauses]
The main responsibility is probably with the conductor, though, when I reflect on it.

Morten describes various aspects of the musical flow that he perceives, reflects on, and acts on. He recognises that experience is part of it—when one has been there before, it enhances the intersubjective sensation and especially the ability to respond to the process. While he characterises the process as mutual, he does come back to the importance of the designated leader within it.

The well-prepared and well-integrated ensemble, then, is a highly empowered team that can accommodate the unexpected. Yet the opposite can occur as well; it is imaginable that such a high level of integration can lead to the opposite, only passive copy reruns. Herman describes a situation where a choir knew the music inside out:

Herman: We were singing on autopilot after a while.

Dag: That can happen in a choir when you sing one thing many times.

Herman: Yes, it can. And I do experience this with my choir, as a conductor, that their singing is habituated. We also have the well-known songs that they have in their spines—they [just] buzz along, because they know it [so well]. I have to stop them sometimes, because I notice that I might as well take my hands down, because they sing the same [way] anyhow. [. . .] Then the choir has taken over the power.

With music that is, in a sense, too familiar and so entrenched in the body that it runs on autopilot, leader intervention has little effect. The habit is stronger than every ability to respond to conductor signals. Ensemble integration is only apparent and superficial, made possible by automation, it does not reflect any sort of deep or vivid intersubjective state. Hence, the genuine intersubjectivity of musicking (as opposed to automated integration) seems to require a certain playfulness.

Birgit compares the musicking relationship between the conductor and the ensemble to that between a vocal soloist and a jazz combo:

Birgit: You stagger and the accompaniment is either behind you or alongside you—I am not saying physically, but musically. But sometimes an accompaniment can lift you and you feel that it floats along and the voice flows. When you have a conductor, it is a little bit the same. That he [. . .] is the one that makes the music swing, and then your life is almost

fused with the gang. It is a very special experience. [. . .] Shoulder by shoulder, it's called.

Birgit's statement very clearly captures how the conductor is an enabler of conviviality and togetherness. Throughout this chapter, singer statements about great musical moments and intersubjective sensations refer to the ensemble as an integrated whole, and descriptions of the team and fellow singers are as prevalent as those of the conductor. Still, the underlying relevance of the leader to creating, facilitating or enabling the intersubjective space is unquestioned. We realise, in the end, that conducting at its best is a transcendental role. As the conductor enables a deep, intersubjective ensemble state, the role actually vanishes, absorbed into the team of peers. The conductor begins to guide in a way that doesn't get in the way of the music or the musicians and intersubjectivity is realised as the relational, temporal and corporeal phenomenon.

13.3.6. Summary remarks on intersubjective space

Most of the preceding descriptions of intersubjective space make extensive use of metaphors. Though the category is very challenging to articulate, the singers provide themes that are rich and varied. We are left with only one further question: what role does the music play in how the singers inhabit the intersubjective space of musicking? Where does the sounding music fit into an understanding of musical leadership? A thorough discussion of musical meaning falls outside the scope of my research question, but one key observation must be made in order to position the music object within the present project's thematic structure.

In section 9.4, we saw that singers will always accept the obnoxious conductor as long as he/she provides an extraordinary musical experience. We may attempt to understand this by applying Gadamer's view on play (see section 4.1.2), which suggests that the musical experience itself assumes the role of a subject or agent. The music doesn't let itself be reduced to a fully controlled object, but is present in the musicking act with its own logic and flowing momentum. Furthermore, music is not just any kind of play, according to Bergson (section 4.1.2)—people find it particularly pleasurable to be taken hold of by the music and to move with its flow. A peak experience of a

musicking moment, then, weighs more than the indignities of an unpleasant experience with a conductor. Perhaps, in fact, the key subject in a musical leadership situation is not the conductor but the music. It is the music that is the constant driving force, providing singers' zest and acceptance of the otherwise unacceptable. We may therefore consider music as a constituent of the intersubjective space, alongside the singers and the conductor. I will leave this as an unfinished thought and as a bridge to part IV, where the findings of part III will be discussed more conceptually.

PART IV – Towards a model of conducting

Part IV takes the themes that constitute the various features of musical leadership one step further. Whereas the theme descriptions in part III are about understanding the singer experience, the models presented in part IV conceptualise how the themes may be understood as a whole. Two models are presented. The *legitimacy model* suggests that the conductor should be seen as a sensemaker. The legitimacy of the role is founded on how the conductor is making sense of, and from, the music material and the ensemble situation. The *enactment model* depicts how the conductor role is performed—how various conductor competencies and behaviours enable the creation of an intersubjective space for musicking.

14. Viewing the conductor role as sensemaking

The question of legitimacy is viewed through the ways in which the conductor helps to create meaning. The interview findings regarding what the conductor brings to the music event are r-interpreted and conceptualised into the '5S model'. This model proposes that the why is provided by the four sensemaking dimensions: significance, sound, singer zest and setting. By blending meaning along these dimensions, the conductor becomes the overall shaper of a music event.

14.1. Legitimacy through four axes of impact

The legitimacy theme, described in chapter 10, emerged from various singer dialogues about the difference a conductor can make in the musicking process. The expectation that the conductor should bring some *unique* contribution to it is highlighted by the fact that the conductor does not produce sound. Four aspects of legitimacy were found; unifying efforts, unleashing efforts, creating musical meaning and staging sound. Because the conductor is expected to bring something to each of these dimensions, they represent ways in which the conductor may impact the musicking. The four aspects of legitimacy are therefore also axes of conductor impact. I deliberately choose to not denote them as things conductors *do* (although conductors clearly have to act in order to make an impact), because their impact derives from a relational phenomenon rather than from actions that lead to consequences. For example,

unifying the ensemble cannot be seen as a conductor act in isolation—it is a *blend* of what the singers do and what the conductor does. It might have been truer to the relational view of impact to denote the four aspects in the past tense—as unified efforts, unleashed efforts, musical meaning created and staged sound—in order to underline the collective achievement each represents. But it remains true that singers ascribe an overall accountability to the conductor to make an impact, so I prefer to word the effects of conducting as impact-in-action—as a continuous stream of impact.

I now intend to take the understanding of conductor impact one step further by attempting to connect the four axes using a common theme: meaning and making sense. The importance of sensemaking in exercising leadership is suggested by several scholars, including Weick (1995), Garnett (2009) and Springborg (2010), as well as supported by the findings in my project. In what follows, I will decompose the notion of meaning in terms of what its *source* is, and how it is *manifested*.

Nielsen (2012:19) invites a broad understanding of music and meaning as he attempts to bridge the two longstanding opposites of absolutism and referentialism, proposing that music involves a multidimensional universe of meaning. By drawing extensively on the canon of phenomenological thinkers, he develops a model of musical meaning on multiple levels: acoustic, structural, kinetic-motoric, tensional, emotional and spiritual/existential. His model acknowledges that there is meaning that adheres to the musical object itself, but it manifests only when one is perceiving, acting within or comprehending a musical experience. While Nielsen’s model is comprehensive concerning sounding music, it does not seem to acknowledge the possibility of creating meaning from *non*-sounding music—from reading a score, for example, and imagining a musical idea. Here I will make use of Nielsen’s wide domain of musical meaning via a different and rougher cut of categories that also includes the non-material, ideal dimension.

14.2. Source of meaning

As was described in section 3.6.6, there is no cue or human perception that escapes our potential for sensemaking intervention. We can make sense of anything, and the number of things we can make sense of is unlimited. Any

aspect of the musicking situation, then, is a source of meaning. The simplest categorisation of these various sources is the distinction between text and context. Text denotes the music as material, whether it is a written score, another kind of notation, or an idea in someone's head. The music material is the third angle in the conductor–singer–music triangle.⁵³ Context, then, is literally everything that is *not* text (musical material), including most prominently the singers themselves in the choral singing situation. I briefly considered the longstanding debate in musicology about whether music as material or the act of musicking is the primary source of musical meaning. According to Nielsen's view of musical meaning, it is not necessary to choose between the two—in fact, we cannot even separate them. Sensemaking depends upon an infinite set of cues that we continuously extract from the situation. Based on Weick's characteristics, sensemaking draws on the music material and the musicking experience in every imaginable blend of the two, including highly biased blends like number mythology in a Bach fugue or group singing around a campfire. Number mythology needs context to be meaningful, and even the entirely situational joy of a campfire singalong needs some music material. Text and context as distinct sources of meaning represent theoretical extremes that are inevitably blended in practice.

In the case of conducting, seeking meaning in and creating meaning from the music material does deserve a distinct category, however. In spite of a music material being both contingent on and created for a musicking context, the conductor is the one who, according to the interviewed singers, occupies the position dedicated to exploring the meaning potential of the score, then contextualising it. Therefore, at least temporarily, the conductor operates with a notion of the text as a distinct source of meaning. Conversely, as the conductor leads warm-up exercises with the singers, or even interacts with them before any actual musical sounds are made, meaning is entirely sourced from the ensemble situation itself (the context). In section 12.1.1, there was a story about Lucy's high hopes for singing with a guest conductor who first entered the rehearsal room and said all of the right things. This is an example of meaning that is largely generated from the context alone, although some

⁵³ Variants of this triangle are used by several scholars; see, for example, Nielsen (1997).

expectations of the sounding music likely resided in Lucy's mind already. Again, sources of meaning should not be placed into distinct categories but rather seen within a spectrum of cues that are attended to in a given sensemaking moment.

14.3. Manifestation of meaning

The conductor makes sense of the music even before a single tone is heard. In fact, conductors usually shape their musical ideas through a sensemaking process that involves reading the score, analysing it and conceptualising how the music should sound. The 'sense' the conductor makes here is related to the directional and enactive aspect of meaning. The musical idea is conceived according to a 'should sound like' meaning—that is, an idea will later be expressed, verbally or gesturally, and then occur as sounding music. Hence, the two main manifestations of the musical idea are (1) the thought in the conductor's mind, and (2) the sounding music that is audibly produced by the ensemble. A musical idea may also manifest itself as markings in the score, as written text, and even as speech during a rehearsal, but I still consider these aspects to belong to the immaterial rather than the material. The notion of *material* manifestation is reserved for the sounding music. Contrary to the notion of a spectrum of sources of meaning, the musical thought and sounding music are two distinct manifestations of meaning (though they do coexist once the music is sounding). As long as the conductor—or the singers, for that matter—is in score-study mode, a single, distinct category of meaning as unacted thought prevails.

With regard to the notion of the sounding music as a manifestation of meaning, it could be argued that sound waves by themselves do not carry meaning; rather, 'The sound relationships [. . .] contribute to the nature and the meaning of the human encounter that is a musical performance' (Small, 1998:139). But the expression *sounding music as a manifestation of meaning* should not imply that the sound *is* the meaning but instead that the sound *as we hear it* is a manifestation of the sense we are making. This is consistent with Nielsen's model, which details the various levels on which we extract meaning, from acoustic signals through musical structure to bodily movement and emotions. The sounding music creates an impression that, in every present

moment, affects the sense we are making; therefore, as singers, we affect the evolving musical flow. Although the sounding music as a manifestation of meaning represents a distinct category in relation to the immaterial musical idea, the two are engaged in constant interplay. The 'present now' simultaneously holds both the retrospective sensemaking of the sounding music and the anticipated and directive musical sense.

14.4. Axes of conductor impact: The sensemaker

The starting point for this discussion was the exploration of meaning as a common meta-theme of the dimensions of conductor impact that arose in the interviews. By viewing meaning in terms of source and manifestation, in tandem with the categories text, context, musical idea and sounding music, we can draw up a two-dimensional map that exposes four areas of conductor reach; *sound*, *significance*, *singers* and *setting*. These areas derive from the deliberate choice to view conducting as sensemaking, and to reinterpret legitimacy through a sensemaking lens. Although this choice is supported by the interview data, the meaning map is a construct over and beyond what can be inferred by hermeneutic-phenomenological analysis. The map is a conceptualisation inspired by the interview findings, then, but generated outside the data, and I will test its viability in the subsequent sections by discussing its fit with the legitimacy themes in the interviews.

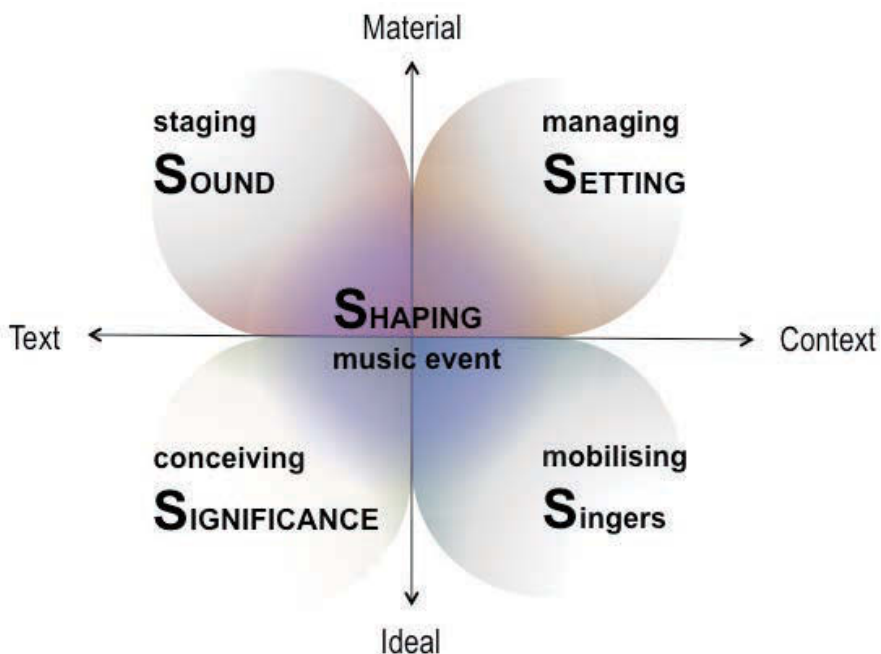


Figure 5: The legitimacy model: Five dimensions of conductor impact as sensemaker.

14.4.1. Significance

The lower left area of the map represents textual meaning as idea, corresponding to the legitimacy theme of *creating musical meaning*. The singers expect the conductor to understand the music, discover a purpose within unfamiliar material, act as an excavator of hidden meaning, and be a mediator or spokesperson between the composer and the singers. When singers talk about the musical idea, they are referring to the music as material, as opposed to context, and associate it directly with musical will and musical intention. The musical idea is therefore talked about as something distinctly non-material that exists before the sounding music, then later coexists with it and is adopted by it. I propose, therefore, to let *significance* denote the lower left part of the map. The musical idea is the conductor's conception of the music material, but creating musical meaning is not an isolated affair but an act of alignment. This conception process involves understanding and reconceptualising composer ideas as well as later associations based in performance and reception history.

Conductors must align their ideas with these past ideas, even when they deliberately choose to break with tradition. To some degree, conductors must also align with the ensemble, because the conductor may not be the only one with a musical idea. Every singer also represents a possible idea, even if it is largely unarticulated, with which the conductor must negotiate, gesturally or verbally.

14.4.2. Sound

The upper left area, the sounding music, is a manifestation of the musical idea in the form of vibrating sound waves that are audible to those present. But *sound* is not only the material manifestation of the musical idea but also the manifestation of the ensemble's capabilities, will and effort. The sounding music draws its meaning from context as well as text. The singers see the conductor as well positioned, in terms of physical location as well as role and responsibilities, to stage the sounding music. Staging sound also encompasses error detection and correction over the course of the rehearsal process. The conductor is able to hear what comes out, balance the sound, amplify singer contributions and ensure that the intended expressivity actually carries over to the audience. He or she stages the ensemble as well as the music, in fact, acting as a sound director in the manner of the theatrical *metteur-en-son* or *klangregisseur*. In section 10.3, Victor pointed out that the conductor not only stages the concert sound, as an event specific manifestation, but also the ensemble's sound representing a lasting, potentially longterm feature of musical leadership.

14.4.3. Singers' zest

The primary source of meaning outside of the music material itself is the ensemble—the singers produce every sound and every expressive detail. How they think and feel, what drives them or holds them back, and what commitment and understanding they bring to the musicking situation all affect the sounding music. What we hear, in short, reflects the meaning singers infuse into the musicking situation. The interviewees recognise the way in which great leadership can unleash their efforts, focus their energy and liberate their expressiveness. Poor or absent leadership, conversely, tends to result in music

that is lifeless and dull. Singers want to be mobilised and yearn for what good leadership can do to their vocal contribution. They have a zest for it, in fact, that the conductor may reinforce or destroy. I deliberately chose the word zest⁵⁴ as the English translation of the Norwegian *lyst* to denote something that is more active than inspiration and more pleasurable than enthusiasm. If ‘significance’ denotes meaning associated with the music material, then ‘zest’ denotes meaning arising from the interpersonal experience between singers and between the individual singer and the conductor. Just as the singers expect the conductor to conceive the musical idea, they also expect him or her to help make their musicking contribution meaningful. A number of themes deal with how the conductor generates singer zest through the display of devotion or the achievement of the proper balance between control and empowerment. A conductor’s impact upon the singers’ zest may represent the pivotal point where the legitimacy of the role itself—the legitimacy *by design*—becomes legitimacy *earned* for the individual conductor.

14.4.4. Setting

During the interviews, some singers occasionally touched upon more managerial aspects of the conducting role—that is, those activities that are not limited to musical leadership but apply in some fashion to all forms of leadership. In terms of conducting, such activities might include a range of near-music activities such as singer auditioning, contract negotiation with external soloists and instrumentalists and tour planning, as well as non-music activities such as ensemble funding and marketing. Generally, the interviewees talked about these issues to a much lesser degree than music-related themes, so there was not enough data in the interview material to develop the managerial theme properly. If we consider the various themes that were developed by interpreting the interviews as ‘must master’, as well, the managerial themes largely fall outside the scope of the expectations placed upon the musical

⁵⁴ Definitions of zest in *Merriam Webster*: (1) a piece of the peel of a citrus fruit; (2) an enjoyable, exciting quality; (3) keen enjoyment. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/zest.)

leader. In my judgement, this observation is highly context sensitive, however. In other ensemble types, and for certain organisational constructs, it is easy to imagine that managerial structures are not distinguishable from the musicking organisation itself (the opera choir and the opera orchestra would probably represent such cases). While organising and managing the musicking context does not appear as a feature of musical leadership in my interview data, the notion of managing the *setting* appears as a space in the 5S map, thanks to the way it is constructed. For the sake of logic and holism, then, I still propose to include *setting* as an axis of impact, despite the fact that my data do not allow for any further elaboration. For some choral conductors, the setting may be beyond the influence of the conductor. Others may be in a position to affect or even control the setting. The word *manage* is meant to imply that the setting is partially given and partially controllable. Iszatt-White (2011) argues that context has traditionally (and wrongly) been seen as external to leadership research, whereas leadership would be better understood as 'mutual elaboration', according to 'the inseparability of action and context which this entails' (2011:132). Whatever the given conductor's degree of control over the setting, he or she cannot disregard how the setting influences the other sensemaking dimensions or disregard it in his or her leadership scope.

14.4.5. Shaping the music event

The fifth legitimacy theme is about unifying the ensemble's efforts. The interviews tell unquestionably that the conductor does make a difference. The conductor is in a position to influence the music, and his or her minute cues may have substantial effects on the musical flow. The (effective) conductor unifies the ensemble, both concentrating and amplifying individual expression. The opposite can also occur, as Trym pointed out. Once singers accept the conductor, he or she has the power to shape the music right at the meeting point of significance, sound, zest and setting. The last of these, encompassing venue, acoustics and repertoire, determines the constraints within which singers may realise their musicality according to the conductor's musical idea, and make salient the significance of the music. In turn, singers are willing to abandon their own musical ideas when the conductor convincingly proposes a different idea. Singers are voluntarily letting themselves be disciplined, in fact, conductors may mobilise a yearning to be caught by and be subject to the

musical flow. When Bergson points out that music may ‘suspend the normal flow of our sensations and ideas’ (section 4.1.2), this effect is contingent on the invitation (and conviction) of the conductor. While the collective effort of the singers produces the sound, the conductor stages the sound. This role is facilitated by the fact that the conductor listens while everyone else must sing, so he or she can control and reconceive meaning during the continuous relay between original musical idea and sounding manifestation. This involves a delicate balancing act, as discussed elsewhere, between providing central control and empowering singers to sing freely.

14.4.6. A holistic view of the music event

Ethnomusicologists offer a wide and comprehensive yet quite structured view of music and musicking. Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2001), for example, has proposed an evocative framework for approaching what she denotes as the music event or soundscape.⁵⁵ According to her, every music event should be analysed as sound, setting and significance. Sound encompasses every audible aspect of the music: melody, lyrics, harmony, rhythm, texture, pitch, timbre, musical structure, acoustic features and so on. Setting is about when, where, and with whom the music event takes place. Significance derives from how we attach meaning to the sounding music, whether in relation to textual content (lyrics), performance issues, reception history or other social or political frames of reference. While I was familiar with Shelemay’s model prior to my interview analysis, I did not make explicit use of it when writing out the themes.

Although Shelemay’s model seems to be incorporated into my proposed 5S model, the latter in fact arose from an independent effort to decompose the sensemaking aspects of the conductor role, not to revise the existing 3S model. Obviously, the two models are variants of the same fundamental view of a music event, and sound, significance and setting are shared dimensions. Yet there are differences. By explicitly introducing meaning as a meta-theme, and by using source and manifestation of meaning to further examine what goes on,

⁵⁵ A very similar model, partially using the same terms, is proposed by Nettl (2008).

my model takes the shape of quadrants, leading to a split within the domain of significance. My fifth element (shape) is directly superimposed onto the map by my interview data. The singers describe a distinct role for the conductor as a shaper that overlaps every aspect of the music and ensemble effort. Shelemay's notion of significance, then, is divided in my model into textually oriented significance and singer-oriented meaning (or singer zest). Given the project's methodology, it should be no surprise that the singers themselves are given roles as subjects in the resulting model rather than objects in the setting or aspects of an overall meaning. As the protagonists of choral singing, their own motivation and sense of meaning—how they throw themselves into the musicking and become enthused or discouraged—become explicit aspects of the music event. As was clear in the interviews, the presence of the singer in the music event should not be understood as neutral participation, as pieces on a game board, but as an expression of will power, joy and zest for the musical peak experience. Once singers as meaning-making entities are given a distinct category, I find it reasonable to reserve the word significance for the corner that has signs (that is, notated music) as its prime source of meaning.

One famous music event can be used to illustrate both the 3S and the 5S models. Renowned conductor Daniel Barenboim, with the Berliner Staatsoper on tour in Israel, performed an extract from *Tristan und Isolde* as an encore. The encore was well received by a rapturous audience of about 2,800 Israelis, according to Edward Said in his article 'Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo' (Said, 2002:176). The remarkable thing about this was the following: Wagner, as Hitler's favourite composer, was banned in Israel. After the announced programme (Schumann and Stravinsky), Barenboim had turned to the audience and proposed the Wagner encore, then opened the floor for a discussion. Barenboim eventually decided to play the piece but first invited those who would be offended to leave; some did. After the concert, a furore erupted, and the attacks on Barenboim continued for several months. This story exemplifies the interplay between sound, setting and significance, as well as the conductor's impact upon the shape of the music event. The setting, of course, supplied a series of explicit constraints, expectations and possibilities. Wagner in Israel is not like Wagner anywhere else. The music was loaded with significance deriving from Wagner's attitudes toward Jews and his alleged fit with Nazi ideas to Barenboim's unhappiness with Israeli policy and cultural bridge-building efforts in the region (Barenboim, in fact, sees himself as an

Israeli). As the conductor, Barenboim *created and led the entire music event* in its widest possible sense. The only element in the 5S model that is not visible in this case is zest—we do not know how the orchestra musicians experienced the event. It can only be guesswork the extent to which a German orchestra found it filled with meaning to reconstitute Wagner with an Israeli audience.

While there is no need to force-fit the two models into one wider notion, I believe they can be seen as alternative but coherent views of a music event. Shelemay's model is applicable for music events where the participants are not necessarily clearly identified or able to take specific responsibilities for the event. Expanding the 3S model to the 5S model follows from my particular interest in a highly specific music event: choral conducting. It probably also reflects the bias towards agency in a phenomenological study, and a likely bias towards structure in an ethnographic study.

15. An enactment model of musical leadership

A graphic representation of the themes constituting musical leadership is proposed. This model is shaped as layered elements with the sounding music at its centre, experienced in an intersubjective space created and maintained by the ensemble and the conductor. The conductor may enable access to this 'common room' of musicking via the various aspects of mastery and a coherent way of being.

15.1. From themes to model

The 5S model of musical leadership impact is based on themes that deal with the legitimacy of the conductor role. Legitimacy answers the *why* or *what for* question. For the conductor role to have legitimacy, in the eyes of the singers, it needs to have impact along four axes (musical meaning, staged sound, mobilised singers and managed setting), in addition to being responsible for the overall shaped event. For each of these aspects, the role offers the possibility of supplying a unique contribution, beyond what singers without a conductor can accomplish. The role's purpose, and therefore legitimacy, is closely linked to this potential for uniqueness of contribution. The 5S model proposes aspects of legitimacy that are inherent to the role itself and independent of how the musical leadership is executed, or by whom. The themes described in chapters 11 through 13 were captured in the course of asking singers to reflect on what is happening when musical leadership works well. *What is happening* covers *how* conductors lead, of course, but also *what* they know and do, and *when* they do it. I based the sequence of main themes

upon Ladkin's mastery-coherence-purposefulness model. The sequencing of the detailed themes arose from a certain amenability to my train of thought but also invited stepwise elaboration without too much overlap or confusion among the themes. Yet *any* sequence of description is potentially misleading, hostage as it is to the linear nature of textual reporting. While theme sequence, order or priority might be valid, simultaneity and parallelism of themes is equally so. The most robust research position in this regard would therefore be to consider the themes as *elements of musical leadership* with no particular order or priority, and to keep ever in mind that the themes are in constant interplay with one another as musical leadership is being exercised. However, the interview material does allow for some observations about how themes are interrelated and how they appear with varying salience in different situations.

15.2. Layered themes

The various themes emerging from the interviews can be seen as different layers of the musical experience. The innermost layer is the sounding music itself. Given the premise that musicking is its own reward, not a means to instrumental and external purposes like money, fame or power, the sounding music represents the core of the music event. Musicking happens in the intersubjective space established and maintained by the singers and the conductor, a metaphorical room that encapsulates the musicking act as an experienced phenomenon. This is the place where meaning is created and shared. The interviewed singers describe this intersubjective space as something rare and precious—a room where admittance is not guaranteed, and whose existence cannot be taken for granted. The room for musicking is a fragile and ephemeral construction, and access to it is enabled or disabled by the elements that have been described as the *mastery* and *coherence* themes. The model is shown in figure 6 and described in more detail in the following sections.

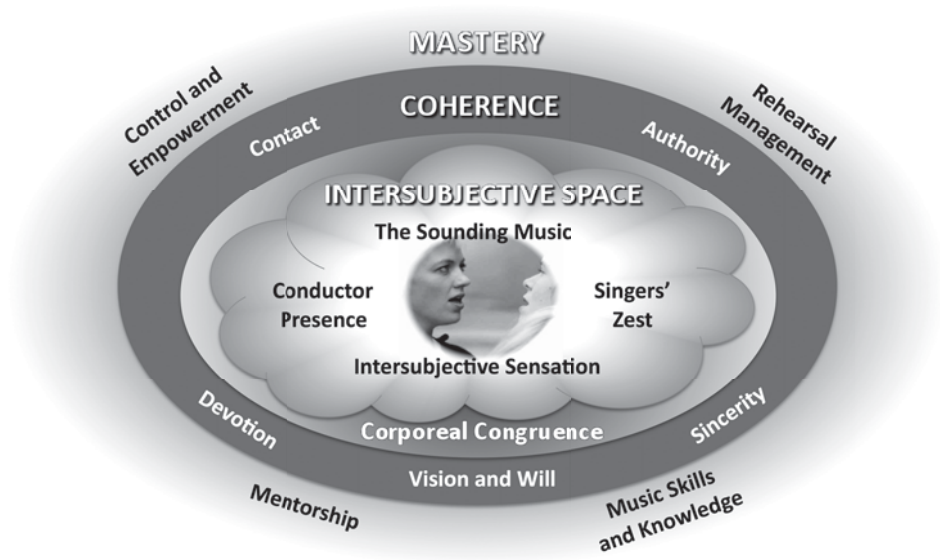


Figure 6: An enactment model of musical leadership.

In section 14.1, I introduced Nielsen’s concept of music as a multidimensional universe of meaning to support the legitimacy of the conductor role via a sensemaking lens. But Nielsen’s model also has strong parallels to the enactment model, because Nielsen depicts the spectrum of musical meaning in a stratified, spherical fashion. Nielsen’s outer layers associate musical meaning with the sensing of acoustic data and the cognition of musical structures. Advancing further inwards, meaning is also created from tensional relations and bodily experience. At the centre of the model, musical meaning draws on our emotional universe and existential consciousness. He describes the inward journey as follows:

In its surface region the musical object consists of relatively concrete and thus verbally relatively easily described qualities, but ‘inside’ it has successively more deeply situated layers of meaning, which grow the more incomprehensible and harder to describe without concomitantly thinking of a musical ‘subject’ the further one advances towards the centre. (Nielsen, 2012:20)

Nielsen observes that the most tangible aspects of musical meaning are found in the outer strata, and that these aspects adhere rather to the musical object

than to us as musicking subjects. Moving towards the centre, meaning becomes increasingly tied to our personal involvement in the musicking act. These two models, then, have striking similarities, but they are different too. First of all, the enactment model is not limited to the experience of the sounding music but includes other situational and contextual features related to the ensemble, the rehearsing process and the impact of various competencies and behaviours. In addition, the outer strata are all tangible, but for different reasons—in Nielsen's model, thanks to acoustic sensation; in the enactment model, thanks to the practicalities of choral rehearsing and performing. What the models mainly share is their recognition of existential themes at the centre, where the encounter between the experiencing person and the musical object 'may become so intense that the experiencing person is completely filled by the experienced object' (Nielsen, 2012:22). Nevertheless, we have great difficulty articulating this experience.

In the concluding paragraph of part III, I noted that the sounding music was both absent and omnipresent in the interview material. I also suggested the possibility that music represented a constituent of the intersubjective space, based on the notion of music as a key 'subject' in the musicking experience. Whether we think about music as an object or a subject in Gadamer's sense of *play as subject*, real human beings are still standing apart from the experienced object/subject, according to Nielsen (2012:22). He wonders, consequently, how it can be that the musical object makes its meaning available to a person who is standing apart from it. He then proposes a certain correspondence or congruence between 'layers of meaning in the music and, on the other hand, layers of experience and consciousness in human beings'. Furthermore, he sees this potential correspondence as made possible by the fact that 'in the musical object a subjective structure is 'embodied', and that through this embodiment the subjective structure assumes an objective form'. The tensional, gestural, emotional and existential layers of music, in short, mirror our own human lives. Nielsen's proposition reinforces the positioning of the sounding music within the innermost model layer of intersubjective space. In the following sections, I will engage with the enactment model in more detail.

15.2.1. Sensemaking and intersubjective space

In the intersubjective space where musicking experience happens, distinct roles seem to vanish, boundaries between singers and conductor become blurred, and the leadership role is transcended. The interviewed singers refer to this space in different ways, but all of their descriptions involve a certain simultaneity of meaning and shared anticipation of the continued musical flow. When I choose to denote the innermost layer of my enactment model as *intersubjective space*, I am combining two facets of the experience that arise from the interviews.⁵⁶ The singers' intersubjective experience is expressed in a number of ways, as *fused lives* (Birgit), *seeing without eye contact* (Kristine), and *understanding at the same time* (Maria). These are 'lived examples' of intersubjectivity, as described by Holgersen (2006) and Zahavi (2003). The *space* metaphor is suggested by a number of further word pictures: confines in which there is *security* (Trym); a substance in which you are *immersed* (Beatrice); the music as an inside as opposed to the *trivialities outside* (Lucy); an enclosure you can *fall out of* and *get back into* (Nora); and a proximity that prevents you from *disappearing* (Morten) or *withdrawing* (Birgit) from one another. Intersubjective space is still experienced as a state of mind, of course, as Lucy points out. Garnett (2009:197) uses the phrase *common house of being* to denote a communal state of consciousness and the thought processes in which collective identities are formed, adding, 'Inhabitation is therefore the means by which the subjective becomes intersubjective' (ibid.). Weick's characteristics of sensemaking may shed light on what goes on when singers make sense intersubjectively.

The process of sensemaking is intended to include the construction and bracketing of the textlike cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations based on action and its consequences.

⁵⁶ The term *intersubjective space* is used in the psychology literature (for example, Bradley [2005]), within the discipline of phenomenological methodology (for example, Finlay [2009]), and even by practitioners of the technique (for example, <http://intersubjectivespace.com>). I am not assuming or relying on any common or coherent definition of the term across all of its usages.

Sensemaking is about authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery. (Weick, 1995:8)

Sensemaking is more enactive than just understanding—it is the continuous relay of responding to new cues and understanding previous responses. When Weick speaks about sensemaking as creation, it follows that sensemaking in a choir is *co*-creation, since the stream of cues is collectively produced. But if singers's sensemaking is co-creation, this must also include the conductor. In every musical moment, the same set of cues available to the singers (disregarding differences arising from physical position and acoustics) is also available to the conductor. Although the conductor may not necessarily make the *same* sense out of the musical flow, he or she is nevertheless affected by the actual sounding music. One of singers' key expectations of a conductor is to create meaning from the music material, meaning that is conveyed in a number of ways during the rehearsing process. In the performing situation, the conductor must then rely on a limited scope of only gestural cues, each of which is loaded with meaning beyond the gesture itself. The singers make sense of the conducting gestures as the cues invoke their own memories. This applies even in the case of *prima vista* singing, because sightreading in every present moment involves anticipating the music flow, and once it has been read, musical meaning becomes memory that is then ready to be moderated by conducting cues.

As the conductor is conveying musical meaning in real time, he or she is making sense, which is understood in this case as providing direction. The conductor is also simultaneously part of the collective sensing of the musical flow. When Weick points out that sensemaking is both enactive and retrospective, he provides a theoretical basis for the references to the conductor's dual sensemaking that appeared in the interviews, which also have an etymological parallel in the Latin root of *sense*. When Holgersen (2006), in his exploration of musical intersubjectivity, draws on Husserl's distinction between operational intentionality and act-intentionality, this may likewise evoke the dual nature of sensemaking. Operational intentionality makes sense by understanding where the musical flow is in any given moment, whereas act-intentionality gives sense by directing the continued flow. In a choral ensemble, the conductor is a sensemaker, creating sense by giving direction and also creating the intersubjective space where everyone may sense the musical flow, upon which renewed direction may be given. This is not to say that the

conductor is the only 'sensible' person in the midst of bewilderment and ignorance. However, in the attempt to understand the conducting phenomenon, it is useful to rediscover and retain the fundamental meaning of making sense. Although everyone in the choir is making sense of the music, and of what they do, the sensemaking is a dedicated function of the conductor's position. The conductor has a particular responsibility to give sense to the ensemble and, as importantly, to sense what the ensemble does.

Does leadership equal sensemaking, in fact, or is sensemaking merely a component of it? Perhaps the best approach is to use the notion of sensemaking as a lens through which to understand leadership. In some situations, the leader as sensemaker may be particularly important, even dominant. Springborg argues that leadership (with no particular focus on music) involves such an abundance of cues and possibilities that 'leaders cannot rely on their conceptual mind producing sense-making, but need to engage in artistic appreciation—receiving sense-making' (2011:256). The need to balance reaction and anticipation is a well-known topic within business leadership, and history is filled with examples of successes and failures related to reactive and anticipatory leadership (Nadin, 2008). In contrast to most leadership situations, musical leadership is characterised by a very short time span between action and effect in the musicking act. In one way, this facilitates anticipation, because effects are experienced immediately, actions can be adapted, and further anticipation can be based on a continuous stream of present moments. In another way, it is very demanding, because it requires anticipation in every moment—let go of one, and the conductor undermines his or her legitimacy. The dual nature of sensemaking in musical leadership appears in every present now, and intersubjective sensation is at its heart. Thought this may not hold for leadership in general, then, I think it is reasonable to propose that musical leadership *is* about sensemaking, and the conductor role can justifiably be framed as the sensemaker.

Given its strong link to intersubjective space, sensemaking is not an individual endeavour alone, nor does it transpire exclusively in people's conscious minds:

Leadership, like any process that involves cognition, is not individual, rational, abstract, detached and general. Instead, leadership is social (located in human communities), it is embodied and concrete (affected by material aspects and physical constraints), it is located (context

dependent), it is engaged (dependent on interaction with the surrounding environment), and it is specific (sensitive to contingencies). (Ospina and Schall, 2000:3)

This statement does not refer explicitly to the intersubjective space between leader and followers. Nonetheless, it clarifies that leadership is a process that is experienced as highly specific, as if zoomed in on the present now, and that implies a certain density of experience. The intersubjective space, as experienced by the interviewed singers, is exactly this kind of dense experience, a boiling cauldron of meaning making. As was pointed out in section 3.6.7, the plausibility characteristic of sensemaking does not require all of the singers to understand the same way or to derive identical meanings. It suffices simply that singers find meaning that allows for (and spurs) a concerted effort in the flowing music.

15.2.2. Coherence as gate opener

Coherent leadership provides access to the intersubjective space, so I have chosen to denote the coherence themes as *gate openers* in the model. Gates may be opened or shut, depending on the degree of coherence in these five aspects: contact, sincerity, authority, devotion and vision/will. Because the gate openers are largely nonverbal perceptions, they must be understood as embodied phenomena, which, in order to be valid, require corporeal congruence. This congruence derives from conductor signals that are delivered in different modes (speech, posture, breath, hand movement, eye contact) but that contain the same message (or at least do not contradict one another). With some allowance for vision and authority, the gate openers are generally ways of being that are unrelated to competences. It is therefore possible to open gates when competence is lacking; conversely, gates may be shut even for the highly competent conductor. Despite the 'ways of being' character of the gate openers, they do not constitute an argument for distinguishing between the conductor being and the conductor doing: what the conductor does is inseparable from how he or she is being it. For example, devotion is exposed through how a conductor rehearses a certain piece of music. A lack of sincerity is exposed through how a conductor abuses his or her mentoring task. How a conductor technically solves certain gestural challenges may reveal weak authority or lack of contact with the singers. These being aspects are worth attending to because

they are key constituents of enactment, a topic which has systematically been neglected in leadership theory, as Ladkin pointed out (section 3.3.4). While the being of leadership can be overlooked in some organisational contexts, this is not so in the musicking situation of a choral ensemble. The conductor is continuously and visibly present, fully open for all of the perceptual powers of the singers. When the interviewees talk about what conductors *do*, their descriptions are filled with perceptions of how conductor tasks are enacted, which is inseparable from the conductor's embodied being.

Corporeal congruence is depicted as an aspect of the coherence category. The embodied nature of musical leadership makes gesture (in a broad sense) both a skill set (that is included in the mastery category) and a way of being through which the other gate openers are experienced visually. A variant of this duality also appears in Durrant's concept of three types of conducting gesture—literal, expressive and supporting (Durrant, 2003:147). Literal gestures are indexical in that they indicate pulse, location and direction in the musical flow. Expressive gestures suggest the character and nuances of the music, and they are emotive, in that they seek to elicit a corresponding vocal response on the part of the singers. Supporting gestures are intended to help singers breathe and sustain phrases. They enable favourable bodily conditions via mirroring, as the interviewees described in section 12.6.1. Durrant explains how the shape, orientation and movement of the palm, for example, directly mirrors the raising of the soft palate, potentially affecting intonation and timbre. The conductor's gestural repertoire, then, is clearly a skill set. At the same time, the interviewees have noted that posture, point of gravity, intense presence and friendly eye contact are equally important. These qualities go beyond what the conductor does and blend with coherence themes, including devotion, authority and will.

15.2.3. Mastery

The coherence layer is made to surround the intersubjective space, to demonstrate that access to this room is not guaranteed and may be enabled or disabled depending upon how the musical leadership is enacted. While there are examples of conductors whom singers appreciate even when mastery is wanting, there is no question that singers prefer a conductor who comes to the musicking situation with a high degree of mastery. The mastery themes are

depicted in the outer model layer. Despite their associations with specific situations, the mastery themes are somewhat more generic than the rest and exist as capabilities independent of their use. Only gestural skills, within music skills and knowledge, are specifically related to conducting. Mentorship is partly generic and partly specific. Rehearsal management bears resemblance to any project management but is also highly specific. Control/empowerment is a general leadership theme but must also be considered an element of mastery that is strongly tied to the unique features of conducting, as it relies on understanding a music flow, its cues and its gestural affordances.

The placement of mastery as the outer layer of the model illustrates that these themes are the most outward and worldly features of musical leadership. They are also concrete and tangible, in that they are part of university curricula, objects of conducting master classes, and foci of research projects. While the findings of this study do not question the value of the distinct conductor competences that constitute the mastery level, the choral singers describe a depth of experience that cannot be understood *only* in terms of mastery. The musical leadership for which singers yearn can only be fully grasped via a broader view of the enactment of the role, and of the access to an intersubjective space of musical sensemaking that it enables. The mystique and magic commonly associated with great conducting is not that at all. At its best, musical leadership simply affords the possibilities latent in the intersubjective sensation to which the conductor and the ensemble commit and for which the conductor has a unique and particular responsibility to facilitate.

What is the relationship between the 5S model and the enactment model? The simple answer is that they show two different aspects of the conductor role, the *why do we want a conductor* and the *how do we want to experience musical leadership*. The 5S model outlines the principles for meaningful leadership. It determines the legitimacy of the role, independent of who fills it—that is, a legitimacy by design. The enactment model outlines its practices—the array of features a conductor may be, know, or do that may in turn enhance or weaken the actual legitimacy. This array of features determines the legitimacy of the individual conductor—that is, an awarded or earned legitimacy.

15.3. Meta-theme: Tension and ambiguity

The enactment model arises from a visualisation of the themes emerging from the interviews. Each layer is the collection of themes that together constitute, respectively, mastery, coherence and intersubjective space. Each of these main themes is saturated with the experience of the interviewed singers insofar as that experience was articulated and I was able to understand it. Every singer did not talk about every theme, and it is likewise possible that additional themes, or at least additional angles on an uncovered theme, would emerge from more interviews. Regardless, we can see the model as a richer picture of musical leadership than was available within any given singer's head. This apparent fullness, as well, manifests a number of embedded tensions and ambiguities that exist on two levels. The first level concerns the salience of each theme, and the relative attention given to it. The second level concerns how many of the themes reveal tension in terms of what good or bad musical leadership is. Importantly, these tensions and ambiguities are not weaknesses of the model but a key characteristic of the conducting phenomenon. In addition, a key challenge for the conductor is to continuously arrange trade-offs among different concerns and rebalance one's own efforts. This apparent lack of stability and precision is captured by Weick's notion of plausibility as a characteristic of sensemaking. A conductor intervention does not work because it is universally correct but because it is sufficiently meaningful in a given moment. Such a contingent view on what is good is also captured by Gadamer's view on play, where beauty, joy and meaning arise from being subjected to ever-changing movement.

15.3.1. A floating hierarchy of themes

In the process of rewriting the interview interpretations, themes arose because nuggets of meaning kept recurring, either in a single interview or across multiple interviews. But this recurrence, taken at face value, masked greatly varying levels of engagement regarding a particular theme. Stella was at her most engaged when she was talking about sincerity and devotion, whereas Daniel felt very strongly about empowerment. Stella and Daniel were not necessarily in disagreement, but their priorities varied, which influences my interpretations and the resultant model. Even a single singer's view on a

particular theme could change from one situation to another. Birgit appreciated the arduous passion of her regular conductor (section 12.5.4) but overlooked the lack of passion of another conductor because of his deep knowledge of and commitment to the music. Birgit's preferences were not stable but malleable. Viewing the layered model as a comprehensive set of expectations (that are even potentially quasi-quantified) disregards its adaptable nature. One metaphorical approach to the model themes is to consider each as a material object with a relative weight (density) that is situational. In one situation, repertoire knowledge and passion may float to the surface, while gestural skill sinks. In another situation, but for the same singer, it may be the other way around. The model could therefore be seen as a floating hierarchy of themes that appear with a saliency that is situationally determined. From a sensemaking perspective, singers attempt to make sense of every musicking situation and conductor approach. The sensemaking property of plausibility (see section 3.6.7) enables the singer to accept a range of different approaches, as long as they make reasonable sense. Birgit finds it meaningful to sing with a conductor who does Bach in a way with which she strongly disagrees, because she finds that meaning in the conductor's lifelong commitment to and passion about Bach. Bowman (2004:37) suggests that the musicking experience is a precious instance of bodily knowing that is in no way inferior to mindful knowing. The fact that music's corporeal basis affords a certain 'genius for ambiguity' must be understood to accommodate a multitude of ways to create meaning. If the musical experience is a way to understand (the work, the flowing sound, the ensemble effort or the social event), this understanding is always a *new* understanding, because our horizons constantly incorporate previous understandings and therefore constantly shift, according to Gadamer (1989). If musicking individuals appear generous, accepting and flexible in terms of living with greatly varying conducting practices, it is because musicking is a powerhouse of meaning-making. Doing Bach in a way I disagree with simply constitutes one more moment of enlightenment. A moment of ambiguity in the conductor's downbeat opens unexpected avenues of experience, encompassing a disappointing resolution of the phrase but also the highly rewarding intersubjective sensation of a new ending.

15.3.2. Elusive perfection

The preceding section dealt with the ephemeral relationships among the various theme models. The inability to fix any of these relationships and thereby determine their importance can be attributed to the abundance of meaning-making possibilities they represent. When they were asked, the interviewees articulated views of the perfect conductor. But as soon as they started to reflect on their statements, variants and even opposite alternatives of these perfect profiles arose. The perfect musical leadership is an elusive phenomenon, not only because many of the preferences are situational but also because many of the things conductors are and do involve continuous choices and constant rebalancing, which affects the singers in turn. Some of the most prominent examples include the following:

- **Control versus empowerment.** The conductor faces this balance in the rehearsing process as well as the performance. Within the former, empowerment is about who is responsible for sorting out technical problems and even includes the possibility of letting the musical expression evolve as an ensemble process. Within the latter, the conductor may temporarily step outside his or her pattern of controlling gestures and leave the performance to the ensemble. When to relinquish and when to take command is never predestined as such but is a judgement of the musical moment. Sensing as perception and sensegiving as a directive are both at the heart of such judgements. The notions of pacing and leading are different sides of the same coin.
- **Knowing versus searching.** The general expectation is that the conductor comes to the musicking situation with a musical idea and a rehearsal plan. However, singers also expect the conductor to be adaptable, in terms of (1) reconciling the musical idea to the given ensemble and situation, and (2) adjusting the rehearsal plan in accordance with the actual progress made and the triumphs and difficulties encountered. Knowing is good, but knowing everything at all times is not. More specifically, searching for a common expression is good, but blind searching is not. Some singers expect instructions, whereas others love to be invited to explore. What's more, singers may be in different modes on different occasions.

- **Working details versus the whole.** The most prominent conductor choice in the rehearsing situation is when to solve specific problems and when to let the ensemble self-correct via the uninterrupted run-through. In a sense, this represents a special case of the control–empowerment balance, in terms of who is made responsible for getting it right. But it is also a question of determining *how* to get it right, by attending to details or subsuming them within the holistic musical flow. Opinions about the right balance may change during the rehearsal process and vary among individuals in the ensemble. Getting the balance wrong tend to aggravate singers. The best course of action is to allow for both approaches, even within very short time frame of the rehearsal.
- **Demanding versus helping.** This balancing act is explicitly captured by the mentoring theme, which is also closely related to control–empowerment, since it deals with deciding what to bring to the ensemble member—specific help or the clear expectation of self-improvement. It is also about understanding what is most useful for the ensemble, and as such, it is applicable in the performing situation: what signalling is useful, and what is superfluous?
- **Telling versus showing.** None of the interviewed singers experienced that conductors talked too little, indicating that talk can interfere with singers’ own musicking and sometimes involve distracting or counterproductive content. At the same time, speech is invaluable for conveying contextual meaning and succinctly addressing specific and detailed problems. This balancing act is closely linked to working with details versus the whole.
- **Being versus doing.** This dichotomy is more subtle than the others. On one hand, the conductor is a being even while executing various tasks during rehearsals or performance. Doing, of course, is inseparable from being. On the other hand, the interviewed singers tell stories about conductors who made a great impact through their perceived devotion, an unarticulated but assumed intention, or the empowerment derived from a moment of gestural ambiguity. Conductors have an impact even when they are not doing anything in particular. Action, then, is not the sole instrument of influence.

- **The pompous versus the meek.** Singers expect authority and will power but also modesty and sincerity. None of these things are necessarily in conflict, but too much egocentricity, for example, is usually off-putting, whereas too little may undermine authority. A conductor must have the urge to lead, to occupy the role, to stand out. A certain pomposity may even mobilise singers to transcend trivial routine. On the other hand, pompous conductors also get in the way of the music. This topic is less of a balancing act in terms of what conductors consciously do and more of an issue of self-insight and identity. Nevertheless, conductors are in a position to shift among various outwardly appearances of their leadership style.

What is particularly noteworthy about these various balancing acts is that there are no stable balancing points. The perfect blend of actions or behaviours one moment may not be so perfect the next moment. In fact, the choice of one mode immediately invites its opposite. After spending a good portion of a rehearsal working through minute details, singers will yearn for a run-through of the whole piece. Even a conductor who is extremely effective at showing what he or she wants may sacrifice some impact if thoughts are never communicated verbally. Singers do appreciate a well-prepared conductor who always knows what the end result should sound like, but the complete absence of experimentation, no possibility for deviation or no danger of failure, can lead to singer complacency.

The elusiveness of conductor 'perfection' and the scope of meaningful realisations of musical leadership underscore the fact that art is ultimately an open-ended process that does not seek unambiguous expression or final closure in terms of understanding. In fact, this may be the point where conducting departs from the adjoining arenas of leadership in general and teaching in particular. The conductor-as-artist is a neglected perspective in most research on choirs and conducting, which favours strictly pedagogical aspects instead. This is not to say that music pedagogy could not engage with some of the axes of tension and benefit from some of the trade-offs that have been described in this section. However, when the interviewed singers acknowledge, accept and even enjoy the imperfections of these conductor profiles, it is not only because they are generous in spirit but also because those imperfections are inextricable parts of an artistic process and an artful means

of leading music. There is, further, a limit to how far we can take the parallel between organisational leadership in general and musical leadership. Despite all of the outwardly set goals of a musical ensemble, from performance quality to financial control, musicking is stuck (and blessed) with being its own reward. Musicking may be a means to another end but nevertheless remains a unique avenue to experience (*Erlebnis*) and insight (*Erkenntnis*). The interviewed singers certainly recognise the importance of mastery. But in the end, it is the intersubjective space that the conductor is able to open up that matters most of all, and they have experienced that even imperfect conductors can enable perfect experiences.

15.3.3. Reviewing models

Throughout this dissertation, I have made selective and rather cautious use of theory and models for the conductor role. Ladkin's concept of leading beautifully, with its simple yet rich view of the role, was used to organise the thematic analysis of the interviews. Her model therefore also contributed to the high-level structure of my data in the enactment model. Though I chose re-label congruence and purposefulness as intersubjective space, I was simply adapting Ladkin's model to the particular needs of my research topic, in turn confirming its usefulness. I decided upon the thematic sub-structures without any particular theory in mind, seeking narratives that opened and saturated the main categories.

Nielsen's concept of musical meaning as a multidimensional universe has already been discussed in relation to the 5S model and the enactment model. It is useful because it helps to substantiate the role of meaning-making in the musicking act, supporting some of the notions that are especially difficult to articulate, including how singers attribute existential meaning to musicking and the importance of the intersubjective space created by and with ensemble and conductor.

Gill's renewed model of leadership (see section 3.3.1) comprises five areas of responsibility that the leader must ensure to fulfil the role: vision and mission, shared values, strategy, empowerment, and motivation. The model is not about personality, competence, or activity but about what needs to be *attended to*. It is about *why* there is a leader. We also see that it has themes in common with my 5S model. Creating the musical idea, mobilising singers and

staging sound can be easily understood as musicking versions of Gill's general model, applied flexibly. What the 5S model adds, however, is sensemaking as the originating and underlying thought. We may therefore reinterpret Gill's model as seeing leadership legitimacy as sensemaking, and the primary feature of a leader as sensemaker. While Weick (1995) describes the sensemaking process, Gill hints at *what* the leader needs to make sense of. Neither Weick nor Gill attends systematically to how leaders do this—that is, how leadership is enacted.

Durrant's model of the effective conductor is among the few that are holistic as well as based on combined research and practical experience. A key question is how my enactment model overlaps with Durrant's model. We might note first that all of the elements in Durrant's model are covered by the interview-generated themes in part III. The categories are not all the same, but it does appear that the interviews, taken together, saturate the choral conducting phenomenon quite well. Based on this comparison, it is unlikely that I missed major themes. In fact, the reverse possibility presents itself: did the interviews and proposed models introduce any new themes or angles upon Durrant's work? Given how I posed my research question, my findings appear in the form of how singers experience conducting and the encounter between conductor and ensemble. Whereas Durrant's model adopts a competence perspective, the enactment model deals with how mastery blends with meaning, on the practical rehearsing level as well with musicking as an existential experience. While Durrant offers a comprehensive and balanced view of what conductors should be capable of, my model adds another angle—that is, how these capabilities come into play as their roles and relevance fluctuate during the process of musicking shared by conductor and ensemble. My model is therefore primarily descriptive, and its normative potential should be used with caution. Because musical leadership appears as a complex web of competences, actions and ways of being, leadership as a distinct notion is hard to pin down. Apart from the person embodying the leader, leadership is in many ways invisible to the eye, although the various themes in the enactment model are perceivable. This characteristic may be what Mintzberg calls *covert leadership*. In his study of a symphony orchestra conductor, he observes:

In conducting an orchestra, it seems that covert leadership [. . .] may be far more important than overt leadership. Leadership infused everything Bramwell did, however, invisibly. [. . .] Perhaps we need a greater

appreciation in all managerial work of this kind of covert leadership: not leadership actions in and of themselves—motivating, coaching, and all that—but rather unobtrusive actions that infuse all the other things a manager does. (1998:144)

In my view, Mintzberg's statement articulates the overall resolution of some of the oppositions that this dissertation has covered—between leadership theory and music, between the objection against leadership as a distinct notion and the fact that leadership is being exercised, and between categorisable 'things' leaders know/do and the integral nature of leadership. In my view, the reason why leadership may appear to be covert is that it manifests *both* out in the open *and* within the individual meaning-making of each singer. Impact is as much a part of leadership as intention, and singer impact clearly belongs to the singer. This may be yet another reason why sensemaking is a useful integrating concept in terms of what musical leadership is. The conductor as sensemaker is a caring role—the sensemaker touches the individual singer's being, the music material and the sounding music in a way that seeks purposefulness for everyone involved, and for the event. The conductor balances continuously and very delicately an understanding of where the musical flow and the singers are coming from and where they are going and displays the vision and will power to shape that interaction. This duality of sensemaking applies equally to the macro situation of practical rehearsal prioritisation and to the micro-gesture of the musical present now.

16. Concluding discussion

This final chapter reflects on the outcome of the study and the research process. The importance of sensemaking is highlighted and the developed models are re-presented as a meta-language to contribute to how we talk about conducting. The findings are considered to be fairly robust, in that they should be expected to largely survive changing contexts and alternative research approaches.

16.1. Reflections on findings

16.1.1. The importance of meaning

The project findings are summarised and embedded in the two proposed models—the legitimacy model and the enactment model. The research question aimed at exploring what musical leadership *is* and what makes it *work*. Common to these two questions is the fact that their answers are found through an examination of *what makes the conductor role meaningful for singers*. I could have framed the role as a social construct, created and developed over the last two centuries and nurtured by a range of music-related and non-music-related interests. Instead, I realised that if the role is meaningful from the point of view of singers in the musicking situation, it must offer something unique—that is, something that the singers themselves cannot provide in their own role, or something that is better provided by a designated single leader. The interviewees described dimensions of conducting's impact that are based on this uniqueness, and they are permeated with ways of making

sense, both in tandem with and on behalf of the ensemble. The designated leader is in a position to stage sound in terms of balance and expression as the mediator of the singers' vocal contribution and the sounding music. Underlying this mediation is a conception of how the music should sound. While any ensemble member could, and probably should, have a musical idea about whatever they are doing, the conductor is able to negotiate and ultimately unify meaning there. In this process, the conductor may also mobilise his or her individual mastery in the name of collective musicking. The interviewed singers tell many stories about how good conductors impact their desire to contribute and how they yearn for liberating leadership. More practically speaking, if an awareness of the full score is left to the conductor, the singers are able to concentrate on their own tone production and parts. This division of labour is found to be both efficient and meaningful.

The importance of meaning in general has emerged from the data more prominently than I expected. Still, my proposal to see the meaningful as the very *source of legitimacy* may seem to be a stretch. Nevertheless, the duality of the notion of sense and sensemaking captures well what singers describe as the musicking moment and why they want the role of conductor to inform it. The conductor as sensemaker is, therefore, the key concept coming out of this study. Sensemaking in organisational work and leadership is becoming an attractive avenue of research in business academia, and I think it should be even more attractive within research in musicking and musical leadership. What drives this emphasis is the immediacy of the musical experience and the significance of the present now in musicking. What goes on in the intersubjective space created by the conductor and the ensemble can be seen as nothing more than concentrated sensemaking. This is also why so many aspects of musical leadership are so slippery. Though the failure to find the 'best way' to lead music is frustrating, the characteristics and consequences of sensemaking make it less so. Plausibility is one of Weick's characteristics of sensemaking: the effort need not be correct or ideal but only viable and sensible enough. Organisations are highly imperfect organisms, but they work. Conductors are imperfect people whose faults may be more visibly and audibly exposed than those of any other kind of leader, but they are in general still accepted, respected and even adored. The inherent features of the role, represented by the legitimacy model, answer the why and what for.

Sensemaking is at the heart of this model and gives legitimacy to the role, though not automatically to the person, who must enact it successfully.

16.1.2. Models as meta-language

An important methodological question arises in connection with the two models. The dimensions of sensemaking were phenomenologically captured through the process of understanding conversations with singers. As such, they are not *constructed*, either by me as the researcher or by the interviewees. However, *modelling* leadership as sensemaking is a conceptual construct. Is this, then, a collision of perspectives between phenomenology and constructionism? I prefer an alternative interpretation: we have passed through a one-way door from phenomenologically captured insight to constructed picture. The legitimacy model is valid in so far as the research process can be trusted, but once the model has been proposed, it exists on its own and may be explored, applied, tested and modified *outside* the realm of phenomenology. It is *not* a description of lived life, but it is a way to talk about how we understand musical leadership. Liz Garnett describes this utility as a *meta-language* (Garnett, 2009:17).

We can make the same observation about the enactment model. When I sequenced the theme descriptions, I encountered the question of relative theme importance, both during the interview sessions and during the process of interpretation. There are many entries for a given theme, and they are linked in such a way that it is very difficult to assess their relative importance. Even the notion of importance itself is problematic, because only some themes emerged in an interview, thereby hiding linkages to other themes. Also, singers may be implying more than he or she actually says about a theme, thereby blurring potential connections and associations. For example, an interviewee might praise a conductor's good preparation and score knowledge without mentioning authority, because it was simply an implied feature of this conductor. But if score preparation had been poor, that topic could possibly have emerged in the guise of the authority theme. There is, in general, a sort of 'floating hierarchy' of themes that allows one feature to surface because other features are okay, whereas these other features are not explicitly brought up. Technical skills, in particular, are not much talked about, because they for the most part seem good enough to not be a determining leadership factor, which

clearly in no way suggests that technical skills are unimportant. This calls for approaching the enactment model with caution. It does not describe what great conducting *is*, but it does enable us to talk about it. The model is a meta-language for a scholarly exchange and the quest for shared understanding.

16.1.3. Robustness

The phenomenological approach sought to reveal how musical leadership appears to the interviewed singers. Each singer, of course, has his or her own experiences to reinforce or contradict the mood of the group as a whole. Phenomenological inquiry, however, does not seek universal truths that may be inferred from a sample study in a positivistic scientific tradition. As a human phenomenon, the pure phenomenologist would conclude, the experiences of musical leadership included in this study can really only speak for themselves and contain no prospects for further generalisation. There is a middle position between universality and uniqueness, of course, that emphasises multivalence and context contingency (Kvale, 2001:160). The theme approach used in this study, for example, assumes that the musical leadership phenomenon has an inner structure and logic to it that understanding singers who have experienced the phenomenon are able to reveal. When assessing the applicability of the study's findings outside the experience base of the interviewed singers, I am not attempting to graft those experiences onto other singers, or to use them to anticipate further responses to the same questions. I have not attempted to analyse some singers in order to understand all singers. Instead, I have tried to understand musical leadership via some singers' exposure to it. The reliance of both the legitimacy model and the enactment model upon interpreted experience suggests some degree of applicability for other singers, but because the interviewed singers do not represent anything but themselves, the representativity of the sample is not a prime concern. In section 6.2.3, I introduced the alternative notion of *presentativity* to denote the singers' ability to expose the various facets of musical leadership. In my judgement, the presentativity was very solid in this group, because of the extensive underlying conductor coverage. I would therefore extend the findings and the models, at minimum, to other singers with similar profiles and similar conductor exposure, using the term *robustness* to denote this extended applicability. The models are robust to the extent that they remain useful outside the realm of

experience of the interviewed singers. It is not controversial, then, to claim that the models are fairly robust within the domain of musically educated choral singers in Norway. I would also suggest that the legitimacy model is overall more robust than the enactment model. It appears to be more of a conceptualisation of the obvious, though it was, in fact, initiated by the interview data. Its relevance and value may be discussed, but if they are acknowledged, the model then applies to a range of settings, including non-music domains such as a commercial business. In that case, staged sound becomes business performance and musical meaning becomes business model/strategy. Singer zest and the choral setting are just special cases of a mobilised employee/team and a business environment. Whether the sensemaking aspect of leadership is as prominent in a non-music domain as it is for the conductor role is an interesting question for another time.

The robustness of the enactment model is more questionable. Though none of the model themes is very controversial, the model as a graphic form implies certain context-specific relationships and notions of outside, inside and core. It is also possible that the 'size' or prominence of a model theme changes as we move among various singer constituencies. As mentioned, the relative importance of features of conducting is very difficult to pin down here—this study is not able to say what matters most, only what matters. Qualitative methods only provide qualitative proxies for quasi-quantitative aspects, such as, for example, a ranking of conductor attributes. A more serious problem with the model themes is what we might call *level of granularity*. In this study, music skills and competences did not take a very prominent position, because they were not talked about much and therefore did not constitute a key distinguishing feature among individual conductors and experienced situations. Each of the coherence themes, on the other hand, was elaborated upon at length, probably because they represented noteworthy features for these singers. Conducting as perceived by much less skilled singers might have lent itself to a much simpler coherence theme ('nice person', perhaps) and a greatly enlarged view of ways in which the conductor might help the singer. On the other hand, rehearsal management might be much less prominent in that model. It is a prominent feature for professionals because project time is limited and singers require less detailed guidance. For a more socially oriented choir, aspects like ambiance would take precedence over efficiency. These examples indicate that while the individual themes in the enactment model

may be fairly robust, the model as presented in this dissertation represents but one particular 'resolution' of the conducting image, in that each theme is depicted at a specific level of granularity that expresses the experience of the interviewed singers in this study.

16.2. Reflections on research process and methodology

16.2.1. The importance of peer conversations

During the data collection phase, I was struck by how easy it was to engage singers for interviews and then organise the requisite venues, and by the enthusiasm and willingness to share that the singers exhibited during the interviews. Staging the interviews as peer conversations was very successful. The singers did not act as though they were producing something whose relevance was obscure, but as though they were enjoying an experience of sharing here and now. As I began to expose the richness of this experience, the semi-structured interview (a euphemism applied to most qualitative interviews) in practice turned into an unstructured conversation, as I sought each given singer's 'horn of plenty'. Most singers had a few topics with which they had extensive experience, deep reflections or strong opinions. It was obvious that the singers were more likely to expose the essentials of musical leadership when they were invited to dig deep on particular topics rather than touch upon all of them.

16.2.2. Size and homogeneity of singer sample

During my initial reading of the interview transcripts (and in the course of the interview phase, for that matter), I was particularly concerned about the material's ability to generate themes through similar, related or contrasting experiences. I need not have worried, obviously. In retrospect, I attribute the theme-generating power of the material to two distinct aspects of the research design: the number of interviews and the homogeneity of the singer profiles. While it is possible to investigate human phenomena via single case studies, I

found the compilation of multiple, related experiences to be crucial to shaping the themes. Some themes, like *control and empowerment*, are so rich that they could not have been properly developed with fewer singers. Others arose through accounts of multiple experiences of the same conductor, including several of the *coherence* themes. A certain oversaturation of some themes was key to exposing the instability or ambiguity of virtues, such as those associated with *rehearsal management*. The homogeneity of the singer sample ensured significant shared experience while retaining a breadth of experience as well.

16.2.3. Understanding–explication–modelling

The choice of a hermeneutic-phenomenological platform implies the ontological supremacy of appearance (the object's surface) over structure and content (why the object works the way it does). But the interviewees also touched upon why certain leadership characteristics would be desirable, preferred, detested, negotiable and so forth. A phenomenological inquiry thus implicitly or explicitly provides some of the rudiments of cause and effect. But is that inquiry then undermined as a result? Does the epistemological platform self-destruct as soon as we attempt to model the findings? Or can models and causal-like relationships be safely constructed from phenomenologically founded research? In my judgement, we are safe as long as causal-like insights emerge as part of the phenomenon but are never imposed upon the structure and execution of the interviews or their interpretation.

A related issue is whether interpretation runs the risk of going too far, becoming too refined and intricate or even covertly introducing preexisting concepts. The meeting point between phenomenological description and interpretation has been discussed at a couple of junctures in this dissertation. Hermeneutic phenomenology takes the view that no pure phenomenological description is possible, and that meaning is already embedded in description. This view appears to apply as long as we find ourselves within a single interviewee statement or an integral descriptive text. But when I am processing multiple text fragments from one or multiple interviewees, I likely impose my interpreter's imprint in four additional ways, here given in order of increasing gravity:

- The process of uncovering and framing themes connects descriptions from multiple singers and entails going beyond what any single individual singer talked about. The meaning of one individual is related to the meanings of other singers.
- The process of writing out a theme takes interpretation one step further, introducing more elaborate wording and comparing and contrasting related experiences. In the present study, each theme write-up was based entirely upon meanings found in the transcriptions, and even upon the actual words used by the interviewees, where possible. Nonetheless, a new text was created: the interpreter' narrative. While this step seems to be safely within the bounds of phenomenological inquiry, it in fact resides in a grey area between description and conceptualisation.
- The theme structure, of course, is not arbitrary. It was arrived at partially by choice (Ladkin's three-element model) and partially from the narrative expressivity of the theme write-ups. Moreover, the themes are intended to be layered, implying that there are relationships and structures among them that do not appear directly in the singer statements. This may not be highly controversial, though—any text is sequential, and every possible sequence is also a structure. As such, the structure could be forgiven as a necessary evil, a practical way to convey the understanding of each theme without attributing any particular meaning to the structure itself.
- By creating a *graphic image* of the theme structure, however, I have taken a fourth step that clearly involves conceptualisation. The legitimacy model and the enactment model are not about perceptions, then, but about the researcher's concepts. The question is therefore whether this process ultimately violates the foundations of phenomenology.

I see two complementary ways to deal with this problem. One is to abandon the philosophy-of-science platform of phenomenology behind. The insight that has been generated from a phenomenological inquiry has now been applied within an alternative scholarly frame that accommodates structures and processes. The other is to insist that the models are meant to be ways of understanding

what the interviewed singers said and meant. The overall view of the layered model, then, could be laid out as the following text:

Musical leadership is experienced via the mastery that the conductor brings to the musicking situation and exhibits there. Mastery involves relational as well as musical-technical skills. It is enhanced or weakened by the integrity of the embodied conductor being. The conductor's authority, sincerity, devotion, vision and will serve as gate openers for the musicking experience. When these gate openers are in place, the conductor may be able to create an intersubjective space, where the sounding music is most fully experienced. The intersubjective space is characterised by joint sensemaking, conductor presence and singers' zest.

This text is an interpretive extension of the theme write-ups in part II. Although it smacks of conceptualisation, it is in fact merely a reading and rewriting of multiple singers' perceptions of musical leadership. The models are nothing more than *iconic depictions of interpretive text*, in other words; they have no value beyond their ability to enable understanding and exchange understanding between readers. The validity of the models is purely communicative, and for this reason, they are not standalone concepts. Their terms are not framed by definitions but by the narrated themes and the singer quotations. The main benefit of these iconic models is that they escape the straightjacket of sequenced text, allowing us to point at a particular theme, jump to another theme, and reflect on their linkage. They also allow dialogue about one particular theme, while at the same time we can see the other themes. The models do not claim to be reality or to predict reality. They also do not claim to be precise but only to be plausible enough to make sense, as Weick's fifth property of sensemaking suggests. Their value will be proven or disproven by their usefulness in scholarly disciplines and musical practices.

16.2.4. Thematic breadth versus depth

The choice of approaching musical leadership as an experienced phenomenon invites a broad view of the topic, and I opened things up from the start with the way I began the interviews. The holism of the research findings demonstrates the strength of the approach. Of course, it is sobering to realise that every theme that was uncovered, described, interpreted and framed here merits a whole dedicated project. Yet this does not invalidate the project's 'shallow'

view (in a literal and non-demeaning sense), in terms of either methodology or scientific rigour.

Though the aggregate results do appear in the form of a broad and shallow model, each interview was in fact a deep dive into only a few aspects of the conducting experience. This means that the results are not a shallow representation of musical leadership as lived experience. The character of the model is instead attributable to a thin and somewhat fragmented application of subject matter theory to each specific theme. Just as breadth presents an apparent challenge to depth, so does depth challenge breadth: diving deep into only few topics in a given interview happened at the expense of a more systematic exploration of all of them. Various qualifications upon the data ensue. What did a particular singer *not* talk about, and why? Where certain apparently salient features of musical leadership in a particular interview in fact either circumstantial or coincidental? Did the interviewer's own background, which most of them knew something about, affect their priorities? Did the reigning choral singing discourse affect their priorities? Why, for example, did almost no one talk about gender, money, prestige or power? The ongoing process of professionalising choirs in Norway and changing government funding of advanced amateur choirs constitute structural constraints that affect how singers look at conductors. These questions do not have simple answers and must be set aside within the frame of the present dissertation.

16.2.5. Agency versus structure

The choice of a hermeneutic-phenomenological platform privileges the first-person perspective. Choosing interviews with singers as the project's only data source likewise reinforces a strong bias towards agency at the expense of structure. Although these decisions are true to the aim of phenomenology to understand the human life world, the fact remains that there are structural aspects of the conducting phenomenon that are passed over. It is true that a philosophy-of-science platform that combines agency and structure would have been fruitful—choral singing and choral conducting could have been investigated as practice fields, for example. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* also likely represents a powerful approach to the conductor role as well as singer identities. The regulation of practice fields and the negotiation of power are

elements of choral life and conducting that come through clearly in many of the interviews, but this avenue of inquiry must be left for another time. Given the dearth of singer views in the literature, and the almost nonexistent holistic and qualitative research base, I remain convinced that a lived-experience-only approach provided important insights that might have eluded these other approaches.

16.3. Implications

16.3.1. Implications for conducting practice

The research question reflects in itself a certain humility with regard to what it takes to fill the conductor role, both by questioning what the role is for and by recognising that how singers experience the role matters. The point of departure is that the value of musical leadership derives from its impact, not from what is intended, how the conductor is trained or what some administrator decides. Although the interviewed singers provide a multitude of experiences with conductors they value highly, the stories also indicate widely varying levels of self-awareness on the part of the conductors themselves. In my judgement, a key implication for conducting practice is the recognition that, though the role provides an inherent legitimacy, this legitimacy must be substantiated through the way in which the role is enacted. Understanding the impact of one's own practice, however, is difficult in the absence of conscious verbal exchange. In many ways, being a conductor is lonely, because the role stands apart from the rest of the ensemble and demands a different distance-intimacy blend than that among the singers. The models developed in this project will hopefully help to nurture a professional exchange around conducting practice and philosophy.

Another key implication of the study is the conscious and explicit recognition of elusive perfection—that the conductor continuously faces balancing acts that require good situational judgement as well as the ability to choose among and adapt the various approaches and interventions. Few 'best practices' are universally and permanently effective. A related point is that conducting as a musicking act cannot be isolated as knowledge only, gestural

skills only or demeanour only—it will always be an integral human-being-in-action. As a complex, personal and situational phenomenon, great musical leadership would seem to demand significant self-insight. The short version of the enactment model could be paraphrased as follows: Know the music, know the ensemble, know yourself!

16.3.2. Implications for teaching

Without referring to a specific school of training, it is not possible to draw clear implications of this study for teaching as such. Good conducting teachers probably embody many of the insights, even unconsciously. For a specific school, many of the insights from this study may therefore be imbedded in its teachings and practices, although not necessarily visible as curriculum, by how. However, four topics are worth reflecting on, independently of school of training or level of teaching:

- Viewing conducting as an extension of playing an instrument is too narrow. Music students are naturally obsessed with playing their instruments and dismiss auxiliary subjects that might interfere with this. But conducting as ‘playing’ encompasses a host of auxiliary concerns, including all of the musical leadership themes that are covered in the enactment model.
- The previous point touches upon the question of core versus supporting curriculum in conductor education. This study, of course, advocates for a broadening of the core curriculum beyond what most educators presently apply.
- More challenging is the degree to which elements of the conductor curriculum should be taught as stand-alone subjects or as integral parts of the act of musical leadership. This applies to specific music skills (like gestural and aural skills) as well as overall rehearsal management technique and relational skills. Based on the findings of this project, the holistic nature of effective musical leadership advocates for the integration of the various features into real musicking situations. The trick, however, would be to make the real ensemble situation

accommodate all the various features, in terms of instruction, practicing, coaching, and self-reflection.

- Lastly, it seems as if conductors could benefit from more systematic and explicit sharing of experience, making use of multiple sources of feedback and reflection beyond tutor feedback and occasional peer chats. The conducted ensemble (and probably also fellow conductors) is an underutilised asset when it comes to reflecting on the impact of a conductor in training. Two obvious themes for such feedback include rehearsal organisation and the match between conductor interventions and singer needs.

It should be noted that the above points are meant as food for thought only, and their relevance will depend on the context in which they are applied.

16.3.3. Implications for research

The validity of the findings is first and foremost determined by their ability to accommodate and shape dialogues about musical leadership. The findings themselves should be scrutinised and tested in light of other research. Furthermore, the robustness of the findings should be tested through their application outside of the research design of this project. What changes about those findings in relation to other ensemble types, competence levels, musical cultures and national traditions? What remains stable?

Many of the research topics involving conducting are studied using quantitative methods, but I believe that they would also benefit from being pursued qualitatively. Much of the research addressing rehearsal organisation is too reductionistic, probably as a result of quantitative methodologies. The rehearsing process is so complex that the best insight likely derives from data that is shaped according to how it is experienced rather than how it can be measured. Several of the rehearsing topics, like mentorship, self-learning versus teaching, and timing, are deeply human-experiential phenomena (as opposed to natural/biological) and deal with what is meaningful for the singers.

Conducting gesture poses a particular problem, since singers respond to it, to a large degree, via unconscious mirroring. However, this does not mean that singers are not *also* reflecting on what is going on. While it may be

absolutely relevant to measure what conductors and singers do, we should always remember to speak with them about how things work as well. When it comes to complex human phenomena like conducting, we should worry less about measuring people and more about understanding them.

As was commented on in section 16.2.5, this research project has reflected its agency bias in its attention to the singers' lived experience and ways of creating meaning from their choral lives and exposure to conductors. Given the insights generated from this project, it would be interesting to investigate several of its sub-topics via a combined agency-structure approach that takes into account how the leadership situation is shaped and understood via power relationships, identities and discourses. This sort of follow-up study would probably be most relevant to the outer strata in the enactment model. Conversely, the innermost strata could be investigated through deeper penetration into musical intersubjectivity, seeking understanding via phenomenology and psychology or explication via neurology and the cognitive sciences. In fact, the tension between understanding conducting as a human phenomenon and explaining conducting as a biological mechanism is as interesting as it is challenging. Recent and ongoing research on musical gestures and meaning takes advantage of new possibilities for biometric measuring (see, for example, Johannsen & Nakra [2010]). The premise for my project is that the lived experience of choral singers is accessible to the conscious mind and expressed by language. However, musicians are able to perceive and respond to physiological changes in the conductor that are very complex and happen continuously over very small time intervals; these may be unconscious or otherwise difficult to express in language (Johannsen & Nakra, 2010:286). Thus there may be impacts of conducting gesture that fall *outside* the domain of the singer life world (as a phenomenological notion). If so, we are met with an ontological shortcoming. More specifically, what conducting *is* cannot be fully answered within any given philosophy of science. The natural sciences do not recognise the *meaningful* aspects, and the humanities do not see all of the biological mechanisms that are at work. It could be argued that this is the case for all phenomena, but conducting is denser than most, and its tensions seem unusually prominent. In any case, future research on conducting must be more explicit than ever before about its philosophy-of-science foundation. These simple questions must be asked: What are we able to find out? What is it that we cannot see?

At this point, we could attempt to finally define the key terms of this dissertation. We could define musical leadership in terms of the overall role and choral conducting in terms of certain specifics (and conducting gesture as a subset of this domain). I will not do so, however, because I remain convinced that both musical leadership and choral conducting, as terms, are characterised more by their rich content than by their delimitations. Hopefully this project has filled them with a variety of facets that in sum have defining powers. The notion of *sensemaking* suggests what conducting *is*, and the *enactment* themes frame *how it works*. But neither of these acquires its meaning from semantic precision but from interactional and situational use.

Parts of organisational-science academia have started to study aesthetic leadership and the aesthetics of leadership, looking to the arts for their inspiration. In my judgement, the findings of this project indicate that this is a fruitful avenue for further research. Musical leadership offers two combined characteristics that should be useful to other leadership domains. On the one hand, musical leadership requires a high level of sensitivity and a desire to engage intersubjectively and deeply with the ensemble. On the other hand, the conductor role is prominent among those leadership positions that most explicitly accommodate unquestioned decision-making. Conductors must demonstrate strong vision and will power, then, but they must do so via an unfettered creative engagement with their followers, to the profound mutual benefit of each party. The role involves high intensity on task and people, and also in time. There is a density of impact here that is not found in most leadership situations. Conducting therefore represents a very promising laboratory for investigating the effects of leadership in general.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Statement of consent (Norwegian)

Sample statement of consent (neutralised):

Fra: [redacted]@gmail.com
Emne: Re: Samtykke
Dato: 7. september 2010 09.31.51 GMT+02:00
Til: jansson@online.no

Hei,

jeg samtykker at intervjuet med meg brukes til prosjektet beskrevet under.

Mvh

2010/9/7 Jansson Dag <jansson@online.no>

Medvirkningen gjelder:

Dr.gradsprosjektet: Musikalsk lederskap
Handler om: Dirigentrollen sett fra korsangerens vinkel
Utfører: Dag Jansson
Institusjon: Norges musikkhøgskole
Periode: 2010-2012

Medvirkningen omfatter intervju om egen erfaring med dirigering, dirigenter og ulike opplevelser i tilknytning til musikalsk lederskap. Det gjøres lydopptak av intervjuene og disse bli nedskrevet og analysert.

Anonymitet:

Ingen intervjudata (lydopptak, nedskrivning) gjøres tilgjengelig for andre enn utfører, samlet eller i større deler, heller ikke det faktum at intervjuobjektet har medvirket. Enkeltstående sitater vil bli brukt i sluttrapporteringen, men alle konkrete referanser til personer, steder eller situasjoner vil bli utelatt eller anonymisert.

Destruksjon:

Når prosjektet er fullført vil alle grunnlagsdata bli slettet.

Uttreden:

Intervjuobjektet kan når som helst trekke seg og kreve sitt intervju fjernet fra prosjektet.

Dag Jansson
Postboks 56
1560 Larkollen

Tel 6926 1987
Mob 9084 3634
jansson@online.no

Appendix 2. NSD Approval (Norwegian)

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Havard Hørfagros gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tlf: +47 55 58 21 17
Faks: +47 55 58 90 50
mailto:nsd@uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.no: 985 521 884

Dag Jansson
Norges musikkhøgskole
Postboks 5190 Majorstua
0302 OSLO

Vår dato: 26.11.2010

Vår ref: 25518 / 3 / LMR

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 12.11.2010. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

25518

Behandlingsansvarlig
Daglig ansvarlig

Musikalsk lederskap

Norges musikkhøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Dag Jansson

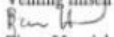
Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 20.11.2012, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Bjørn Henrichsen


Linn-Merethe Rød

Kontaktperson: Linn-Merethe Rød tlf: 55 58 89 11
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Appendix 3. NSD assessment (Norwegian)

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 25518

Utvalget består av 15-22 korsangere. Data samles inn via personlig intervju/gruppeintervju.

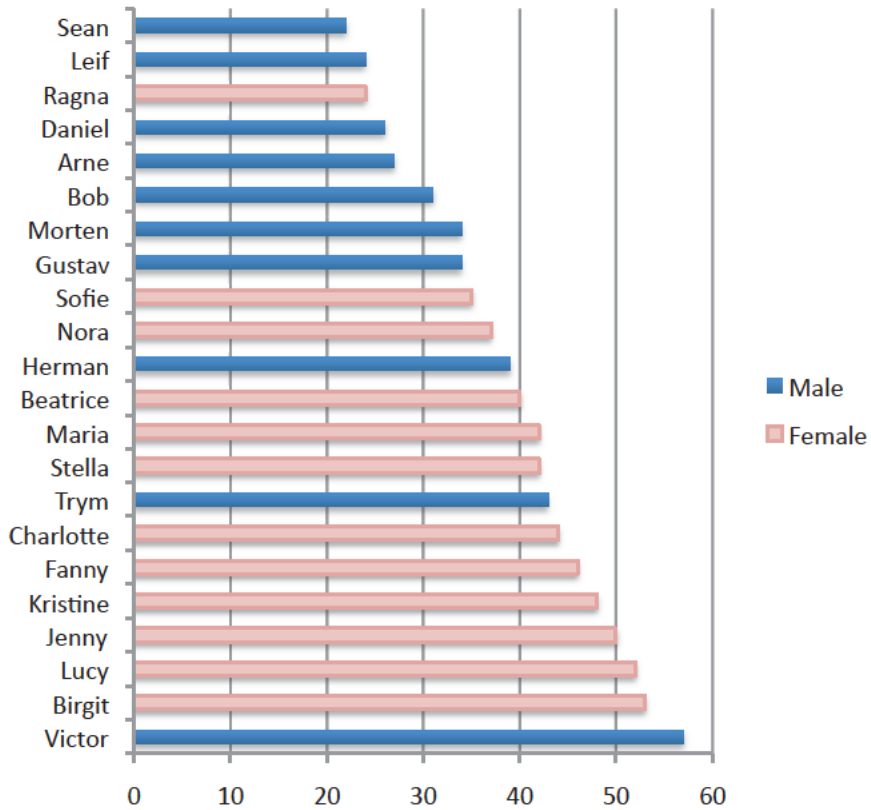
Prosjektleder foretar førstegangskontakt via telefon eller e-post med henvisning til den lokale kontaktpersonen som har foreslått vedkommende som mulig informant. Det gis muntlig og skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet. Personvernombudet finner informasjonsskrivet vedlagt meldeskjemaet, tilfredsstillende.

Prosjektleder opplyser at det kan fremkomme opplysninger om tredjepersoner i intervjuene (dirigenter). Ombudet legger til grunn at identifiserbare opplysninger om tredjepersoner anonymiseres fortløpende ved transkribering, og anbefaler at det foretas konkrete vurderinger i hvert enkelt tilfelle, om hvorvidt tredjepersoner skal gis informasjon om prosjektet.

Prosjektet skal avsluttes 20.11.2012 og innsamlede opplysninger skal da anonymiseres og lydopptak slettes. Anonymisering innebærer at direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger som navn/e-postadresser slettes, og at indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger (sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f. eks. navn på kor, alder, kjønn) fjernes eller endres.

Appendix 4. Overview of interviewees

Age distribution (years) by alias:



No of interviews in each location:

Tromsø:	3
Bergen:	4
Kristiansand:	4
Oslo region:	5 + Group interview: 6

Number of interviewees: 22, of which 10 male, 12 female.

Average age, male: 34 years, female: 43 years.

Appendix 5. Interview guide (English)

Musical Leadership
PhD-project at Norwegian Academy of Music
Dag Jansson

INTERVIEW GUIDE for conversations with choral singers.

Interview type: Qualitative research interview. The format is unstructured in the sense that the themes to be covered are governed by what the informant comes forward with. All interviews start with the same main question (see below). The interview evolves as a conversation where the interviewer participates as an active conversation partner, and the role of the interviewer is to stimulate the informant to reflect on the main question as unconstrained as possible.

Expected duration: Approximately 60-90 minutes.

Establishing the interview setting

The aim is to make the informant feel taking part in something important – also for the purpose of the informant's own reflection and insight. Furthermore, it is an aim to make the informant feel taking part in a secure conversational situation where the informant may share significant experiences with someone who understands the topic, who may even have had similar experiences, so that we together discover important and interesting aspects of choral singing and being lead by a conductor.

Spoken introduction:

Repeat the project goal and scope. Confirm mutual understanding of duration of interview, sound recording and processing of interview data. Underline for the informant that the interview is unstructured, that the purpose is to capture the informant's own lived experience, with the informant's own emphasis and associations.

(Turn sound recorder on)

Starting the conversation:

The informants have beforehand described their choral experience by e-mail, based on a selection of fact questions. These questions are repeated, so that the informant may give own oral wording, and so that interviewer and informant face to face establish an experience arena serving as the point of departure for the interview.

The interview has one main question:

Imagine a musicking situation where you experienced that the musical leadership worked really well. Describe this situation, what did you experience and what was going on?

Optional ‘provocation question’, at a certain stage during the interview, for the purpose of stimulating more themes to come up, when or if the conversation begins to be exhaustive:

Imagine that you can choose between two situations: A) An unusually great musical experience with a highly obnoxious conductor. B) A good, but still ordinary musical experience with a highly pleasant conductor. Which situation do you prefer? What are your thoughts on this?

Follow-up questions:

A series of follow-up questions may be used to deepen the informant’s statements, these are in practice improvised on the spot, they are not all being used, and other questions may be asked as well.

General follow-up questions:

- Say more about this.
- What other associations do you have around this situation? - What did this do to you?
- What do you mean by this word?
- What term would you use to designate this?
- Have you experienced this in other situations?
- Imagine the opposite, what would have been different?
- Do I understand you correctly, if I hear that you are saying ...

Specific follow-up questions:

- In which musicking situation was this?
- Is this experience associated with a specific genre of music?
- What is important to you in this kind of situation?
- Could you describe a bad experience with a conductor?
- Imagine this experience without a conductor, what would have been different?
- Could you describe an experience with an orchestra conductor?
- What do you expect a conductor to bring to situation?
- Do you have experience with NN (conductor name)?
- What was the experience with this conductor for you?

Closing the interview:

- Are there any themes that we have not covered and that you would like to talk about?
- Is there anything about the interview situation itself that you would like to comment on?

(Turn sound recorder off)