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LEARNING THE BASIC SKILLS OF ORCHESTRAL PLAYING IN A STRING ORCHESTRA

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Introduction

I have studied the violin since the age of six and played in children's and youth orchestras since the age of nine. Nevertheless I have always felt that my knowledge about orchestral playing has never been on a level, which one should be able to reach with 20 years of experience. This led me to think about the role of youth orchestras in introducing the basic skills in orchestral playing.

In 2007 when I started my studies in the Swedish national Orchestra Academy, SNOA (Master's degree programme in orchestra studies) I observed how much more comfortable and at ease some students seemed to be than the others while playing in our orchestra projects. Playing well in the orchestra at SNOA level is without a doubt a combination of several factors and I do believe that our orchestral experience as children, the substance and the quality of it, plays a major role in playing well in the orchestra as an adult.

If one compares team sports and music as hobbies, great similarities can be found. Both are started at an early age, are demanding, time consuming and require commitment. In both fields a great deal of effort is put into developing individual motor skills, so that each child has the possibility of becoming a professional, if they so choose. In both sports and music individuals work together trying to create the best possible result as a unit. A significant difference, however, is that in team sports, a lot of time is spent to practice how to function together. It is taught how to read the game, how best to utilize the whole team and how to combine individual skills with team effort. I would hope that the same principle would be applied when working with children learning music in a youth orchestra. Too often, at least in my native Finland, the rehearsals are about just playing through, trying to make the piece sound presentable before a Christmas or a spring concert. However, each youth orchestra rehearsal should be a learning experience, where the students learn something about how an orchestra functions and how to develop as an orchestral player.

I have always been fascinated by the process of learning and therefore by the process of teaching as well. During my Bachelors Degree studies I focused greatly on teaching the violin and thus emphasized on pedagogical aspects. In this thesis I wish to combine my two fields of interests, teaching and orchestral playing.

Owing to severe pain in my arm I was forced to interrupt my studies in SNOA temporarily in December 2008 and move back to Finland. During this time when I was unable to play, I decided to contribute to my studies by working on my thesis. I contacted a music institute called Juvenalia Music Institute and suggested to undertake a half a year project with their youth orchestra called Juvenalia String orchestra. It was agreed that I could use 15-20 minutes in the beginning of each rehearsal to work with the orchestra.

My aim was to approach the orchestra rehearsal from a pedagogical point of view and to seek ways to improve the basic quality of their orchestral playing. As the orchestra is part of each child's musical education at the music institute I wanted to see if it was possible to treat the orchestra rehearsal in a way similar to individual lessons where a substantial amount of time is used to improve the basic skills through scales and etudes, for instance.

From a personal point of view I hoped that this project would force me to reflect on what I consider to be the essentials of playing in an orchestra: what are the skills that are vital to be a good orchestra musician. In the past, teaching the violin has helped me on an individual level as one learns oneself through teaching others.

The Structure of the Thesis

In my thesis I will introduce the different exercises I have used with the Juvenalia String Orchestra. In the section "the basic skills of orchestral playing" I have chosen those skills which I find most important while playing in an orchestra.

In the following section entitled "exercises" I will then go on to show how the exercise in question can be helpful for improving a specific skill needed in orchestra.

For the final part I will reflect on what I expected before the project, how I experienced the project and what I have learned from it.

1. The Project

The project took place in the spring term of 2009 at the Juvenalia Music Institute in Espoo, which is located 10km from Finland's capital Helsinki. In Juvenalia one can study music from musical playschool level all the way to adult education programme. The students have individual lessons every week, chamber music, theoretical subjects and solfege as well as orchestra and choir. In total the students visit the institute normally four or five times a week. I was a student at the Juvenalia Music Institute from the age of 5 to 19. One of the String Orchestra's conductors is my former violin teacher.

Juvenalia has different orchestras for different age groups and instruments. The orchestra I was assigned to work with is called the Juvenalia String Orchestra consisting of approximately 25 young people aged 12-16 years. The orchestra has two conductors who share the responsibility for the orchestra.



In the spring of 2009 the orchestra was rehearsing with several pieces such as Impromptu by Jean Sibelius, Sprättärin by Pehr Erik Nordgren and Concerto for two violins by J.S Bach. This music was also incorporated in my exercises.

Prior to the project in question I had no experience of being in front of the orchestra and it did take some time to adapt to the role of a conductor. Apart from the technical challenges I found it difficult to be responsible for the bigger picture.

With this project I wanted to give the students the opportunity to concentrate only on how to play as an orchestra, not as individuals. In order to do so I took simple and familiar songs known to all the children, so that all their energy would not be directed on coping with their own parts. I tried to create exercises, which would be efficient, motivating and fun for the children. As I had only 15 minutes in the beginning of each rehearsal, time was an important factor in producing these exercises.

2. The Basic Skills of Orchestral Playing

One of the most challenging parts of the thesis is defining what constitutes the basic skills for orchestral playing. First of all, I will only concentrate on the skills that string players need since I have neither personal experience about being a wind player nor sufficient knowledge on the subject. At the planning stage of this thesis, I did not think that my own thoughts on orchestral playing were relevant or valuable, since at the time I had no experience of working in a professional orchestra. Later on I came to a different conclusion for two reasons. Firstly, I realised that the meaning of a thesis in the field of musical performance should be to learn about growing as a musician, develop ones own thinking and share this process with others. By omitting my own views and referring only to others would not help me to clarify the essentials of orchestral playing to myself. Secondly, to my great surprise it has been challenging to find published material on orchestral playing. Most of the literature published is concerned either with how to win a position in an orchestra or on the more technical and historical aspects.

As we have been told on several occasions during my time in SNOA, each orchestra has its particular way of functioning and there can be no universal rule about how to play together as well as possible. For example some emphasize the importance of “leading from the back”, which means that the desks sitting farthest from the conductor try to take as much initiative as possible and some orchestras want to restrict leading or any kind of movement only to the first desk. Also whether to follow ones own section leader, the concert master or the conductor in certain situations varies from

one orchestra to another. Knowing how to read a conductor's movements is the most basic skill of all, but deciding when to follow the conductor is more of an advanced skill. For example sometimes an experienced orchestra musician might choose to follow their section leader in a pizzicato place rather than the conductor.

2.1 Following the Conductor

The most fundamental tool for anyone learning to play in an orchestra is to be able to follow the conductor. With time, the beat patterns should become as easy to read and react to as a sign language. It is vital for anyone sitting in an orchestra to know for example where the third beat is in a four beat pattern.

The first time I was introduced to conducting was at the age of 10. Unfortunately no one gave any guidance on how to interpret the conductor. Especially as a young player one is quite often lost and can get confused about when one is supposed to play. When reading the conductor becomes a subconscious and an automatic function, it can and will save the player from many mistakes.

A former SNOA colleague, who now has students of her own, introduced me to a way of making beat patterns familiar to children. She conducts and counts out loud at least the beginnings of pieces to her students in their individual lessons. This way the children get used to the beat patterns early on and by the time they join their first orchestra, they can already follow the basic beats and actually use the information given by the conductor for their advantage. This kind of preliminary work for orchestral playing done in individual lessons is extremely valuable and does not take any extra time or effort from the teacher.

The conductor's role depends very much on the level of an orchestra. In his book *Orchestral Performance*, Christopher Adey points out: "No youth or student orchestra, of whatever standard, can actually override the direction in the way that a professional orchestra can, and sometimes has to" (Adey, 835). The less experienced the orchestra, the more they need the conductor for playing on time and for being together.

In professional orchestras, as I see it, the conductor is there to carry out their musical vision and has the role of an interpreter of music. Most professional orchestras are so closely knit together that they can play well together even without a conductor mostly relying on their section leaders. As Adey puts it: “---conducting can be the one area of music making where the lack of even the most basic technical prowess may not deter success.” (Adey, p. 835)

Nevertheless the students already in youth orchestras should learn to use the conductor for receiving information about interpretation. It is very common that if a student thinks he is playing correctly on time, he does not bother to look at the conductor. This habit should be rooted out as early as possible for two reasons. First of all, playing without looking at the conductor leaves the conductor powerless over controlling the orchestra. The conductor should have the whole orchestra in his grasp in case he wishes to make changes. Players playing on autopilot will not be able to follow in case the conductor decides to take more time in a certain passage or go forward. Secondly a lot of valuable information about dynamics and character that the conductor is trying to convey is lost if there is no one looking.

2.2 Unified articulation and colour

As a tutti player one of the most demanding and important qualities is to be able to play exactly the same way as the section leader. Each desk strives to play as uniformly as possible. In his book “Becoming an Orchestral Musician” Richard Davis writes about the ability to blend in. This also means that the player has to learn how to be unselfish and possibly produce a more diffused sound that they would as solo players (Davis, pp 89-90). For a string player one of the first things required for having a unified articulation and same colour in the sound is to play in the same place of the bow as the leader. Next step is to try to listen to the right articulation for example to differentiate whether the leader is playing eight notes with or without a dot. In a large string section hearing the leader’s way of articulation can be demanding. That is why each following desk has a great responsibility to adopt the articulation used by the desk in front of them and make sure that it spreads to the other desks in the section.

2.3 Being Aware of the Surrounding Music

As musicians we are expected to interact with each other, to listen to each other and react accordingly. Interaction and communication is the basis of creating music regardless of the musical culture, tradition, ensemble or genre. Unfortunately this often gets forgotten while being a part of machinery such as an orchestra. To be able to react one first has to be aware of what others are playing.

I still struggle with listening to others while playing, which is difficult and embarrassing to admit as a musician. One reason I believe is that I never was encouraged as a child to listen to other sections and instruments on a conscious level, to actually register what was happening around me while I was playing my part. The music educational tradition in Finland is very individually orientated. For example individual lessons are considered to be a very private occasion, the next pupil often waits outside for the previous one to be finished and it is very uncommon that the pupils listen to each others lessons. In youth orchestras there are often 30 individuals playing rather than one orchestra of 30, each student concentrating on their individual parts so intently that they do not listen to the music as a whole. A good example of an opposite approach is the El Sistema, where the ensemble and orchestral playing is the foundation of the musical education.

The El Sistema musical educational programme has started in Venezuela, and has now spread to more than 25 countries. The program has both social and musical mission and is focused at offering free musical education for all children regardless of their socio-economical background. El Sistema emphasizes ensemble participation and group learning and students join their first ensemble as early as at the age of five. In early age ensembles they often concentrate on one note in order to get acquainted with good sound quality in an ensemble. The weekly schedule consists of full ensemble work, sectional work and individual lesson (<http://elsistemausa.org/el-sistema/around-the-world/s>)



Gustavo Dudamel, the chief conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra from season 2007-2008, has received his musical training through the El Sistema organization.

Many of my colleagues in SNOA seem to possess the skill of being aware of rhythmical patterns, melodic lines and harmonic structures in others parts while playing their own ones. They are able to comment on other persons/sections parts without looking at the score. This ability in my experience is essential for any musician and especially for someone playing in an orchestra. I will now go on to give examples of situations where listening to rhythmical, melodic and harmonic events while playing is helpful and even necessary.

Listening and being aware of the rhythmical patterns that other instruments/sections are playing makes it possible to play accurately and together as an orchestra. If, for example, the first violin section is aware that during their quavers the clarinets are playing triplets, they can adjust their playing so that the two parts are exactly together (example 1a). On the other hand if an instrument/section has a melodic solo, it is very helpful to be able to find a section, which has a certain rhythmical accompaniment pattern and make sure that the melodic solo fits with the accompaniment (example 1b).

The image displays two pages of a musical score for the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 (Pastorale). The left page features a flute with a prominent singing melody, while the violins provide accompaniment with changing rhythmic patterns. The score includes various instruments such as flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas, cellos, and bass. Dynamics like *cresc.* and *arco.* are indicated. The right page continues the score with more complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

Example 1b. Beethoven symphony no 6 (Pastorale) 1st movement. Flute has a singing melody and the violins have accompaniment with changing rhythmic patterns. Instruments from above: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas, celli and bass

The third very common situation is the rhythmical dialogue between two instruments/sections (example 1c). If one has trained ones ears to find the counterpart of the dialogue as fast as possible, it will make playing together much easier.

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Example 1c. Schubert The Great C major symphony no 9 1st movement. The dialogues can be found both in strings (1st violins and violas in dialogue with 2nd violins and celli) and winds (flutes and clarinets in dialogue with oboes and bassoons) Instruments from above: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, bass trombone, timpani, 1st violin, 2nd violins, viola, celli and bass

Classical music is often orchestrated in such a way that a melodic line is played by more than one section simultaneously, in the same or different octaves. This is very characteristic especially for the 1st and 2nd violins (example 1d). Instruments/sections playing the same theme should find support in each other in terms of intonation and articulation. Usually letting the lower octave be more dominant, the intonation becomes better.

Example 1d. Brahms Symphony no 1, 4th movement. The 1st and 2nd violins playing the same scale in different octaves

Probably the most challenging aspect of listening is listening to the harmonic structure of the music while playing. Especially during long chords, assuming the music is tonal, it is quite possible to hear which function the tone one is playing has in a chord, whether it is the tonic, the third and so on. Finding the tonic of the chord and adjusting ones own tone to it should be a routine for all the players. The wind players are nevertheless more acquainted with cleaning the chords than string players, because often in wind ensembles each instrument has a greater independent position than strings. Therefore the winds practice intonation regularly, for example in the Swedish National Orchestra Academy the winds have intonation work shops several times during the semester. As a string player I feel that adjusting the intonation in a violin section is challenging because it is impossible to hear the section leader's intonation to the desk further on. Personally I feel this often leads to everyone randomly trying to fix the intonation without knowing exactly whose intonation to follow.

In youth orchestras the conductor might have to point out several times that the players should take notice of a rhythmical, melodic or harmonic event. This has happened in most of the orchestras I have played in, even on professional level, where of course the things to observe are more subtle. I believe that a considerable amount of time and energy could be saved if each player could have the

ability to register the surrounding parts and most importantly take advantage of all the musical information being provided by other sections.

2.4. Being the Section Leader

The leader of each section has responsibilities that a tutti player does not have, such as playing solos, showing the entrances, deciding on the bowings and possibly even fingerings in some cases. They also determine in which part of bow the section should play. Most of these tasks are not relevant for young students since there rarely are solos in the repertoire they play and it is in most cases the teachers who fix the bowings. Nevertheless the most important aspect remains: the responsibility for playing at the right time and being able to lead the others. Although everyone in the section should be as well prepared as the leader and should take responsibility for their playing, personally I have always felt it to be a very different kind experience to sit in the front. The fact that there is only a desk partner to rely upon when it comes to counting and following the conductor, no one sitting in front of the section leader, makes the position very different from a tutti desk. The experience of being a section leader improves one's self confidence and I believe that makes one a better tutti player as well.

3 Background for the Exercises

During 2008-2011 when I was rehabilitating my arm I worked as a school teacher with children aged 7 to 12. In addition I had experience as a violin teacher. Thus I had gained considerable experience in the field of teaching before embarking on this project. In 2010-2011 I was accepted in the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences to the Teacher Education Department at the University of Helsinki. I have a strong second identity as a teacher in addition to an orchestra musician. During these years of being interested in educational matters, a personal vision about teaching has slowly started to take shape. I will not describe the vision in its entirety but as my educational values and preferences surely affect the process of creating the exercises, I will in brief try to introduce the most important aspects of it.

My most sacred principle related to teaching and working with children is to avoid humiliating and causing anxiety in them. At least in Finland in the past decades humiliating, if it was for the sake of good results, was and unfortunately still is in some cases considered somewhat acceptable. Many of my SNOA colleagues have had to stand up from a string section and play on their own or with a desk partner when they were young. These traumatic situations where children or young people (youth orchestras) were made to feel scared on purpose have happened at least in Poland, Russia, United States, Spain, Sweden, England, and in Norway. Of course these are isolated cases and cannot be used to make generalisations, but do give an idea of how adults can misuse their position of authority. Making children feel guilty, anxious or scared through humiliating causes traumatic experiences, which can affect their self confidence and esteem for years to come. For the process of learning, humiliating creates great obstacles because the mind is blocked from receiving new information. It is quite common for all young players to be asked to play alone or with one's desk partner in a youth orchestra, sometimes even standing up. As a pedagogue, this kind of use of authority is unacceptable for me for psychological reasons and also incredibly unproductive for learning. It is easy to imagine that it does not increase the inner motivation of a child, quite the opposite.

The second fundamental principle I follow when teaching is to involve the students as much as possible and help them to be creative and think for themselves. This view has its roots in the constructive learning theory, where a teacher's role is not to feed information but to create a learning environment where the learner can construct new information. This has been a universal trend in the educational sciences for at least since the 1990's and is finding its way to practise in the school context. Christopher Adey uses the term moulding an interpretation with the orchestra rather than instilling one. (Adey, p. 695) This suggests that the members of the orchestra are included in the process of creating instead of treating them merely as anonymous parts of machinery.

Richard Davis calls the skill of true ensemble playing a natural talent and compares it to perfect pitch (Davis, p. 86). I believe that skills are more a result of environmental factors such as exposure, encouragement and guidance than merely talent, a word that is used vastly, and too lightly, in the music world. The idea that one either is or is not blessed at birth with the talent of playing well with others, makes the whole process of teaching and learning seem pointless.

In musical education old traditions die hard and especially in student orchestras it is the teacher/conductor who speaks while the students listen. Asking questions, expressing opinions and

coming up with new ideas is not part of the orchestral culture when working with children. It is true that big symphony orchestras have a very strict hierarchy for a reason. It would be impossible for a symphony orchestra to function if everyone was allowed to speak when they pleased. It might be that teachers conducting student orchestras mean to prepare the students for such hierarchy by trying to behave as in a symphony orchestra. This, in my opinion is underestimating the students. Children are, if properly explained, able to understand the difference between two separate situations such as an exercise where things are discussed and a working situation where a certain amount of hierarchy is necessary. For example school children know how to modify their behaviour depending on whether they are working in groups, independently or taking an exam. The same logic applies to orchestra rehearsals. The children can be taught the conventions and hierarchies of a symphony orchestra but during at least a certain part of the rehearsals they could have a more interactive role.

All of the following exercises include discussing with the students, what was easy and what on the other hand challenging. I tried to create an atmosphere where the students would feel free to ask and comment freely.

4 Exercises for Improving the Basic Skills

4.1 Following the conductor

When working with children, it is often useful to disguise an exercise into a game. I have found that a little friendly rivalry is something that motivates them. For the following exercise each section becomes a team in a competition. Aside from learning the beat patterns I wanted the students to feel a sense of belonging to their section and to make each section more cohesive, which is often achieved through a common experience.

In order to make the most common beat patterns (2, 3, 4 and 6 beats) familiar to the students I invented a game at two levels:

1. I started to conduct with one of the patterns and the team who recognized the pattern first, won a point. This might sound like an easy task, but without any music it can be confusing. In addition I did not necessarily start with the first beat. For the age group 12-16 the exercise became too easy after a few rounds.

2. On the next level I stated which pattern I was going to conduct and the students were asked whether it was done correctly. Each section got their turn to answer whether I had changed the pattern in some way. For example in a pattern of three, I might conduct the second beat to the left instead of right, which is the correct way. For this more advanced exercise I included the five beat patterns as well.

People have different ways of learning. Some find visual instructions easiest, some prefer auditory approach and some learn best through kinetic activity. The latter is often forgotten in educational world, where most of the teaching is done through reading and listening. Combining the ways of learning is productive and treats people with different learning orientations equally. I incorporated the kinetic approach into my exercises by giving the students a chance to conduct. Being the object of information that is being transmitted can create passiveness and lack of attentiveness. Having to be an active subject and to create something physically can be a very efficient way of learning. This kind of hands on – approach gives the students the realisation that they are an active part of the learning experience. First, one should rehearse the beat patterns together, each student conducting from his/her own place. Once they feel comfortable with the most common patterns, the first student can take the conductor's place. It is not wise to force the students to conduct but to encourage them and make it sound as lucrative as possible. Once the first ones have tried it the others want to have the same experience as well. The orchestra plays a simple passage and the adult conductor can, if possible, play in the orchestra in order to give support. Each student does not have to conduct more than few minutes. The idea is to “plant the seed” so that they consciously or unconsciously start to process conducting. Some of them might for example start to think about the patterns during a bus ride or in the elevator and may even try to conduct to themselves.

What I call auto-pilot playing is when a player takes the initial tempo from the conductor and then continues to play only staring at their own parts. This, in my experience is one of the most frustrating things for a conductor, because he is powerless without having a contact with all the players. For this exercise I used the D minor double violin concerto by J.S. Bach. I did not explain before hand what the exercise was about, I wanted them to play exactly as they were used to play.

After playing a while in a normal tempo I started to make exaggerated ritardando's and accelerando's to see whether they in fact were watching me at all. In the first few times most of them kept on playing in a tempo they thought was right, exactly as I predicted. After a few times they got more careful about watching and did pay more attention to what I did. However the more subtle I made the tempo changes the less they followed me. Undoubtedly my very humble conducting skills may have been a significant factor in causing some difficulty for the students to follow me. The tempo changes I did had nothing at all to do with Bach's music and it could be argued that such an exercise is artificial and spoils the music. In my opinion it is effective to use music that is metrically very stable for an exercise like this to make the tempo changes as clear as possible. Bach's music for example does not naturally fluctuate in tempo as much as for example Sibelius's music.

In the next rehearsal I added the dynamics to the exercise, trying to express very clearly the changes in dynamics, again exaggerated at first.

4.2 Unified articulation and colour

In the rehearsal I approached the issue of articulation and colour by comparing it to a wild fire, which spreads fast regardless where it starts from. For the exercise I used a French canon song known to everyone in the orchestra (appendix no 1). The goal was to reach an identical way to articulate as fast as possible. The only thing I did was to give the initial tempo and point at the first person to determine the articulation. At frequent intervals I changed the "source" whom everyone else should follow, trying to give several students the opportunity to be responsible for the articulation. The students had to decide on bowings (separate bows or slurs) and articulation independently.

The students were used to being told verbally which way to play and imitating each other's way to play was something quite new for them. The students understood quite fast what to do and reaching the same articulation and a unified bowings took approximately 4-6 bars. To make the exercise more demanding I asked a person sitting in a last desk to determine the articulation. This way everyone was forced to really listen to the source. There were two noticeable implications. First was

that everyone started to play a bit quieter thus trying to hear the source better. The change in the dynamics was not the aim itself but helped as the students stopped playing on auto-pilot and actually tried to integrate their own playing into the ensemble. The second implication of the exercise was how the students not being able to look back to whoever was determining the way to play, was that they started to find clues in the other sections. For example if a student sitting in the last desk of the first violins was the source, the celli could easily see which bowing the source was using. Then the rest of the violins picked up the bowing from the celli.

Canons are excellent material for creating exercises because of their versatile qualities. They are usually known to everyone since childhood and therefore all the students already know how it should sound like. By definition a canon is a song where groups enter at different times. This gives an opportunity to practice how to enter the music as a section. Finally although the melody is usually quite simple, the canon becomes a piece with harmonies when all the groups play at the same time.

4.3 Being Aware of the Surrounding Music

I wanted to increase the level of attentiveness of the students. My goal was to get them to really open their ears while playing. I used the repertoire they were playing at the time.

I started with conducting normally and then suddenly stopping and asking some questions about the passage we just had played. For example I asked the celli to try to remember what violas were playing, which rhythmical pattern for instance, and ask the first violins whether the second violins had the same melody or not. In the case of J.S. Bach's double violin concerto, I asked the following questions. (Instruments in all the double concerto excerpts: 1st solo violin, 2nd solo violin, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas and bass continuo)

1. for the 1st violins: are you playing the theme and if not, where can you find it?

Vivace.

Violino concertato I.

Violino concertato II.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Continuo.

2. for the continuo players, during your long note, in which section is playing sixteenth notes?

3. for the viola players, which section is playing eight notes same time with your sixteenth notes in bar 16?

* Vergleiche Jahrgang XXI, Lieferung 2, Seite 83. B.W. XXI (D).

4. for the second violins, which rhythm do the violas have in bar 12?

These are just some examples of the questions one might ask the pupils. Of course in a string orchestra there are only five sections (1st and 2nd violins, violas, celli and double bass) and therefore not so many different things to listen to as in a symphony orchestra.

If the students are not yet ready to play in a bigger ensemble such as a symphony orchestra, one can provide the symphonic music for them through other means. I believe that an orchestra rehearsal

does not have to be about playing 100% of the time. Some minutes can be used to develop the students' observation skills. A very simple way of executing this task is to play recorded music for the students. It is as well an excellent way to introduce essential symphonic repertoire to the pupils and show them what an orchestra is capable at its best. Seeing glimpses of the goal they are working to achieve might be motivating factor for many. Naturally it would be the ideal situation that the children would go to symphony orchestra concerts but unfortunately nowadays it is not so many who do that voluntarily. Listening to music composed for an entire symphony orchestra familiarizes the pupils with different wind and percussion instruments and helps them to differentiate them from one another.

It is important to choose an excerpt which is suitable for the purpose i.e. is not too complicated but still versatile enough to provide a challenge for the students. For the age group of 12-16 years old I would suggest an excerpt from Bartok's Concerto for orchestra. It is, in my opinion, irrelevant what era or style the music represents. It is often thought that the earlier the music is composed the easier

it is to listen. However some music composed in the 20th century might be very articulate and thus easy to follow and analyze. The texture of the music composed in the 17th and 18th centuries is less heavy and complicated than 19th and 20th century music but it can be difficult to differentiate one section from another because the sections are more blended in with each other. After going through several orchestral music excerpts the pupils will start noticing which sections are usually supporting each other like the celli and bassoons or the 1st violins and flutes. Although the orchestration of different eras, musical styles and composers vary tremendously, there are nevertheless some similarities.

For the exercise each section should be given their respective parts of the piece in questions. (Nowadays most of the scores and parts are available on the internet, for example in the Petrucci Music Library, where one can legally obtain scores to those pieces whose composers have died more than 70 years ago.) This way they will read the music in front of them as if they were playing it. The students will be given a specific assignment. While following the music in their own parts, they will be asked to answer a question about a specific bar or a short passage (making sure that there are bar numbers or letters in each part).

The beginning of second movement of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra (appendix no 2) is an excellent passage to introduce different wind instruments to the pupils. They can write in their respective parts when they hear which wind instrument has the solo. The exercise can continued until bar 102, when all the solo instruments have been introduced. This excerpt takes 2 minutes and 20 seconds.

Another excerpt of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra can be used to bring attention to different rhythmical issues.

The questions for the Bartok 5th movement (appendix no 3) excerpt could be:

1. In which bar do the flutes come in?
2. In which bar do the flutes play first time on the first beat?

4.4 Being the section leader

The Juvenalia String Orchestra had a fixed seating order, which means that everyone was assigned place in the beginning of the term and these places were not rotated. I decided to rotate the seating as much as possible during the exercises in order to really engage all the students in the music. Too often in youth orchestras the students who are put to the back desks unintentionally get labelled as less skilful and as a consequence get passive and less committed to playing together. It should become a routine to rotate so that everyone gets the leader responsibilities as well as the experience to play from the back desks. The further one sits from the conductor and the leaders the more difficult it is to play and is a skill in its own right as Marja Inkinen, the principal second violin in the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO) said (a conversation during a GSO week in February 2012). In some professional orchestras, especially in the Nordic countries, rotation is very common in the string sections.

During the exercises I decided to rotate the section leaders as often as possible so that during the semester everyone would get to have that experience. Creating an exercise to develop this skill was

demanding because leading is such an individual and personal skill. Everyone has their own way to move and to use their bodies to express timing and dynamics. Helping with how to learn to count felt quite difficult as well. The only thing I thought I was able to help with was the practice how to breathe together with the other section leaders. I used Sibelius's impromptu for this purpose (appendix no 4).

I chose to use Sibelius because it has many fermatas and tempo changes as well as many dynamic changes. The exercise was simply to play without any conducting and trying learn how to breathe together. From bar number 3 for example the music proceeds in phrases of 5+4+5 bars. Each phrase ends with a long note for everyone, which makes it difficult to maintain the pulse and start the next phrase together. This is where the section leader has to take responsibility and initiative. The *largamente* in bar 22 offered another opportunity for the section leaders to determine the tempo. I encouraged the five section leaders to play together as it was chamber music, making sure that they were completely connected with each other. The difference with chamber music of course is that each section leader has an entire section to follow them. Naturally each player in the section has an individual responsibility for their own parts and playing them correctly but the section leader has the responsibility to communicate as clearly as possible, in a way that it is obvious to the following desks when and how to play. The individual parts in this piece were not at all challenging for the students, so the violins played both 1st and 2nd violin parts. The leaders were changed every few minutes and we did not play the whole piece, mainly the beginning until bar 48 and the transition to *Meno andantino* starting from bar 48.

5 The Results and Conclusions

Before the project I hoped that by the end of the term the results would become apparent, even significant. To me the goal felt realistic and attainable. Having taught the past two years prior to the project I believed I could assess the learning capacity and pace of the children realistically. What I had not fully taken into consideration was how big an impact meeting only once a week would have on the continuity and progress. In a grammar school context I had gotten used to meeting the children daily and having the opportunity to revise the next day whatever we had worked on previously.

I was quite pessimistic about the motivation and the attitudes of the students before the project. I expected to encounter opposition and sceptical approach to many of my suggestions. I was also somewhat concerned if it would become too confusing for the children to have three different persons, the two regular conductors and myself, working with them.

Creating exercises and ways of learning is something I have had experience with and feel comfortable doing. However in an orchestra context I was unsure about how to execute the exercises as smoothly as possible, i.e. what is practical when working with an orchestra. In the beginning I used too much time explaining things verbally instead of getting the pupils perform the exercise. One of the main inner conflicts I had during the project is that I could not present ready and full proof exercises for the pupils, exercises that I would have known to be useful, because the project was of experimental nature. It was basically a “hit and try” method which inevitably means that some attempts would fail and could be considered a waist of time from the orchestra’s point of view. I did not advertise my lack of experience to the pupils not wanting them to feel that they were not in safe hands. The exercises would surely be more efficient and productive if they were carried out by an experienced conductor.

It is very difficult to estimate what kind of an effect my exercises had on the orchestra. There is no exact measurement for sound quality and playing well together. As I did not document the project properly with recording or video camera, only speculations can be made over the end results concerning the orchestra. To be realistic, probably the effects on the quality of playing are very modest taking into consideration that I only worked with them for four months. I only got to work with Juvenalia String Orchestra for a limited period of time and was not able to repeat the exercises many times. All of the exercises described above would need regular and long term repetition in order to have a noticeable effect on the quality of playing.

However based on the feedback from the students, I believe that the exercises broke the routine of the rehearsals in a way that motivated the students. It was a period of unpredictable 15 minutes where the pupils did not know what was going to happen and it was something different each time. In my experience if an activity follows the exact same routine each time, the predictability transforms into passiveness. The pupils seemed to be very alert and active during each exercise and if I missed a week, some of them came to me asking in a concerned way if I was not going to come

to the rehearsals anymore. I hope that the one of the main results was to get the students intrigued and fascinated by the art of playing in an orchestra.

This project has made me think of orchestral playing in a new analytical way. During this process I have dissected the entity of orchestral playing into smaller components and tried to examine them. I feel that through this approach the sense of mystery around orchestral playing, has diminished tremendously if not completely disappeared. Having realised that being an orchestra musician consists of skills that can be improved through awareness and practice I feel much more hopeful concerning my own development as an orchestra musician. Before embarking on this project I had the perception that good orchestral players are naturally that way even without guidance. While it may be that some people have the tendency to be more at ease in an orchestra, I am convinced that the basic skills of orchestral playing can be and should be taught. While writing this thesis I have played both in SNOA projects and with the GSO and noticed I have a new sense of awareness towards listening to other instruments while playing and have felt much more confident and proactive.

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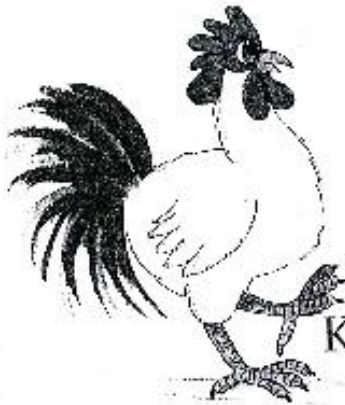
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Alamaassa

L. K. K. K.

1. A - la - maas - sa ma - ja ma - to - la. Ka - na - las - sa kaa - kaa
 ka - na ka - la - la. Ka - na - tar - ha ma - jan ta - ka - na

2. Olomaassa mojo metelo.
 Känolössä kookoo kono ketelo.
 Känoterho mejon toxoni,
3. Ilm issi miji miltii ...
4. Älämaässä mäjä mätälä . . .



Kukkoni kuoli komea

E. K. K. K.

Kuk - ko - ni kuo - li ko - me - a, kuk - ko - ni kuo - li ko - me - a.
 Ei se e - nää lau - la ko - ko - di, ko - ko - daa, ei se e - nää lau - la ko - ko
 dii, ko - ko - daa, ko - ko - ko - ko - ko - ko - ko - dii, ko - ko - daa.

II (GIUOCO DELLE COPPIE)

Allegretto scherzando, ♩ = 74

I Bassoons
II Bassoons
Side Drum

without snares
mf *dim.*

I Trumpets
II Trumpets
S.D.
Vln. II
Vln. I
Vcl.
D. Ba.

pizz.
p

17

I Bassoons
II Bassoons
Timp.
Vln. II
Vln. I
Vcl.
D. Ba.

(*pizz.*)
p

20

B. & H. 9099

30

25

I Oboe *p*
 II Oboe *p*
 Vlns. II *p* arco punta d'arco. pizz.
 Vla. *p* arco punta d'arco. pizz.
 Vcl. *p* arco pizz. *mf*
 D.Bs. *p* *f* *p* *mf*

33

I Oboe *mf*
 II Oboe *mf* senza sordina sempre stacc.
 S. Dr. *mf*
 Vlns. II arco *mf* piaz.
 Vla. *mf* arco *mf* piaz.
 Vcl. *mf* *f*
 D.Bs. *f* *mf*

41

45

I Oboe *cresc.*
 II Oboe *cresc.*
 I Clts. in A *p*
 II Clts. in A *p*

41

45

Vlns. I *arco* *son div.*
 Vlns. II *arco*
 Vla. *arco*
 Vcl. *p*
 D.Bs. *f*

B. & H. 9009

25

poch. rit... a tempo

I
 Clts. in A
 II
 Vln. I
 Vln. II
 Vla.
 Vca.
 D.Bs.

52

I
 Clts. in A
 II
 Bass. I, II

52

Vln. I (div)
 Vln. II
 Vla.
 Vca.
 D.Bs.

60

Flts. I
Flts. II
Bass. I, II
Timp.

mf

p

60

Vlna. I
Vlna. II
Vla.
Vcl.
D. Bs.

senza sopr.

p

spiccato

pizz.

sf sf

p

20^a

70

Flts. I
Flts. II
Vlna. I
Vlna. II
Vla.
Vcl.

f

mf

p

mf

arco

pizz.

arco

non div.

mf

p

mf

p

arco

77 poco rallent.

Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass

f, *mf*, *piaz.*, *arco*, *p*, *mf*

a tempo

Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass

f, *mf*, *cresc.*, *ff*, *arco*, *piaz.*, *non div.*

* Facilitó: etc.

34

I
Vts.

II

I
Trpta. in C

II

90

con sord.

con sord.

p

Vlns. I
(div. in 3)

con sord.
pp

con sord.
pp

90

con sord.

pp

con sord.
pp

con sord.
pp

Vlns. II
(div. in 3)

con sord.
pp

con sord.
pp

Vla.

pizz.
mf

arco
p

Vca.

arco
p

D. Bs.

p

39

97

I
Trpta. in C

II

Vlns. I
(div. in 3)

Vlns. II
(div. in 3)

Vla.
(div.)

arco con sord.

arco con sord.

p

pizz.

arco

pizz.

Vca.

D. Bs.

p

B. & H. 9009

Appendix no 3

82

36

I
Flts.

II

I, II
Bass.

III

I, III
Horn. Ia, I

II, IV

Timp.

36

Vln. I
(div.)

(non div.)

Vln. II
(div.)

(non div.)

Vla.

Vcl.

D. Ba.

B. & H. 9009

Violine II

Impromptu für Streichorchester

nach den Impromptus für Klavier op. 5 Nr. 5 und 6

Jean Sibelius

bearbeitet vom Komponisten
herausgegeben von Frank Reinisch

KIRSI JENNI

SORDINO

Andantino

con sord.

pp

9

17

cresc. *f* *dim.* *p* *cresc.* *f* **Largamente**

24

dim. *mp* *dim.*

33

pp

40

ppp sempre

48

Meno andantino (in 2)
saltando

mp *sim.*

53

f

senza sord

Violine II

59 *mf*

65 *f* *p*

70 *dim. poco a poco* *pp molto*

76 *mf*

82 *cresc.* *f*

88 *mp* *mf*

94 *p*

101 *dim. molto* *ppp*

108 *Con Sord.* *Tempo I* *ppp* *sul tasto*

116 *ppp sempre*