

Training

Being an artist in an orchestra requires skills which cannot be acquired by an only theoretical learning : the professions of musician and conductor are particular in the way that one learns while practising. Thus, all learning involves professional orchestras in a more or less narrow way. How do orchestras contribute to their performers' training ?

Answering this question presupposes taking into consideration not only initial training but also professional integration and life-long training, with stakes being quite different for musicians and conductors.

Speakers and delegates share a same statement : there is an important gap between the musicians' initial training and the reality of an orchestra. The main reason is that conservatoires, academies, music schools or universities – designations depending on countries – don't have for single and unique calling to train orchestra musicians : many students, for example, want to continue their career as soloist or in a chamber orchestra.

But being a member of an orchestra requires particular artistic, human and social skills. And for unprepared musicians, entering the orchestra is often a shock.

On the artistic level first of all, a strong instrumental technique is certainly necessary but not sufficient : John Smith, from International Federation of Musicians, speaks with eloquence of an "art de l'ensemble" which is similar to instinct for an experimented orchestra musician.

Moreover, the work's organization within the orchestra could be disturbing for a musician freshly out from music school. Lars Kvensler, from the Göteborg University, recalls how much work is necessary to master a new repertoire. As for the Director of the CNSMDL, Henry Fourès, he mentions the discovery of exclusive codes for the orchestra – as well as a way of infringing these codes.

In order to facilitate musicians' professional integration, two types of structures have developed over the past years : youth orchestras and specialized career paths. Youth orchestras are represented by Renate Böck, President of the European Federation of National Youth Orchestras (EFNYO). These formations function like professional orchestras and, at the same time, enable development of stylistic and technical skills, flexibility and group integration. At the EFNYO, the leading programme is musicians' exchanges, created to develop young musicians' careers by opening opportunities within the European market. They are therefore confronted with orchestra culture in other countries than their own, other conductors, different teaching styles, other interpretations and new concert halls.

As for some specialized structures such as the Dortmund Orchesterzentrum, they exclusively prepare for competitive entry examinations through mock-auditions and mental preparation. Another example is the Swedish National Orchestra Academy of the Göteborg University,

presented by Lars Kvensler. In both cases, tight relationships are established with the professional orchestras : the permanent musicians are the trainers, related concerts and encounters are organized...

Setting up such structures is still too recent to be able to fully measure the impact, but they express the will to create links between initial training and orchestras. However, one question still remains : must one train for the exam or to become an orchestra musician ?

Indeed, the competitive examinations tend to rate highly soloist qualities even when it concerns a tuttist position. Relating to this subject, Marie-Claude Ségard presents the results of a survey conducted by the European Association of Conservatoires, which she presides, on orchestras' recruitment processes. While in certain countries several rounds are organized in order to evaluate the candidate's different qualities, other orchestras give importance almost exclusively to virtuosity – this is namely the case of France.

Once the examination and the trial period are over, the risk of considering the musician's training finished is high. Now John Smith insists that it is imperative to think about the way one can concretely involve principals as well as tuttists in the orchestra's continuing training process. In this respect the General Secretary to the International Federation of Musicians asks orchestras not to limit themselves to one restrictive vision : beyond musical type trainings, musicians are eager to learn about subjects such as copyright, accounting, tax system, search for financing, the Internet, health, etc.

Educational programmes, in particular, are a promising development line for continuing training, enabling the musician on the one hand to acquire new skills and on the other hand to blossom while working. In this field, Great-Britain is considered as the precursor : such programmes have been implemented for more than twenty years, the most emblematic is undoubtedly the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO).

Judith Webster points out the stakes of specific training for orchestra musicians : it is a matter of making the musician aware of his identity and his role but also helping him make future choices.

Sarah Goldfarb extends these remarks by presenting her experience as a trainer. The aim is to encourage musicians to ask themselves questions : what is the use of training the audience to listening ? What does music experimentation bring ? What is the effect on participants – children or adults – of being a creator ?

The accounts expressed during these workshops reveal a true benefit for musicians and thus, for the orchestra. But succeeding in such projects is on one condition warns Richard McNicol : the competence of the contributing musician must be recognized as a specific competence, that is to say covered by a payment. To develop these skills, there is today a strong demand in experienced animateurs capable of training musicians.

Conductors' training raises questions similar to these mentioned here above : learning is first and foremost done through practise ; but initial training only offers few opportunities to be confronted with real orchestra work. Different contributions illustrate the orchestras' involvement in learning the profession of conductor, whether at the Conductors' Forum in Germany, the Music Academy in Lithuania, the specialized training of the CNSMDP in France or also at the conductors' training programme at the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO).

The BSO's General Manager, Michael Henson, outlines the most important criteria for success : a selection process organized with the music schools and where the orchestra musicians are fully involved, a two-year period of commitment, the opportunity to conduct a wide selection of works in different types of concerts, and work closely with the main conductor as well as the musicians.

This experience enables the young conductor to develop in the real world an aptitude for leadership and psychological skills essential to his profession.

Michael Henson mentions orchestras' moral responsibilities to explain his orchestra's undertaking to train young conductors : if orchestras don't do it, who will train tomorrow's great figures ? Such a statement applies to musicians as well. Because the quality of an orchestra might be, above all, that of the men and women who make it live. Creating callings, developing talents, nurturing support to an artistic project : such should be the ambitions of every training policy.