

Castles versus Cheerleaders

The Clash of Old and New Power Values and Their Effect on the Role of the Conductor

MAJELLA CLARKE

ABSTRACT

All forms of leadership are currently undergoing change, as digitalization, democratization, and increased transparency have led to a shift in social values and a realignment of influence disassociated from power. Power is shifting in the world; old leadership models are clashing with new leadership models. The article presents an analysis of the role of the conductor using the new power compass framework to discuss the drivers of change in the future of ensemble and orchestral direction and their programming to support diversity and inclusion.

The music scene is experiencing calls to strengthen its efforts toward diversity and inclusion at scale. Though still in its early stages of change, much work remains to ensure tokenism, nepotism, and other more superficial inclusive acts do not take hold and rather that permanent diversity and inclusion initiatives within the orchestral and opera fields, and particularly within positions of leadership, are realized. Origins of the renewed momentum include the #metoo and #blacklivesmatter movements, the social media dialogues about identity politics, and a general recognition that power is still cultivated and held by those with privilege.

For example, motivated by the George Floyd protests in 2020, Roderick Cox hosted a virtual roundtable discussion on Facebook to discuss the experiences of Black conductors, which noted the lack of diversity and inclusion in the American classical music scene; see Zweibach (2020) [1]. Another investigation in Finland, a country hailed for its high degree of gender equality and the highest number of state-sponsored orchestras per capita in the world, found that between 2010 and 2019, 93.9% of the concerts in Finland were conducted by male conductors. The investigation also found that out of 28 orchestras, 25 orchestras would plan entire playing years without a female conductor. The exceptions have been orchestras with female chief conductors, but even then, the proportion of female guest conductors distributed has been modest for freelance assignments [2].

Majella Clarke [conductor, researcher, consultant], Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, 00097 Uniarts, Finland. Email: majella.clarke@uniarts.fi.

See <https://direct.mit.edu/leon/issue/55/5> for supplemental files associated with this issue.

Female and nonwhite composers experience similar trends in having their music programmed and performed in concerts, broadcasts, and recordings. Data analysis of the 15 Gramophone orchestra's 2018–2019 concert season revealed that out of 1,400 concerts worldwide, only 76 concerts (5%) featured at least one piece by a female composer and that of the 3,524 musical works performed, 97.7% were written by male composers and 2.3% by female composers [3].

These statistics and trends have given rise to new ensembles and initiatives seeking leadership that considers diversity and inclusion. Recent initiatives include the Boulanger Initiative [4], International Symposium Women Conductors [5], Sydney International Women's Jazz Festival [6], WoCo Fest [7], and Women in Music (WIM) [8].

Concurrent to the aforementioned developments within classical music, leadership theory is undergoing changes in response to nationalism in politics, digitalization, and social media influence. Specifically, Cortellazzo et al. (2019) [9] review the literature on how the advent of digital technologies has changed leaders and leadership roles. Schwarzmüller et al. (2018) [10] researched how digital transformation affected organizations and their leaders by examining the unidirectional relationship between the technologization of leadership and that of the workplace. The research found that trends included increased employee influence (via digitalization) as well as the flattening of organizational hierarchies, and noted that participative leadership has gained relevance. Udupa (2019) [11] presents a critical assessment on the resurgence of nationalism in politics and the role of social media, while Poell et al. (2016) [12] showed that leadership plays a vital role in steering popular contention on key social platforms.

Power relationships have also been discussed in recent music literature with respect to music improvisation and ensemble management. Lang (2011) [13] builds on the essay *Towards an Ethic of Improvisation* by Cardew (1971) [14], explores egalitarianism in music improvisation, and argues that the improvisor's ideals work irregularly within

TABLE 1. The participation scale [32]

Level of Participation	Actions
Consuming	Traditional consumption
Sharing	Sharing other people's content or ideas
Shaping	Remixing and reshaping content or ideas
Funding	Crowdfunding or endorsing with money
Producing	Creating or delivering content or assets within a peer community
Co-owning	Having partial or complete ownership in content or assets

an educational setting and, though many improvisors feel a strong impulse to teach, many also have radical opposition to hierarchical instruction. Clark (2012) [15] reviews how complex, less-audience-friendly (atonal) music elevated the role of the conductor to surpass the composer “exercising glamorous authority on the podium”; however, once the CD revolution of the 1990s made recordings cheap and easy to make, exclusive record contracts previously made with the conductor democratized classical music by shifting power toward orchestral musicians and their managers and funders. “Butch” Morris proposed that the future of ensemble music “must evolve to include the individual sensibilities and the opportunity for everyone to find their expression through the art of conduction,” an art form that unifies performance, composition, and improvisation through conduction gesture directives [16].

Recent digitalization and the idea of a new techno-utopia has created increased social connectivity, leading to instant democratization. Heimans and Timms (2014) [17] explore the clash of new-versus-old power models and their impact on leadership. The article has contributed to the literature and dialogue on organizational theory and leadership with the proposition of using the new power compass framework to understand power models and their value relations. These perspectives are also translatable to power, values, and leadership in opera, orchestra, and ensemble music when applying their New Power Compass Framework. They define the distinct forces and tensions between old power and new power. Old power is explained to “work like a currency, held by a few. Once gained, it is jealously guarded. It is closed, inaccessible and leader-driven.” Conversely, new power is explained

to “work like a current, it is made by many, it is open, participatory and peer-driven” [18]. The article explains how new power gains force through exploring the participation scale. It argues that while the old power model was about how to get people to comply and consume, the new power model is about how to channel power and give people more opportunity to participate, get involved, and offer their support to a movement. An adaptation of the participation scale is presented in Table 1.

Building on this presentation of the new power participation scale, their article compares new power values and old power values, replicated in Table 2. Table 2 was used to guide a web-based review of ensembles to map their perceived position on the new power compass framework.

The new compass framework categorizes entities into one of four quadrants. Castles are entities that use old power models with old, top-down power values. Connectors are those that use old power values with new power models; they recognize the need for scaled support and voice but still guard their control. Cheerleaders tend to utilize old power models but embrace new power values like transparency. Crowds celebrate the power of the crowd with new power values and new power models. The framework is dynamic, and we can expect to see entities move in the matrix, either responding to digital democratization and/or a leader with a new vision. Based on the new power compass framework presented in Heimans and Timms [18], selected music orchestras and ensembles are placed into the framework in Fig. 1 based on website review for further discussion.

Ensembles such as A Far Cry [19] and the North Corner Chamber Orchestra [20] would certainly be in the “crowds” cell of the matrix, with new power values applied within the new power model. They both seek to empower their musicians to take the decisions of a conductor and are self-conducted ensembles. A Far Cry also uses the rotational leadership model and does not have a hierarchy. The players are mostly young and are driven by the goal “to wrestle the music back from the cultural baggage it has accumulated” [21].

The Prague Chamber Orchestra could be argued to be an example of a “connector” in the framework. After the fall of

TABLE 2. New power values versus old power values [33]

Old Power Values	New Power Values
Managerialism, Institutionalism, representative governance	Informal, opt-in decision making, self-organization, networked governance
Exclusivity, competition, authority, resource consolidation	Open-source collaboration, crowd wisdom, sharing
Discretion, confidentiality, separation between private and public spheres	Radical transparency
Professionalism, specialization	Do-it-ourselves, maker culture
Long-term affiliation, loyalty, less overall participation	Short-term conditional affiliation, more overall participation

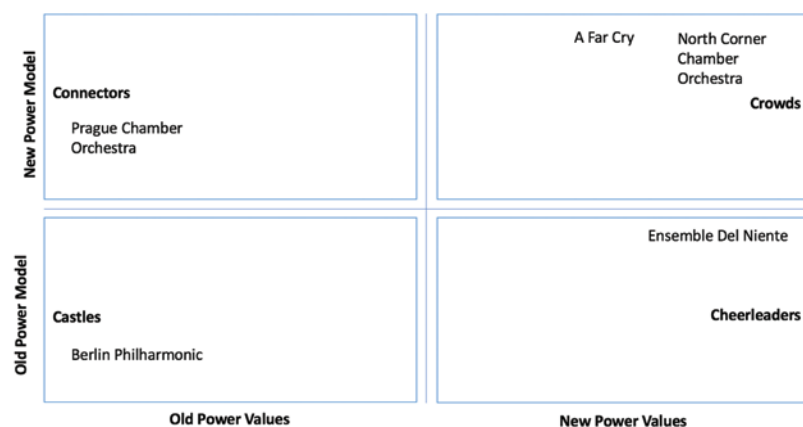


Fig. 1. Examples of New versus Old Power Models and Values [31].

communism, the musicians formed their own company and managed the critical operations of the ensemble [22]. They evolved conductorlessly by specializing in classical music, although they have also premiered contemporary works. Prague Chamber Orchestra is one of the longest-enduring orchestras to be unconducted; however, they do collaborate with conductors when needed, though rarely, and while it is peer driven, it also operates via traditional patronage and with an evident hierarchy [23].

In the castles cell of the matrix, with old power values and old power models, we have the traditional symphonic orchestras with management and institutional affiliations as the mode of decision-making. The Berlin Philharmonic [24] is one example, with both state and corporate sponsorship such as Deutsche Bank, Mercedes, and Hyatt. While it is not clear the extent to which decisions on repertoire and programming are made with consideration of diversity and inclusion, they regularly perform and record, for example, Gustav Mahler and Anton Bruckner symphonies, with many players on call. However, an online repertoire search will show the performance and recording of symphonic music composed by women and composers from outside of Europe comparatively much less often. In the cheerleader quadrant, Ensemble Dal Niente [25] performs new and old music, uses democratized models for repertoire and player selection, and operates within traditional organizational structures such as a board and advisory committee. The conductor's role is about carefully balancing efficiency and organization of rehearsals, performances, and players, while proposing programs in consultation with players to reach new audiences.

Until recently, the chief conductor and artistic director of an orchestra/ensemble had a fair degree of influence on the programming decisions and artistic direction (with whom to cooperate, to delegate, plan rehearsals, etc.). Democratized decision-making models that disperse decisions and influence to players are becoming more common. In addition, new models of conducting are gaining traction. Many symphony orchestras will ask their players to rate and provide feedback on guest conductors, which in turn determines whether the guest conductor is invited to conduct in the future. Some ensembles have chosen the conductor-less model to disperse power. At the same time, new models for con-

ducting are forming. Conduction is a method that eradicates hierarchy [26] and for which there are numerous examples of “Butch” Morris demonstrating conduction. Rotational leadership models could also be explored in such a space. Typically, these democratized leadership models and values will be found in the crowds, connectors, and cheerleader quadrants of the framework.

Many of the ensembles in the new power model/new power value cell are from the U.S.A. and are generally smaller in size (ensemble), have a prominent role in the call for new scores, and/or regularly perform cross-genre music. The rapid evolution of new power/new value ensembles in the U.S.A. is driven by their financing model, usually based on benefactors and philanthropists interested in changing the status quo and reaching new audiences. On the other hand, the management of a symphonic orchestra requires strong organizational practices due to the number of players involved, and typically top-down decision-making models tend to prevail. This, in turn, affects the volume of new music composed for symphonic orchestra and other large productions, with most of the new music commissioned being for ensemble.

Composers play an equal part in challenging the role of the conductor within the ensemble. Highly complex music, even for several musicians to perform cohesively, can require a conductor. On a large scale, several of Stockhausen's compositions require multiple conductors. For example, *Gruppen* (1955–57) [27] requires three conductors in the same performance on the same stage. Xenakis's *Strategie* (1962) [28] and *Duel* (1959) [29] require two orchestras with two conductors directing back-to-back. Pauline Oliveros wrote compositions disrupting the traditional position of the conductor, so that, for example, they would face the audience, as in *Double basses at twenty paces* (1978) [30]. These pieces of music would not be performable without a conductor.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in this review of orchestras and ensembles and their decision-making value/power models, the role of the conductor as a leader, artistic director, and sole decision-maker is changing, allowing for the establishment of new decision and management models. The conductor-less ensembles self-organize, or innovate their management pro-

cesses, in response to the old power models and old value models that, to this day, continue to overlook the importance of diversity and inclusion and furthermore democratize and distribute the decision-making power among themselves. That is not to say that the position of the conductor is completely useless, as the crowds may argue—the function of a conductor is to make rehearsals more efficient and provide overall unified artistic direction. For certain repertoire, this type of hierarchical direction is unavoidable.

The new Heimans-and-Timms-based power compass

framework explores different driving forces that are changing the role of the conductor within the orchestra and ensemble. Driven by digitalization, democratization, diversity, and inclusion, ensembles are distributing power to musicians and are gaining a stronger role in the call for scores from composers and performance of new music. Acknowledging the shift between old and new power values is important when reflecting on leadership principles, because to remain relevant as a leader in this transitional period, one must be aware of the models and values with which they are leading and influencing.

Acknowledgments

I thank the following for their input and discussions related to the article: Graham Abbott (conductor and music educator), Claire Edwardes (percussionist and Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring), Jeongdae Lee (conductor and music educator), Michael Lewinski (Conductor, Ensemble Del Niente; Associate Professor/Conductor, DePaul University School of Music), and Alvin Seville Arumugam (Music Director of the Musicians Initiative).

References and Notes

- 1 M. Zweibach, *A Roundtable on Black Conductors and Classical Music*, San Francisco Classical Voice (4 August 2020): sfcv.org/article/a-round-table-on-black-conductors-and-classical-music (accessed 20 August 2020).
- 2 W. Kvist, “HBL granskar: 93,9 procent av konserterna dirigeras av män—med nuvarande takt kommer kvinnorna ikapp år 2098 (16 September 2020): hbl.fi (accessed 16 January 2021).
- 3 Donne: Women in Music (n.d.): “News & Press: Inequality in Music: Women Composers by Numbers 2018–2019”: drama-musica.com/stories/2018_2019_orchestra_seasons.html (accessed 20 August 2020).
- 4 The Boulanger Initiative: boulangerinitiative.org (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 5 Women Conductors Symposium 2020: women-conductors.com/symposium-2020 (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 6 Sydney International Women’s Jazz Festival: siwjf.wordpress.com (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 7 WOCO Fest 2020: boulangerinitiative.org/wocofest2020 (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 8 Women in Music: womeninmusic.org (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 9 L. Cortellazzo, E. Bruni, and R. Zampieri, “The Role of Leadership in a Digitalized World: A Review,” *Frontiers in Psychology* **10** (2019) p. 1938.
- 10 T. Schwarzmüller et al., “How does the digital transformation affect organizations? Key themes of change in work design and leadership,” *mrev management revue* **2**, No. 2, 114–138 (2018).
- 11 S. Udupa, S. “Extreme Speech| Nationalism in the Digital Age: Fun as a Metapractice of Extreme Speech,” *International Journal of Communication* **13** (2019) p. 22.
- 12 T. Poell et al., “Protest Leadership in the Age of Social Media,” *Information, Communication & Society* **19**, No. 7, 994–1014 (2016).
- 13 Barbara Rose Lang, “Teaching the Ethics of Free Improvisation,” *Critical Studies in Improvisation* **7**, No. 2 (2011).
- 14 C. Cardew, “On the role of the instructions in the interpretation of indeterminate music,” *Treatise Handbook* (1971).
- 15 A. Clark, “The Modern Maestro,” *The Financial Times* (15 June 2012): ft.com/content/ac8c4148-b47d-11e1-bb2e-00144feabdco.
- 16 D. Veronesi and L.D. Morris, *The Art of Conduction: A Conduction Workbook* (Karma, 2017) p. 35.
- 17 J. Heimans and H. Timms, “Understanding ‘New Power,’” *Harvard Business Review* **92**, No. 12, 48–56 (2014).
- 18 J. Heimans and H. Timms, *New Power* (Macmillan Publishers Aus., 2018).
- 19 A Far Cry: afarcry.org/home (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 20 North Corner Chamber Orchestra: nocca.org (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 21 “A Far Cry rocks harder than your favorite music band. But can it save classical music from itself?” <https://thephoenix.com/Boston/music/134396-far-cry-rocks-harder-than-your-favorite-band-bu/> (accessed 27 May 2022).
- 22 Prague Chamber Orchestra (2020): varnasummerfest.org/news_search_results_en.php?page=news_show&newsID=326&nsID=12 (accessed 20 August 2020).
- 23 Prague Chamber Orchestra [22].
- 24 Berliner Philharmoniker: berliner-philharmoniker.de (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 25 Ensemble Dal Niente: dalniente.com (accessed 30 August 2021).
- 26 Veronesi and Morris [16].
- 27 M. Stockhausen, “Gruppen,” in *Mathematik für Chemiker* (Steinkopff, 1995) pp. 346–377.
- 28 I. Xenakis, *Strategie* (Editions Salabert, 1956).
- 29 I. Xenakis, *Duel* (Editions Salabert, 1971).
- 30 P. Oliveros, *Double basses at twenty paces: a theater piece for two double basses, their seconds, and a referee (conductor)* (Smith Publications, 1978).
- 31 Adapted from Heimans and Timms [17].
- 32 Adapted from Heimans and Timms [18] p. 69.
- 33 Source: Heimans and Timms [17].

Manuscript received 28 August 2020.

MAJELLA CLARKE studied piano, oboe, and conducting at the University of Sydney, University of Washington, and Sibelius Academy, and holds a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Contemporary Repertoire Conducting from the Swiss-Italian Conservatory.