

HAYS-FORUM

LEADING DEMANDING EXPERTS – HOW ORCHESTRAS EDUCATE THEIR CONDUCTORS

Swiss conductor Graziella Contratto began her lecture on leadership from the orchestra's point of view with a brief historical overview:

When did being a conductor become a profession begin and why?

What circumstances with regard to art, philosophy, the army and industry existed to enable a more in-depth definition of this product of the 19th century?

The concept of the conductor is a relatively new phenomenon: Prior to the 19th century, musicians acting as the leaders of an orchestra sat among their colleagues as instrumentalists (e.g. playing the violin or harpsichord). The conductor as we now know him (standing in front of the orchestra, without an instrument), came about as a necessary evolution when orchestral works became increasingly larger and more complex and simply "keeping time" required a greater degree of interpretation.

This was of central importance in developing what could easily be called management behaviour. It was also during the 19th century that the "myth" of the conductor was born: a sort of cult-like worship whose roots can still be felt today.

Using two contrasting conductors as examples, Ms. Contratto used the second part of her lecture to demonstrate how it was possible for transactional and / or transformational management to develop within two generations. Sergiu Celibidache (over 80 years old and performing a sample from Beethoven's 9th Symphony) and Antonio Pappano (considerably younger and music director of the La Monnaie opera) were the inspiration for two different leadership models; the one being charismatic, patronising with a top-down approach and the other being empathetic, emotional and motivational.

It is also possible to recognise further leadership qualities in how these conductors interact with their orchestras based on their actual movements while conducting.

Here, Ms. Contratto looked at how people handle power, the relationship between the orchestra and its conductor, and the changes that have and had to take place in the past few decades. Today, the conductor is still in the historically documented position of being the superior and aloof leader, significantly influencing the interpretation of pieces and performances. However, due to the extremely high quality of the musicians in an orchestra, the conductor's task in the 21st century is increasingly more about focus and combining the orchestra's qualities so that the conductor can encourage the best possible results from the musicians, enabling him and them to provide a common presentation of the score.

In the third and final part of her lecture, Ms. Contratto presented her favourite conductor, Carlos Kleiber. In his style of conducting, issues such as participatory engagement versus an awareness of hierarchy, structure versus feeling and dominance versus empathy have become obsolete. This is impressively proven by an excerpt from his New Years concert with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1989.

Having the right experts is now more important than ever. Their abilities, knowledge and experience ensure the short- and long-term success of companies. As a firm market leader, Hays recruits these highly qualified specialists for its clients. In doing so, we promise to unite companies with the perfect specialists. Quickly, flexibly and reliably.