

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - ROWAN HARVEY-MARTIN - 2009 Churchill Fellow

THE STUART AND NORMA LESLIE CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to study and observe opera and symphony orchestra conducting with Maestro Johannes Fritsch and the Graz Opera Philharmonic Orchestras in Graz, Austria and in Rochester, Baltimore and Cleveland, United States of America.

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Signed

Dated

Rowan Harvey-Martin

30 December 2009

INDEX:

Introduction.....Page 3

Executive Summary.....Page 4

Programme.....Page 5

Main Body.....Page 9

Conclusions and Recommendations.....Page 20

INTRODUCTION

The Stuart and Norma Leslie Churchill Fellowship has enabled me to study opera and symphony orchestra conducting with Maestro Johannes Fritsch, actively observing him rehearse and perform with the Graz Philharmonic for the ‘Festival Concert for 110 years of the Graz Opera’ and for the opening opera of Opera Graz 2009 season, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* by Richard Wagner. The Fellowship also enabled me to travel to the United States of America to observe Maestra Marin Alsop with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; Rochester New York to have lessons with and observe Christopher Seaman with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; and Cleveland to observe Franz Welser-Möst in rehearsal with The Cleveland Orchestra. This project was made possible by Mrs Norma Leslie and The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rowan Harvey-Martin
19 Lochbuy Street
Macquarie ACT 2614
Ph: 61 2 6251 2316

Principal Violin with Canberra Symphony Orchestra
Artistic Director and Conductor The Llewellyn Choir, Canberra Youth Philharmonic Orchestra and Radford College Chamber Orchestra

THE STUART AND NORMA LESLIE CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to study and observe opera and symphony orchestra conducting with Maestro Johannes Fritsch and the Graz Opera Philharmonic Orchestras in Graz, Austria and in Rochester, Baltimore and Cleveland, United States of America.

Particular highlights of the Fellowship were:

- In Graz, Austria I was able to observe the entire rehearsal process of the Graz Philharmonic for Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and was allowed full access to all aspects of the rehearsal process, including piano dress rehearsals, early stage rehearsals, chorus rehearsals and full access to the Graz Opera House. One of the most important aspects was the one-on-one tuition with Music Director Johannes Fritsch.
- In the United States I had the opportunity to sit in on all rehearsals with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra with Maestra Marin Alsop as they prepared for a performance of the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra* and the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35* with the international violin soloist James Ehnes.
- In Rochester, New York I had the unique opportunity to assist Maestro Christopher Seaman as he rehearsed the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra for three performances of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and a newly commissioned work, *Geo*, by the Dean of the Eastman School of Music, Douglas Lowry.
- In Cleveland, Ohio I had the opportunity to sit in on a full rehearsal with The Cleveland Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Franz Welser-Möst as they prepared for a performance of Brahms' *A German Requiem*. The Concertmaster of The Cleveland Orchestra hosted my visit and I observed him as he taught his Masters students at The Cleveland Institute.

These experiences have enabled me to learn about efficient rehearsal practice; different set-ups of a symphony orchestra for different genres of music to gain optimum balance and musical effect; how to work effectively with large force; how to deal with a large group of talented and highly educated people in a professional and dignified manner and how to reach an extraordinarily high musical standard in an extremely limited time period.

I will bring the lessons that I learnt on this Fellowship back to Australia in my capacity as an emerging Australian conductor through my upcoming professional engagements; to disseminate this knowledge through my work with Symphony Australia, Canberra Youth Music; in my capacity as Artistic Director of The Llewellyn Choir and through my teaching.

Conclusion: Presently, Australia needs intense and advanced practical, theoretical and musical training at postgraduate level to address the gap that exists in this area of conductor training.

PROGRAMME

Week 1: September 7 – September 12, 2009 (Graz)

- Orchestral rehearsals with Graz Philharmonic for *Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Rehearsals conducted by Johannes Fritsch.
- Met with General Manager/Artistic Director, Elisabeth Sobotka; Director of *Meistersinger*, Alexander Schulin; Assistant conductors Tecwyn Evans and Ulrich Winkler; Stage Director, Alfred Peter; Costume Designer, Eva Maria Dessecker; Chorus Master, Bernhard Schneider and Repetiteur Massimo Parise.
- Met with singers Alik Abdukayumov (Kothner), Burkhard Fritz (Walther von Stolzing), Gal James (Eva), Dshamilja Kaiser (Magdalene), Marlin Miller (David), Ivan Orescanin (Nachtigal) and James Rutherford (Hans Sachs).
- Stage rehearsals with soloists, chorus and piano. Conducted by Johannes Fritsch; Repetiteur – Massimo Parise.
- Soloist rehearsal with Mlada Khudoly (Russian soprano) Johannes Fritsch and Massimo Parise. Rehearsal of the Schlussgesang (Final Scene) from *Salome* by Richard Strauss.
- Orchestral rehearsals and Sitzprobe for the ‘Festkonzert 110 Jahre Oper Graz’ (Festival Concert celebrating 110 years of the Graz Opera).
- 12 September ‘Festkonzert 110 Jahre Oper Graz’, Graz Opera House 7.30pm.

Week 2: September 14 – September 20

- Sitzprobe – orchestra, soloists and chorus. Not on stage.

- Two Stage Orchestral Rehearsals daily 10am – 1pm and 7pm – 10pm with full orchestra, soloists and chorus.
- Three individual lessons with Johannes Fritsch focussing on Brahms' *A German Requiem* and Beethoven's 6th Symphony.

Week 3: September 21 – September 27

- One stage rehearsal run and two general rehearsals for *Meistersinger*.
- Three rehearsals for Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, rehearsing concurrently with *Meistersinger*. One piano rehearsal and two stage orchestral rehearsals conducted by Tecwyn Evans.
- 2 lessons with Johannes Fritsch.
- Saturday 26 September Opening Night of *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* starting at 3pm and finishing at 10pm.
- Opening Night after show party.

Week 4: September 28 – October 1 (Baltimore USA)

- Attended 2 rehearsals daily with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.
- Meetings with Marin Alsop, Zoe Saunders (Ms Alsop's assistant) and Mihaela Cesa-Goje (recipient of the Taki Concordia Fellowship for 2009), Jonathan Carney (Concertmaster BSO), George Orner (former Principal 2nd Violin BSO), James Ehnes (violin soloist).

- Bus trip to Strathmore Center with BSO for concert of Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* and Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto in D major Op. 35*.

Week 5 and 6: October 2 – October 13 (Rochester NY, Cleveland)

- Attended two Symphony 101 adult education concerts 'The Classical Era' at the Hochstein Performance Hall, conducted by Christopher Seaman.
- Attended chorus rehearsals for Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Rochester Oratorio Society, directed by Eric Townell, conducted by Christopher Seaman.
- Attend 'sound check' rehearsal to appraise the balance of the newly refurbished Kodak Hall.
- Attended twice daily rehearsals for Opening Weekend of three concerts of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and the newly commissioned work, *Geo*, by Douglas Lowry. Assisted Christopher Seaman with balance and musical issues associated with the new hall and the orchestral homogeneity.
- Four individual lessons with Christopher Seaman on Brahms' A German Requiem and Beethoven's 6th Symphony.
- Attended all three concerts over the weekend, 8 October – 11 October
- Met with Douglas Lowry (Dean of the Eastman School of Music), Eric Townell (Director Rochester Oratorio Society), Betty Strassenburgh (principal sponsor of the Kodak Hall refurbishment and RPO sponsor), Juliana Athayde (Concertmaster), Melissa Matson (Principal Viola), Erik Behr (Principal Oboe), Charles Ross (Principal Timpanist).

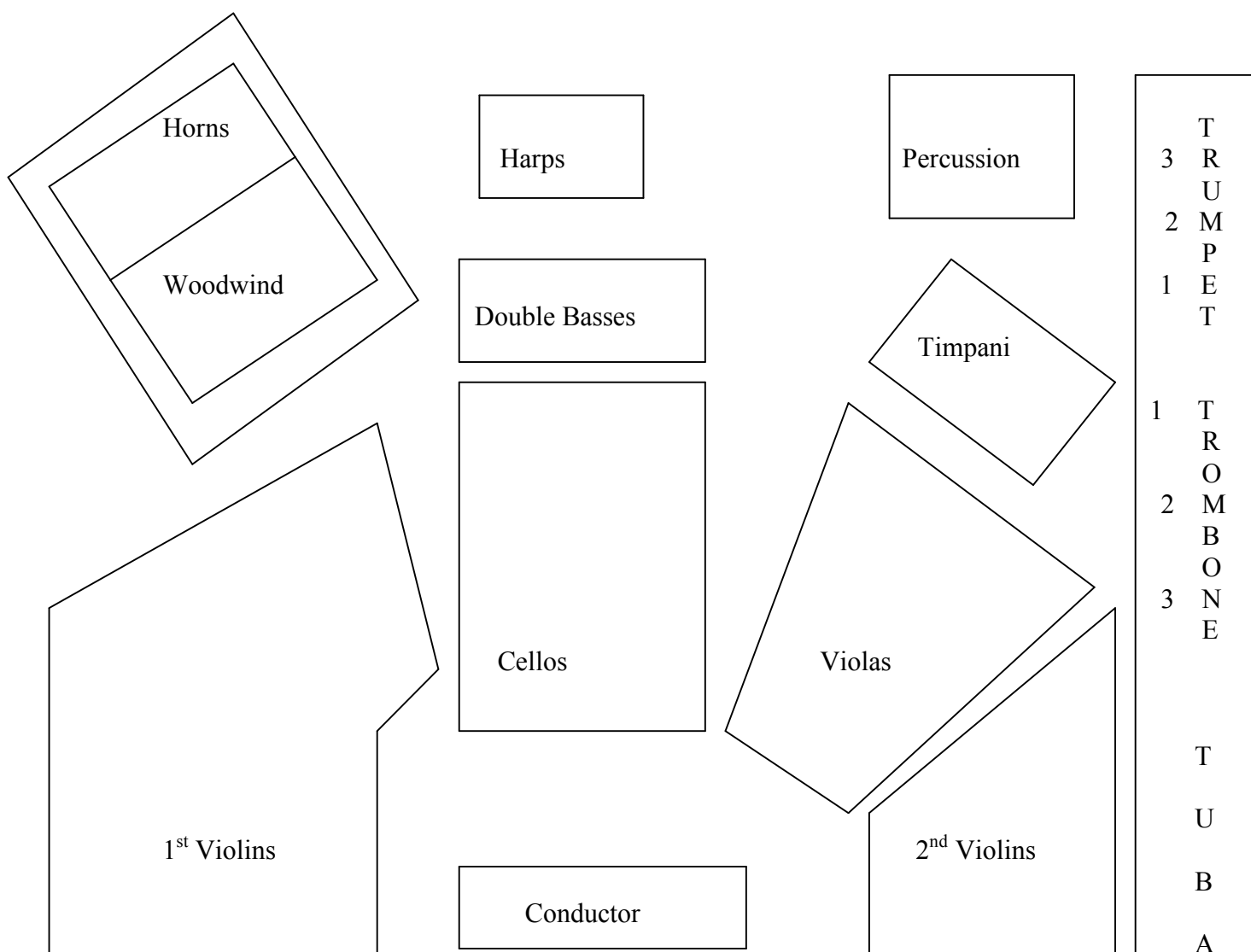
- Travelled to Cleveland and attended rehearsal at Severance Hall of The Cleveland Orchestra with Franz Welser-Möst conducting.
- Renewed my acquaintance with William Preucil, Concertmaster, who showed me around Severance Hall.
- Sat in on lessons with William Preucil as he taught his Masters students at The Cleveland Institute.

Week 7: October 14 – October 20 (New York)

- Met with Dr Kelly Parkes, Assistant Professor of Music Education at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg.
- Met with Miriam Burns, assistant conductor New York Philharmonic, Music Director Kenosha Symphony Orchestra, Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra of the Redeemer NY.
- Attended performance of *Tosca* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

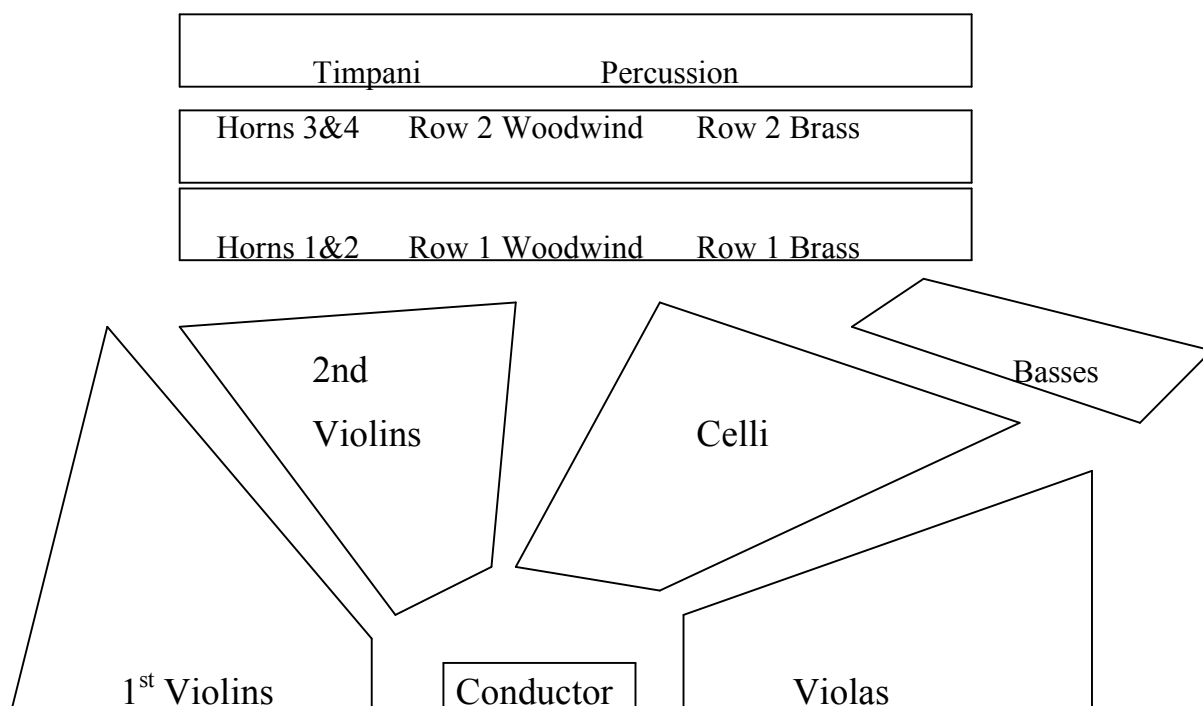
MAIN BODY/REHEARSAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Importance of the physical environment: My Fellowship began with an intense three weeks in Graz, Austria. The day after I arrived from Australia I visited the Graz Opera House for the first orchestral rehearsals of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* by Richard Wagner. The orchestra has enormous forces, so there is an emphasis in the early stages of the rehearsal process on making sure that the musicians are comfortable and placed correctly for balance and blend. The rehearsal space had recently been refurbished with wood and acoustic sound panelling; it was therefore important for the conductor to find the best placement of the sections that would best simulate how it would be when the orchestra moved into the pit. Such consideration would be a welcome innovation at rehearsal venues in Australia.



Once in the pit there were of course the usual adjustments and slight experimentation for placing instruments. The French Horns were brought further around behind the 1st Violins, the Leute (folk harp) was placed on a high riser so that it rose above the level of the pit wall against the wall next to the 4th Horn and the percussion section was put in the first loge behind the brass section.

What was interesting to observe was the difference in the stage setting between the pit set-up and the concert set-up for the Festival concert, which the orchestra was rehearsing alongside rehearsals for the opera. The orchestra was still very large but as they were to be on stage in the theatre there was more room for the players. Maestro Fritsch chose a much more traditional set-up:



It is becoming increasingly popular in symphonic orchestras to swap the violas and cellos around so that the violas are sitting on the right-hand side. Each of the orchestras I visited (Baltimore, Rochester and Cleveland) had more or less this set-up with variations occurring in the double bass, brass, and percussion sections. In Baltimore, the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall was a huge venue that caused balance issues. The woodwind were not on risers and as a result the sound was muddy and difficult to hear. In Rochester, Kodak Hall was smaller, as is the Rochester

Philharmonic Orchestra, but Maestro Seaman did a great deal of experimentation, especially with the woodwind section in order to find the most suitable position. It turned out that from the players' perspective the preference was not to be on risers as the players could hear each other more clearly and they did not overpower the string section. Interestingly, when the chorus was brought in the orchestra was moved further forward on the stage to accommodate the choir and the sound was less satisfactory than with the orchestra further back. In Cleveland, Severance Hall has extremely good acoustics as well as being visually stunning and is a beautiful hall in which to listen as an audience member. The Cleveland Orchestra, being one of the highest quality orchestras in the USA, is used to the acoustics and has found the optimum stage set-up. It is an interesting phenomenon that the size of the concert halls and opera theatres in Europe is significantly smaller than those in the USA. The Metropolitan Opera is an enormous theatre and has velvet covering the seats, floors and partitions. Important to note also was the sound, which although not loud, carried to the uppermost level of the audience balconies without losing much clarity in either the singing or from the orchestra.

Carefully adjusting the environment to the needs of the orchestra for greatest musical effect is an important part of a conductor's knowledge. Knowing the space and experimenting with the placement of players both flat on the stage and upward on risers causes significant changes in the quality of sound. Knowledge of the historical context of the repertoire and the musical intention of the composer also impacts on how to most effectively position the musicians.

Rehearsal Techniques:

Due to the enormous size of *Die Meistersinger*, rehearsal time is at a premium. I learnt a great deal about how to rehearse efficiently and effectively. Maestro Fritsch did not and could not spend time in verbal explanations of what was needed so it was extremely important that he could show exactly what he wanted - which meant his rehearsal needed to be effectively planned and his conducting technique clear and well in control. The expectation is that each member of the orchestra knows exactly what he or she needs to do. The string section, making up the main body of the orchestra, was homogenous and the leaders of each section were very much in control. There were three different wind and brass sections which were interchangeable. This meant that rehearsal time had to be planned so that each player had played the whole opera through at least once before the first performance without too much repetition for the core players.

Opera and ballet conducting is by far the most technically demanding. There are so many things to be aware of and it is in the pit where conductors truly learn their craft. So much depends on the conductor being clear and acutely aware of what is happening both on and off the stage as well as in the pit. Technique is everything. The musicians must be given exactly the same gestures every time - secure up-beats and solid leadership in order for the stage and pit to gel. With *Die Meistersinger* I learnt an enormous amount through watching the interaction between Maestro Fritsch, the singers on stage and the musicians in the pit. At times there were even musicians on stage both upstage and downstage as well as full chorus, soloists and extras. Maestro Fritsch was the central focus for literally hundreds of people on stage and in the pit, making it vital for gestures to be strong, clear and comprehensible.

With the Festival Concert, due to the demands placed on the orchestra, there was again limited rehearsal time. A symphonic concert that has many smaller pieces put together in one programme has issues of time management in rehearsal and depends on a conductor being secure with technique, knowledge of the repertoire and ability to change suddenly from one style to another. Players and soloists rely on the conductor for secure tempi, correct entries and musical indications as well as inspiring the

musicians to perform to an extra level of artistry that a performance demands. For an opera orchestra it is unusual for them to perform on stage so the level of anonymity that gives them a sense of security in the pit is not there. The musicians are on show more than they are used to and the conductor must provide them with the security and leadership they need in order to produce a satisfying musical outcome.

In Baltimore, Rochester and Cleveland the lessons I learnt were slightly different due to the different genre of the symphony orchestra. Firstly, each of the programmes was significantly smaller in time and forces. In Baltimore the programme was only two works for orchestra so there was more time to focus on blend, balance, intonation and musical ideas. Time management, whilst important, was not an issue, as it was easy to cover both pieces satisfactorily. Maestra Alsop concentrated mainly on the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra* and much less attention was paid to the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto in D major*. Technically for each instrument the Bartok is very difficult. Each player is stretched musically and technically and keeping the orchestra together is demanding but not impossible for the conductor. Ms Alsop concentrated mainly on the outer two movements of the four movement work because of the time and meter changes and because these form the bulk of the work. In Rochester, again the programme was shorter and contained only two works in total. With a newly commissioned work however, it is vital that the conductor has a clear idea of how to beat (i.e. if it is in a fast 3 beats or a slowish 1 in the bar, how to beat bars in 5, 7 and 9? etc) in order for it to be clear for the players. Conductors cannot work this out in front of the orchestra even though they have never heard the work previously. Sometimes there will be some changes made once in front of the orchestra but mostly the orchestra relies on the conductor to know instinctively what beats and gestures will work. Maestro Seaman spent the first rehearsal of *Geo* letting the orchestra get to know how the work sounded. It is important not to 'rehearse' from the very beginning but to allow the players to get an idea of the overall structure of the work and how it fits together. Often a conductor can get bogged down in the minutiae and detail of a work when it is far more beneficial, especially in a new work, to run a piece through from beginning to end at a first rehearsal. This also will highlight if there are any

mistakes in the parts or if there are certain passages that don't quite work. If the composer is present, as was the case in Rochester, then this gives them the opportunity to hear their work for the first time to ensure that their initial concept of the work is how it is meant to sound. When rehearsing the Beethoven *Symphony No. 9*, again Maestro Seaman chose to run each movement before working in detail. All the players are familiar with the work and much of the rehearsal was spent on balance between the sections, intonation in the wind and brass and blend in the strings. For the first few rehearsals the focus was on the first three movements that were orchestra only. The last two rehearsals consisted of the final movement with choir and soloists and then a run of the whole symphony. The focus for the last movement was on clarity of the words and balance between choir and orchestra so that the choir could be heard at all times.

In Cleveland I only attended one rehearsal so it is difficult to comment on how the rehearsal process progressed. The rehearsal was dedicated entirely to the Brahms *A German Requiem* and was with both choir and orchestra. The Cleveland Orchestra is one of the finest orchestras in the United States and attracts musicians of the highest calibre from all around the world. There is little need to rehearse different sections for notes or for technical challenges in the music. The standard repertoire is played so often that less rehearsal is needed. The musicians are so used to each other musically that the orchestra could practically run itself. The role of the conductor here (Franz Welser-Möst) is to ensure a perfect balance exists between choir and orchestra, that both the choir and orchestra understand perfectly the marriage between text and music and that the emotional and musical ideas are adequately conveyed. Rehearsals must focus on musical and emotional ideas and the musicians must feel inspired to play their very best and be challenged on a much deeper level. The lesson I learnt here is how much the conductor must know in addition to the work itself. To rehearse a 'Rolls Royce' orchestra and choir means that the conductor must know so much background about the work, must know the structures and musical ideas inside out and in the case of choir with orchestra have an intimate knowledge of the text and its meaning. It is not enough to just to be able to beat. The conductor must be able to

elicit the music from the musicians and mould and play with gestures in order to coax different sounds and meaning from them.

CONDUCTING TECHNIQUES:

As was mentioned previously, it is important for a conductor to be clear, precise, have a clear musical conception and be able to rehearse effectively.

What I learned from my time with Maestro Fritsch was the importance of technique, especially when you are conducting an opera. *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is one of the shorter Wagner operas, lasting six hours. For such a huge work it is important that the conductor have a very clear idea of where they are in the opera, that gestures are precisely worked out and that the conductor's technique is strong and enduring over an extended period. Economy of movement is essential. The conductor is continually looking up and down between stage and pit, therefore posture is extremely important. Any unnecessary twisting of the torso or unbalanced feet positioning will result in injury. Extraneous movements in the arms, body or head can be distracting and can actually be misinterpreted by the musicians. Knowing when to rest and just 'beat time' and when to bring in a musical gesture is important. This must be practised so that the musicians read it correctly. The conductor must be continually ahead of the musicians. If the conductor is beating with the orchestral sound then the orchestra will be behind. The conductor must know when to let the players 'have their heads' and when to rein them in and control what they do. Mostly this is done with the size of the beat. If the orchestra starts to race ahead then the conductor must keep a solid, rhythmic beat which is extremely clear. The bigger the gesture the slower and louder an orchestra will play. The smaller the beat, the more rhythmic and controlled. Size of beat and the refining of beat were focussed on in lessons with both Maestro Fritsch and Maestro Seaman. It is interesting to realise that what you think you are conveying can be perceived as something quite different by the musicians. For instance, when you want the orchestra to phrase a musical line more horizontally but

you beat more vertically and heavily you will get a heavy, stodgy result than if you beat smaller, more fluidly and more sideways. If you want an orchestra to keep moving, but use a lot of arm and body movement then eventually you will be dragged back by the orchestra because they have so much information from you to process. If you want an orchestra to play quietly but give a huge upbeat then they will come in loudly and if you want a string section to play pizzicato sections (where the players pluck their strings) together but do not have a clear bottom of your beat then the players will not know where to play. Body language and gesture are a conductor's tools. They must be explored effectively and practised, in front of a mirror and in front of real musicians in order for them to be perfected.

Comparisons between the conductors I observed and worked with were interesting. I could see a great deal of similarities as well as diversity in the different techniques. Maestro Fritsch is very clear and very precise. The control he has over players is mesmerising. His beat is strong, his gestures transparent and clean and his knowledge of the music thorough. Maestro Seaman also has a very clear and very precise beat. His internal rhythm is rock solid and he is never lead by the players. He is always in total control. Maestro Seaman's gestures always have a musical end. There is never a moment when the beat is idle. The beat will always lead the musical line but will never lose its rhythmic basis. Both conductors will not tolerate lack of unanimity. They are able to get the result through their gestures rather than through verbal explanations. Maestra Alsop had quite a different technique. There was body movement, often leaning inwards towards the orchestra which meant she lost control and authority on the podium. The back of the orchestra and the front of the orchestra were often not together as complicated gestures meant lack of focus on the fundamental beat. With Franz Welser-Möst the focus was on the musical outcomes. Beat was not always necessary but 'painting' a picture and pulling the sound from the choir and orchestra and shaping it was paramount. There was minimal body movement and the gestures were always elegant and expressive. He always had good eye contact and communication with the musicians and he was never absorbed in his own music making. Although an orchestra wants to have leadership they never want

to be dragged along on one person's journey. The most successful conductor makes an orchestra feel as though a performance has been a collaborative journey to produce something musically and artistically satisfying.

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS:

There are always differences in performances that cannot be foreseen during the rehearsal process. A conductor's job is to try and foresee as many things that might go wrong as possible and put contingencies in place to get through these. It may be as simple as knowing how many 'dead beats' to give before an entry so that everyone knows when to come in or knowing which notes are likely to be out of tune in the brass or woodwind section because of the technical difficulty of producing the note or that a certain section will probably slow down or speed up because it just seems to happen every time in a particular part of the piece. Whatever the problem a conductor must know how to address these during a performance.

A conductor must make certain choices and stick with them. If the conductor displays the slightest uncertainty then the orchestra will lose confidence. There is a particular moment during *Meistersinger* at the end of the 2nd Act when everyone is on stage and the entire orchestra is playing. Coordinating the sheer number of people is a nightmare and during this performance some of the singers started to get out of sync with the orchestra. Maestro Fritsch recognised the problem immediately, made the choice to keep the orchestra with him and very quickly brought the singers back to him before they had the chance to get out of control. His mastery over the musicians was fantastic to watch. In Baltimore all the rehearsals took place at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. The first concert however was at the Strathmore Center which was an hour and half outside of Baltimore near Washington. The difference in the acoustic was drastic, going from a rehearsal space that had velvet and carpeted areas in the auditorium to a performance space that was totally made from wood. Maestra Alsop had to try and adjust her beat and her gestures to accommodate a much more reverberant space than the orchestra had rehearsed in. In Rochester, both the orchestra and Maestro Seaman were in a completely refurbished space and the concert that they were rehearsing for was the first one in what was basically a totally new performance space. No one had any idea how the sound would change when an audience filled the auditorium and how the players would be affected. The Rochester Philharmonic had

the luxury of three performances of the same programme and with each performance the musicians and conductor adjusted their performances to suit the acoustic.

PROGRAMMING:

In my lessons with both Maestro Fritsch and Maestro Seaman we had discussions about how to put a programme together. Maestro Fritsch was adamant that a programme should have some sort of theme or connection. The connection does not always have to be blatantly obvious but there should be a connection all the same. An audience appreciates a programme that makes sense and that will educate them in some way. Putting three pieces on a programme that have absolutely no connection, similarity or reason can result in a musically unsatisfactory evening for the audience even though they may not realise why.

The connection could be key relationships, being written in the same period but from different countries, the composers may have known each other, a later composer may be influenced by a former composer, compositional techniques may be similar or purposely radically different. There are so many ways to build a programme, but it must always make sense and have a reason. Similarly, Maestro Seaman stressed the importance of taking a great deal of care when choosing repertoire. Sometimes a conductor has no control over what is in a programme, especially if the orchestra is not theirs. Other constraints may be financial or parochial and it is always prudent for a conductor to be constantly listening and finding new and exciting repertoire that will stimulate and educate as well as entertain.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This Fellowship has enabled me to work closely with a number of conductors who are the most eminent in their fields and to see the impact that music and the arts as presented by them has on the both the artistic and broader community as a whole. The importance of knowledge, musicianship and technique in such an enigmatic field as conducting is vital as is the exposure to a wide range of new ideas and the sharing and discussion of these ideas.

The still significant isolation of Australia because of its distant location to the rest of the cultured world and its relatively short cultural history means that the dissemination of new ideas and the sharing of musical knowledge is still significantly slower than in Europe or America. The sheer number of professional orchestras that are still working in Europe and America means that opportunities for emerging conductors are far more than in Australia and the depth of cultural history means that more importance is placed on music and the arts in education.

The number of opportunities afforded to students to study the art of conducting in its own right are many more. There are many courses at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level available at universities as well as specialised courses for this purpose at music festivals etc - for example Aspen - and competitions and courses run by conductors of the highest calibre around the world. The facilities afforded to the students who attend these courses are of a high standard and the techniques, musical ideas and tuition is provided by some of the best conductors and teachers in the world.

Symphony Australia has started to address this serious gap in Australia's musical education by implementing the Symphony Australia Conducting Courses that run from high school age (basic technique) through to the Master Courses that train those musicians wanting to pursue a professional conducting career. The courses are short - only a few days - but they do try to address issues of technique, repertoire and

working with a real orchestra. However, due to the demands placed on conductors in Australia simply to survive, many have other careers overseas and thus have only limited time to spend when they are here. As a result, the great work that these courses initiate is difficult for the students to capitalise on, as there are no appropriate facilities available to them.

In recognition of this lack of opportunity I will be undertaking postgraduate work at the Australian National University, researching the validity of implementing a suitably rigorous course that will address the issues raised above. The research that I will be doing will focus on a wholistic approach, emphasising the philosophical, musical, musicological and technical aspects of conducting. The aim is to design and implement a comprehensive course that will be attractive to students at an elite postgraduate level.

Finally this research will form a basis for action by governments and arts bodies in Australia and the broader community, in order to raise the cultural profile of our nation in relation to the rest of the world, particularly Europe.

©

