

Curtain rising, baton falling: The politics of musical conducting in contemporary Argentina

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Abstract This article gives an ethnographic account of the several processes under which a charismatic conductor is de-legitimized, exploring the relationship between institutions and charisma in an art world where the authority of the cultural producer is diminished by the management of everyday interaction. The article shows how, in Argentina, the politics of musical conducting are shaped by four institutional worlds. They range from the macro economic cultural policies of the diverse state agencies to the everyday interaction world of orchestra musicians, and include meso-processes and mechanisms like the field of musical conducting. This article explores the structure and ideologies of the four institutional worlds, their interplay, the concrete practices that shaped them, their struggles, and how they overlap in causing the diminishing power of charisma. In undertaking this endeavor, the article systematizes the existing sociological corpus on the orchestral world in order to sketch a more complex and complete picture of hierarchies and interactions.

In March of 1999 one of the best-known conductors of Argentina, Alberto Soriano, went to a meeting with the musicians of the major chamber orchestra he had conducted during the last 16 years, the Spring Chamber Orchestra. He was going to inform them that the American Bank that had absorbed their former sponsor, a small national bank from the Jewish community, had agreed to sponsor them for one year, in order to guarantee their continuity. He had already told this story to a couple of musicians he ran into during the later months of the summer. To his surprise, and after he had been warmly greeted by all the musicians, they informed him that they were going to continue on their own, that they 'were the orchestra' (as they had told him in several previous meetings during the last two years), that they are not going to need him anymore, that they wished him good luck with the project and the sponsor and that the concertmaster (who was also the National Symphony Orchestra concertmaster) was their new musical director and the Bass soloist (the union delegate of the National Symphony – NSO) was their new General Manager.

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Later, during that month, the conductor would learn that some of the musicians had legally registered the name of the orchestra as soon as the sponsor went broke and that there had been several meetings where some of the musicians had suggested that “it was a good time to take the conductor off their backs.” They had also gone to the American Bank office to claim that they were the legitimate representation of the orchestra and that the conductor was not entitled to speak for them. The proposed budget was significantly smaller than the one managed in previous years, reduced from a 52 week season with paid vacations to almost a third of that. Unfortunately for the conductor the sponsor backed out after constant demands from the musicians. They decided to sponsor just one major concert and a series of educational performances of the new orchestra created by Soriano.

This incident is a key moment in which it is possible to witness ideological and political conflicts and practical problems being worked out through the world of orchestra organization. It shows the institutional capacities and quality of the music world in Argentina and the limits of a privately funded cultural policy when the money disappears. It also illustrates the continuity in the music world between State funded orchestras and private sponsored orchestras, especially among their personnel. It demonstrates how the conductor, in this context of weak institutionalization and absence of regulations is perceived and evaluated as a broker and just in charismatic terms. It also shows the existence of an egalitarian rhetoric among orchestra musicians where unionism and work alienation are translated into aesthetic demands and claims for autonomy. It draws the contours of the musical conducting profession as a rank-and-file musician (making explicit the inherent difficulties of the profession to sketch a legitimately sanctioned boundary) replaces a trained conductor. It presents the weakening of the legitimacy of the conductor because of charisma routinization after 16 years with the orchestra and his replacement by a younger, more dynamic and new charismatic figure, the concertmaster.¹

Soriano’s case is not the only one. It is part of a larger trend in orchestral organization in Argentina that includes the top two orchestras of the country, the Buenos Aires City Philharmonic, which had been without a Principal Conductor from 1992, when they fired their long-time conductor and the musicians declared him “persona non grata,” until 2000, and the NSO, which did not have a conductor from 1974 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1994 and was perceived publicly as an unmanageable organization.² Indeed, over a six-year period (1994–2000) a third of the Argentinean orchestras had run their Principal conductor out of the post.³

¹ One of the best examples of de-legitimization is Richard Sennett’s analysis of Savanarola’s fate. Sennett, R. (1974). Charismatic de-legitimation. A case study. *Theory and Society*, 2. For a musical example, see Sargeant’s account of the victory of Toscanini over Willem Mengelberg. Sargeant, W. (1949). *Geniuses, goddesses and people*. New York: Dutton.

² Liut, M. (1994). Pedro Ignacio Calderón asumió la dirección de la Sinfónica Nacional. *La Maga* (January 12); Riera, D., & Sánchez, F. (1992). Un conflicto de poderes enfrenta a la Sinfónica con la Secretaría de Cultura. *La Maga* (May 20); Riera, D., & Sánchez, F. (1992). Los músicos de la Sinfónica Nacional no están conformes con su nuevo director. *La Maga* (March 3). Riera, D., & Sánchez, F. (1992). Una polémica mantiene paralizada a la mayor orquesta argentina. La Sinfónica Nacional no tiene director y sus delegados permanecen suspendidos. *La Maga* (April 29).

³ Several other orchestras have followed this path and dismissed their principal conductor. For instance, the Córdoba Symphony ousted their conductor after 16 years (1982–1988), the Tucuman Orchestra lost their conductor after 12 uninterrupted years (1988–2000), the San Juan Orchestra after six (1989–1995), and the Mar del Plata Orchestra replaced theirs after 10 years (1986–1996). Also, the Colon Opera Orchestra hasn’t had a principal conductor for most of the 1990s decade.

The aim of this article is neither merely to work on a case study of the interactions and hierarchies in the orchestra nor to study conducting as a profession, the sources of orchestra alienation, or the construction of authority in a musical setting,⁴ as might be thought initially after the opening example. The aim of this article is twofold and it includes and expands upon all the aforementioned objectives. On the one hand, (1) I want to understand and explain comprehensively the end of a cycle of national charismatic conductors in Argentina, exploring the relationship between institutions and charisma in an art world⁵ where the authority of the conductor is diminished in the management of everyday interaction with orchestras and programming: On the other hand, (2) I intend to systematize the existing sociological corpus on the orchestral world in order to sketch a more complex and complete picture of hierarchies and interactions.

Following Max Weber's⁶ explication of charisma, I understand a charismatic conductor as a musical director whose authority is based on the demand of obedience from the musicians in virtue of his or her musical mission. The conductor gains and maintains authority by demonstrating strength in practice, being the owner of a personal "gift" outside everyday routine, performing, thus, "musical miracles." It is the duty of those whom the conductor addresses to recognize him as a qualified leader. The conductor's authority is unstable by definition and is based on a Romantic representation of the musician as a highly subjective and special individual devoted only to cultivating this art. It is performed as a set of authoritative practices on the everyday orchestral life, which includes stylistic decisions about the interpretation of a score, and as a set of bodily practices during concerts that result in the identification of the musical product with the name or the figure of the conductor.

The music world as an art world

Over the last 20 years the body of research on music has changed. Moving out from the traditional space of biography, historiography, and hagiography, several works have used music as an excuse to build diverse study objects that contain and exceed it, splitting the study subject from the posed questions. On the one hand, we find the extensive work done by several cultural historians who have questioned the mode of articulation of several layers of representations and operations of cultural imaginaries in the musical and operatic

⁴ See, respectively, Faulkner, R. (1974). Career concerns and mobility motivations of orchestra musicians. *Sociological Quarterly*, 14; (1983a) Orchestra interaction: Communication and authority in an artistic organization. In J. Kamermann, & R. Martorella, op. cit.; Kamermann, J. (1983a) Symphony conducting as an occupation. In J. Kamermann, & R. Martorella, op. cit.; (1983b), Conductors' interpretative style. In J. Kamermann, & R. Martorella, op. cit.; (1990) review of 'A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice by Elliot W. Galkin,' *Contemporary Sociology* 19(6); Kamermann, J. & Martorella, R. (1983). *Performers and performances*. South Handley: Bergin & Garvey; Arian, E. (1971). *Bach, Beethoven and Bureaucracy*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press; Sennett, R. (1977). *The fall of public man*. New York: Alfred Knopf; Couch, S. R. (1982). Patronage and organizational structure in symphony orchestra in London and New York. In J. Kamermann, & R. Martorella, op. cit.; Attali, J. (1985). *Noise. The political economy of music*. Durham: Duke University Press; Galkin, E. (1988). *A history of orchestral conducting in theory and practice*. New York: Pendragon; Born, G. (1995). *Rationalizing culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Horowitz, I. (1987). *Understanding Toscanini*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁵ See Becker, H. (1982). *Art worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁶ Weber, M. (1946). The Sociology of Charismatic Authority. In H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

narratives.⁷ On the other hand, there is the research that links the emergence of the modern city to the dramatic and representative capacities of theatrical and musical performances.⁸ On this last path, the group of works that highlight the institutional network giving birth to the ‘modern’ and silent behavior of musical audiences are worth mentioning.⁹

The dissolution of art in culture¹⁰ has moved the axis away from classic definitions of culture. The idea of culture as a repertory has imposed itself rather than viewing culture as equivalent to art. However, the later conception that presented culture as a separate dimension of social life has transmuted into a definition in which culture is a discrete object as well as a group of social practices. It is in some key works of the American sociological tradition known as ‘production of culture’¹¹ where we can find the inaugural momentum that, by focusing on a particular domain of the production of symbols researched the social contexts and mechanisms of production, the various networks in which culture was created, distributed, publicized, and consumed.¹² This

⁷ Among others, the works of Gross, A. & Parker, R. (1986). *La bohème*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Lindenberger, H. (1984). *Opera. The extravagant art*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; (1998) *Opera in history. From Monteverdi to Cage*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Buch, E. (1999). *La neuvienne de Beethoven. Une histoire politique*. Paris: Gallimard; Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books; (1991) *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Alfred Knopf; Weber, W. (1975). *Music and the middle classes: The social structure of concert life in London, Paris and Vienna*. New York: Holmes & Meier; Clement, C. (1988). *Opera or the undoing of women*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Hutcheon, L. & Hutcheon, M. (1996) *Opera and disease*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; (2000) *Bodily charm. Living opera*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; and Robinson, P. *Opera and Ideas*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁸ R. Sennett, 1977; Gerhard, A. (1998) *The urbanization of opera*. New York: Columbia University Press; Ahlquist, K. (1998). *Democracy at the Opera*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

⁹ DiMaggio, P. (1986). *Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts*. New York: Oxford University Press; (1987) Nonprofit organizations in the production and distribution of culture. In W.W. Powell (Ed.), *The nonprofit sector*. New Haven: Yale University Press; (1987) Classification in art. *American Sociological Review*, 52; Cultural boundaries and structural change: The extension of the high culture model to theater, opera and the dance, 1900–1940. In Lamont and Fournier (Eds.), op. cit., 21–57; (1999) Emprendimiento cultural en el Boston del siglo XIX: la creación de una base organizativa para la alta cultura en Norteamérica. In J. Auyero (Eds.), *Caja de Herramientas*. Buenos Aires: Quilmes University Press; 163–198; Levine, L. (1988). *Highbrow and lowbrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Johnson, J. (1998). *Listening in Paris*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁰ Zolberg, V. (1990). *Constructing a sociology of the arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Myers, F., & Marcus, G. (1995). *The traffic in culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Geertz, C. (1994). El arte como sistema cultural. In *Conocimiento local*. Barcelona: Paidós; Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Eds.) (1991), *Rethinking Popular Culture*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.

¹¹ Peterson, R. (1976). *The Production of culture*. Sage: Beverly Hills; Kadushin, C. (1976). Networks and circles in the production of culture. In R. Peterson (Ed.), *The Production of culture*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

¹² Research on the production of culture has focused on such subjects as the nature of culture industries: Hirsch, P. (1972). Processing fads and fashions. *American Journal of Sociology*, 77; Peterson, R. & Berger, D. G. (1975). Cycles in symbol production. *American Sociological Review*, 40.; Crane, D. (1992). *The Production of Culture*. London: Sage.; the tension between cultural production and the bureaucratic organization of institutions: Arian, 1971; Born, 1995; the relationship between the organizations and the characteristics of the cultural products: DiMaggio, 1987; Blau, J., 1988. *The Shape of Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; the role of critics and gatekeepers in the formation of taste: Shrum, W. (1996). *Fringe and fortune. The role of critics in high and popular art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.; Sarfatti-Larson, M. (1993). *Behind the postmodern facade*. Berkeley: University of California Press; the types of cultural markets: Towse, R. (1993). *Singers in the marketplace: The economics of the singing profession*. Oxford: Clarendon.; Plattner, S. (1996). *High art down home*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and careers in cultural production, moving closer to the sociology of professions: Faulkner, 1983; Kamermann and Martorella, 1983; White, H. & White, C. (1965). *Canvases and careers*. New York: Wiley.

perspective¹³ presents culture as a differentiated symbolic production structure that produces a particular manufacture framed by a series of organizations and institutions ran by a specific kind of producer.

The list I presented proposes a fruitful alliance among cultural history, institutional musicology, social theory, and ethnography that constitutes a field in itself that shapes the object. Armed with this theoretical frame, I combine a classical problem of the first perspective, the relationship between music and charisma,¹⁴ with the theoretical tools of the sociological perspective. This article is based on the ethnographic systematization of several events I took part in as a member of a family of musicians and my work at several orchestral organizations as a musician, organizer, and technical employee during the four years prior to my arrival to the United States.¹⁵

I want to highlight here my double involvement with this particular cultural space. In a way I try to define myself in this research in relation to what James Clifford calls an indigenous anthropologist.¹⁶ On the one hand, as I mentioned, I belong to a family of musicians and because of my work experience I know the internal point of view of the production and organization of high culture institutions. On the other hand, as a sociologist researching in Argentina, I have worked on several projects about spaces of cultural production, circulation, and consumption. As has been the case with Becker and Arian, and as Vera Zolberg and Janet Wolff have said, a person situated as I am has a special opportunity to approach sociological research about cultural institutions that, nevertheless, takes into account the specificity and semantic density of the study object.¹⁷ As an “indigenous anthropologist,” I did not have to cross endless difficulties to gain access to the community in question, I did not have to learn the “native” tongue; and my presence did not introduce significant alterations to the everyday life of the group. This could enable me

¹³ It is probably in Howard Becker’s *Art Worlds* that we find the first systematic effort of the ‘production of culture’ school. Becker not only formalizes the cultural frame for production of culture, but actualizes some of his ideas about the production of culture and symbolic interactionism presented in *Outsiders*. The concept of ‘art world’ enables him to argue that the products of the world of cultural production are fruits of collective labor – that art labor is based on cooperative networks and division of labor. Like science for Kuhn, the world of cultural production is based on known and recognized conventions by producers, distributors, and consumers. This clustered network of production, circulation, distribution, and consumption and the recognized and shared conventions make the cultural product more effective and less costly. Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders. Studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York: Free.

¹⁴ Richard Sennett (1977) has focused extensively on charisma in music and the birth of the orchestral conductor. However, he has mostly referred to its relations with the audience and the discipline of silence and not with the other performers linking power to a believable public personality. He has dealt mostly with the conductor as the recipient of projections of charisma and mystery (Born, 1995). Another noteworthy work in the same perspective is Irving Horowitz’s *Understanding Toscanini*. I am combining Sennett’s standpoint with a Weberian perspective on charisma and authority inside the orchestral world.

¹⁵ I have relied heavily on seven key informants, a consecrated conductor, two rank-and-file violin players (one from each major symphony orchestra in the City of Buenos Aires), two young conductors, one successfully studying in the United States, the second virtually unemployed, a female cello player from the Argentino Opera Orchestra, and a young Buenos Aires’ based composer. I have also extensively used newspapers interviews, reviews, and articles and the diverse orchestras’ seasons that constitute Argentina’s organizational system of orchestras from 1997 to 2001 as well as the CV of the conductors. While I use the names of the orchestras and institutions, to protect their identity I have not used the actual names of the players, students, or conductors involved.

¹⁶ Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁷ See Wolff, J. (1983). *Aesthetics and the sociology of art*. London: Allen & Unwin.

to recognize more precisely local categories and ratios.¹⁸ However, a perspective like this demanded from me an effort to turn into exotic events¹⁹ the domestic life that surrounded me for 29 years, rather than the usual tendency to domesticate the exotic. I believe this methodological frame is fruitful for the description, interpretive comprehension, and analysis of the musical world.

I would like to introduce a methodological warning related to the differences between a central musical world, like the ones of the five major orchestras in the United States or the London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin musical scene in the European context,²⁰ and the economic possibilities of an art world “down home,”²¹ like the Argentinean where classical music is organized only for local consumption. In Argentina there is no such a thing as a six figure contract for an eight-week schedule of performances,²² conductors don’t suffer from the jet-lag of conducting one week in Philadelphia, the next one in Paris, and after that in San Francisco or Los Angeles. They do not have several appointments – they are lucky to get one – and orchestras do not have an extensive roster of principal, associate, guest, and assistant conductors. If conductors are tired of traveling, it is sometimes because of the multiple pedagogical engagements around the country they need to make a living; a US \$4000 fee for a performance by a respected national guest conductor is considered outrageous and could lead to bankruptcy.

The last warning I want to offer comes in the form of a confession. The impetus for this article has been largely my interest in understanding the freelance status affecting one of the most important charismatic conductors of Argentina: my father. I cannot take forget the pessimism under which his work life has developed during recent years. He has worked mainly as a freelance conductor after years of being in charge of one of the top orchestras in the country. To break from his pessimistic personal point of view and his structural position in the music world, I collected as much information as I could gather, had informal chats (as I always had), and interviews with other musicians, elaborated statistics, collected conductors curriculums, orchestras’ payrolls, rosters, and season programming, and surveyed newspaper reviews and interviews. However, the result is as pessimistic for the future of charismatic conductors as if I had stuck with my father’s story solely.

A four level object

The politics of musical conducting in Argentina are shaped by four institutional worlds that range from the macro economic cultural policies of the diverse state agencies and instances and the institutional history of the musical world in Argentina to the everyday interaction

¹⁸ Dilthey’s *Verstehen* seems to be the conceptual frame more suited for this kind of comprehensive understanding. In it, the ethnographic authority is based in “sharing a common experience.” Experience that is constituted and reconstituted in a “common sphere,” and works as the frame of reference all “texts,” “events,” “facts,” and their interpretations are confronted against.

¹⁹ Bourdieu, 1984:289.

²⁰ These are the musical worlds studied by the available literature. Cf. Arian, 1971; Faulkner, 1974a, 1974b; Couch, 1983; Kammermann, 1983a, 1983b, 1988; Born, 1995; Galkin, 1988; Horowitz, 1987; Hennion, A. (1993). *La Passion Musicale. Une sociologie de la mediation*. Paris: Métailié.

²¹ See Plattner, 1996.

²² The Metropolitan Opera reported that their Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, James Levine, commands US \$1.7 million per year. He is also the conductor of the Munich Philharmonic, and after the 2004 season of the Boston Symphony, guest conducts at Vienne, Salzburg, Bayreuth, and Berlin. He was also the conductor for the ‘Three Tenors concert,’ charging around US \$500,000 per performance.

world of orchestra musicians and meso-processes and mechanisms like the field of musical conducting. I explore here the structure and ideologies of each of the four institutional worlds, their interplay, the concrete practices that shape these worlds, their struggles and how they all overlap in causing the diminishing power of charisma among conductors.

The cultural policy world

To explain the relation between cultural policy and the politics of musical conducting in contemporary Argentina the path of description must take into account two phenomena. On the one hand, there is the loss of classical music centrality in the national artistic and cultural world due to institutional misunderstanding of the non-profit and subsidized historical character of classical performance in Argentina. On the other hand, how has the concept of culture been reshaped as it is defined and framed by the National and Buenos Aires city government cultural policies and its linkage to the cultural changes in Buenos Aires over the last two decades.

An introductory paragraph about the geographical organization of cultural production of in Argentina is necessary if we are going to draw a complex picture of the institutional world of classical music. Buenos Aires, the capitol city, gained importance already in colonial times as the cultural, commercial, and political center. Thanks to the country geography all kinds of goods, commercial and intellectual, came from abroad to and through the city port. In the interior of the country society remained conservative and stratified. The importance of the city and the surrounding areas gained momentum in late nineteenth century when Buenos Aires and its surroundings connected to the world economy leaving the rest of the country behind. Both the liberal and the nationalist rhetoric helped to emphasize this divide, structuring for a long time policies and political ideologies. As a consequence, the image of “two Argentinas” was an organizing metaphor to explain the workings of culture, politics and commerce. The consequences for cultural production were the lack of interest in differentiating the diverse parts of the interior, the disparity in the concentration and management of resources and the lack of connection among the cities of the interior, which usually have to communicate through the capitol city. This geographical structure is still seen in the relation between the orchestras from the interior and the orchestras of Buenos Aires (titled national orchestras) and among the orchestras of the interior themselves.

The national and the city government have emphasized two dimensions as the guidelines of their policy: First, the idea that the government is no longer going to subsidize artistic institutions and endeavors outside its realm. Second, that the marriage between art and money in the figure of cultural tourism is the goal of their administration. As the Secretary of Cultural Industry²³ has commented: “We are interested first of all in empowering the industries in the private sector, understanding culture in terms of profit. That is why we are working on international festivals linked to the concept of national and especially international tourism.”²⁴ Argentinean anthropologist Néstor García Canclini has defined

²³ The name per se is suggestive as the ‘Direction’ he is in command of did not exist under that name and most of the official administrative offices were called National Direction of Music, National Council of the Arts, etc. The national government also created a new Direction, under the guidance of the Culture Secretary to be called “Direction of Special Events” that guides the Festivals policy. At the end of 2001, the government decided to change the status of the Culture Secretary and created the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, thus making more obvious the link between culture and tourism investment.

²⁴ Marabotto, E. (2001). La Cultura también se come. *Clarín* (March 4).

this practice of cultural policy as neo-conservative privatization,²⁵ a set of policies that re-organizes the organizational field of cultural production. Its bases are the production and private profit of symbolic goods according to the market laws.

As such, the quality of classical music, which has taken a dive since its after II World War peak in which the national orchestras were the refuge for Jewish–European musicians and the most important in South America, made it strictly for local consumption, and as a consequence left out of the tourism investment circuit. Here is an example of how this policy affects classical music: the National Symphony Orchestra lost the chance to keep playing at the Auditorium where they have resided since 1986. They were indebted for over two years of rent. They still owe many fees to the national guest performers (both soloist and conductors) who have played since the beginning of the 2000 season.²⁶ According to two insiders – one of them a former Director of the Colón Opera House, the other a current Administrative Officer – the last two appointments as Principal Conductor of the City Philharmonic Orchestra were largely based on economic factors. Both conductors, the one promoted from assistant to associate and then to associate in charge and the one promoted from the Contemporary Center were already employees of the Performing Center. Both of them conducted most of the off-season and extraordinary concerts, something that traditionally has been reserved for the most prestigious national conductors. They did not command an extra fee for those performances as they receive a monthly salary. Further, as Arian says of Ormandy they guaranteed the necessary cooperation in the Opera House economic policies. The State Orchestra of Santa Fe at Rosario has also had the same problems as they tried to hire a new conductor to replace the last one. Due to economic measures adopted by the Provincial State under the direction of the National Plan of Economy they could not hire any new personnel.²⁷ Both the post of conductor and of Orchestra secretary could not be legally filled. The newly appointed conductor has a salary of 26,000 a year²⁸ and a temporary contract.²⁹

In addition to mentioning the immediate consequences, I want to refer to the misunderstanding that these guidelines pose about the historical status of classical music production. As DiMaggio, Levine, Bourdieu, Williams, and Zolberg have extensively shown for the American and Western European context, the production of high culture since the end of the nineteenth century has depended on its non-profit character and on a subsidized institutional frame. Argentina's classical music has not escaped from this logic as all the existent symphony orchestras are patronized by the State, sometimes directly by the national state (as in the case of the NSO), sometimes indirectly (as in the case of the Cuyo, Tucumán, and San Juan Orchestras sponsored by the National Universities),

²⁵ For a detailed argument of the concept linked to the conceptual frame of the cultural action paradigms, please see Canclini, N. G. (1987). *Políticas culturales y crisis de desarrollo: un balance latinoamericano*. In G. Canclini (Ed.), *Políticas culturales en América Latina* (pp. 13–61). Grijalbo: México. Also see, Brunner, J. J. (1992). *La mano visible y la mano invisible*. In *América Latina: Cultura y modernidad*. Grijalbo: México.

²⁶ 'Dirección de música sin fondos,' *La Nación*, July 6, 2001.

²⁷ Both the San Juan Symphony Orchestra and the Tucumán Orchestra were under the same burden. They had about US \$1,700 per month to spend on each guest conductor. Even worst were the perspectives of both the Mar del Plata and the Bahía Blanca Symphony, their continuity endangered by cuts on the municipal budgets.

²⁸ Call to public competition to appoint a new conductor for the Santa Fe State Orchestra at Rosario. *Official documentation* at www.santafegov.ar/cultura/concursos.html.

²⁹ Rosario, con batuta santafesina. *El Litoral*, April 10, 2001.

sometimes by the city governments (as it is the case in Mar del Plata and the City Philharmonic and all the artistic companies of the Colon Opera House), sometimes by the Provincial States (as in the Argentino Opera House and the remaining Symphony Orchestras). The state efforts have usually been combined with private sponsors, especially at the Colón Opera House and at the Opera seasons planned by the diverse Symphony orchestras.³⁰

Another important point in understanding the secondary place that classical music has been placed in is the reshaping of the concepts of culture and of the high/popular division in Buenos Aires and how it has been adopted as a reference frame by the policymakers. On the one hand, the concept of culture has largely resembled, in national and city policies, the anthropological definition of culture.³¹ On the other hand, drawing heavily from their experience as Cultural programmers at the University Cultural Center,³² the City and national authorities have emphasized a blurring of the old divide that instead of incorporating in historical perspective classical music, without its universalistic pretension, has dismissed it from the realm of artistic production.

As a result the cultural policies are presented on two levels: honoring the anthropological approach, they have highlighted popular workshops in local communities where painting on canvas cohabits with dj'ing, drum sessions, cooking, and pottery. On a second level, funding decisions at International Festivals and National Summer Programs, the organizers have formed a very eclectic pool in which national rock, leftist folklore, and avant-garde theater or music coexist.

A couple of experiences involving jazz and classical music during 2000 and 2001 serve to highlight the role that 'high culture' and 'esoteric' music play in the relation between tourism and cultural production. During 2000, helped by private sponsors like Philip Morris, the National Secretary of Tourism put on an international jazz festival at winter venue and ski resort San Martín de los Andes. Later that year they also programmed a ballet performance by Julio Bocca³³ and his dancers at the Iguazú Falls, in the north east region of the country. In 2001, symphony musicians strongly participated at the National Wine Fair, a tourism extravaganza that takes place at the end of the summer in the Andean State of Mendoza. These three experiences have in common not only their placement in touristic realms but also the suggested link between culture and nature. On the one hand, nature is spectacularized and magnified and presented as a perfect background for enjoying an artistic performance. On the other hand, the bucolic character of the presentation, with plays taking place at falls, the shore of a lake, a vineyard, or the interior of an old bodega, dissolve culture in nature while showing the harmony and order of this displacement. As

³⁰ For instance, the 2000 and 2001 seasons of the Córdoba Symphony were sponsored by the state lottery, a private university, two local banks, and a national express courier firm.

³¹ Rubinich, L. (1992). *Tomar la cultura del pueblo. Bajar la cultura al pueblo*. Buenos Aires: GECUSO; Gonzalez, H. (1992) *La Realidad Satírica*. Buenos Aires: Paradiso Ediciones.

³² Dubatti, J. (1995). *Batato Barea y el Nuevo Teatro Argentino*. Buenos Aires: Temas de Hoy; Hernán Nazer (1997) *La oposición moderno/tradicional en el campo cultural argentino*. paper presented at the *3rd National Conference of Sociology*, Buenos Aires.

³³ Julio Bocca has redefined the place of classical dance in contemporary Argentina. Starting very young, at age 14, he won several international prizes and become a soloist at the American Ballet Theater. When back in Argentina, he usually dances in non-conventional spaces, such as rock stadiums, thus popularizing classical and contemporary dance. He was chosen as one of the characters most representative of Argentina during the 1990s in a poll by *Noticias* magazine and in an essay of the *Clarín* newspaper.

Adorno³⁴ has signaled, a preferred procedure for doing so is the dissolution of time into space and an archaic presentation of classical music that returns it to some mythical origins in the realm of nature.

Even though Argentina has produced during the last four democratic governments, both professional agents and autonomous formalized and informal groups that lead their activities to cultural action, a complete picture of the Cultural policy world would not be complete without explaining its framing by the *long-duree* institutional world and the most contingent actions made under the urgency of the political world.

The following section discusses two key developments that aid our understanding of the curtailing of the conductor's charismatic authority. The first one involves the disputes among the national, city, and states offices and the differences between the states governed by the Alliance of Radicals and the FREPASO that ran the country during 1999–2001 or by the Peronist party and its cultural representation in the public sphere through musical policies. The second one is concerned with the dispute between professional politicians and the artist as a prophet and also their overlapping in the figure of the artistic director of theatrical complexes and the rise of general managers of symphony orchestras in what I call the professional politician as sorcerer's apprentice.

Reinventing Peronism as high culture

Several authors³⁵ have emphasized the subversive and heretical character attributed by the Peronist movement to the contents of popular culture and the denial of the elite's social and cultural pretensions. Other authors³⁶ have studied extensively the tense relationship, which included censorship and persecution, between Peronism and part of the realm of high culture constituted by Academic and Literary intellectuals, especially at the University of Buenos Aires during the 1945–1955 and 1973–1975 intervals. Auyero describes in a lively and vivid manner the moral economy of Peronism, pointing out that it “had as a central tenet an affirmation of the worker's right... and a collective claim for dignity that was ready to call into question certain social and cultural hierarchies.”³⁷ So, how is it possible that all the organizational endeavors favoring classical music activity after 1996, ranging from Opera (Argentino Opera House and Avellaneda Opera) to chamber music through the creation of a new Symphony Orchestra (Salta) were made by Peronist governments, agencies and officers?

Unlike the Alianza's definition of culture the Peronist governments have taken a different way of building cultural policy.³⁸ On the one hand, they have not dissolved the stairs metaphor that is generally used to define cultural hierarchy. Although Buenos Aires

³⁴ Adorno, T. W. (1973). *Philosophy of Modern Music*. New York: Seabury; *In Search of Wagner*. New York: Seabury, 1981.

³⁵ Among others, Rubinch, L. (1992) Algunos significados de la palabra gorila. *Apuntes de Investigación*, 7 (Buenos Aires: Fundación del Sur-CECYP, 2001); James, D. (1988). *Resistance and Integration. Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Auyero, J. (2000). *Poor People's Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

³⁶ Neiburg, 1999; Altamirano, 1998 and 2000, and Terán, 1992.

³⁷ Auyero, 2000, 188.

³⁸ I understand as “cultural policy” Garcia Canclini's 1987 definition of it. This is: “The set of activities planned by the State, the Civil Society and/or community groups in order to direct the symbolic development, satisfy the cultural necessities of the population and obtain consensus for an specific social order.”

has actively promoted the Ballet del Sur and the Orchestra from Bahía Blanca and has highlighted especially the activities of the artistic companies residing at the Argentino Opera House, they have also saved space for the organization of free music festivals during the summer of 2000 and 2001 for popular genres like cuarteto, chamamé, cumbia, tango, and national rock. On the other hand, they have tried to bridge between the two cultures³⁹ by means of a model that has usually been defined as “cultural democratization.”⁴⁰ As Rubinich states this cultural program recognizes the existence of a variety of cultural levels and minor forms and another set of legitimate cultural activities defined for separated and diverse audiences, and its goal is to make accessible to everybody, without changing the social and economic structure of society, the high culture goods.

However, the extensive use of high culture by Peronist states is also a new way of positioning their government image in the public sphere.⁴¹ It is greatly related to the opposition to the cultural policies and the definition of culture of Alianza’s national and Buenos Aires city government. The main example of this continuous policy was the re-inauguration of the Argentino Opera House after 20 years of inactivity. Destroyed by a fire, the Argentino Opera House re-opening provided a great occasion to see the opposition at work and also some policies that go hand-in-hand with the ‘cultural democratization’ definition. The Opera House has been adorned with all the technical and acoustical novelties of a modern opera house. However, it was not truly finished by 1999. As a personal project of Governor Duhalde, the theater was temporarily reopened at the end of his second period in office. He did not want to relinquish the privilege of being the one remembered as the governor that reopened the Opera house.⁴² Even so, the theater had a special mini-season of free concerts at the end of 1999 conducted by guest conductors. The results were not very good as the critics’ reviews were especially concerned with the acoustical problems of the theater.⁴³ With the arrival of a newly elected Peronist government headed by former vice-president Ruckauf, policy directions changed appointing a new director for the Opera House and new conductors and coaches. The new administration decided to challenge the cultural hegemony of the Colon Opera House that for ages has dominated the collective representations of high culture.⁴⁴ To do so, the Governor himself appointed the former Executive Director of the City Philharmonic to be General Director of the theater. Moreover, the new Artistic Director appointed as Principal and Guest conductors two maestros that he had appointed as Associate and Principal Guest Conductor of the City Philharmonic during the period 1998–1999. They lured away from that orchestra many of the hired but not permanent musicians. They also attracted the residency of the International Piano Competition “Martha Argerich” and some of the administrators, including the stage manager and the administrative director. Moreover, the Colon Opera

³⁹ Alberto Ciria has argued that Peronism historically highlighted the role of high culture in the construction of a national identity. Not only have they created orchestras like the Mar del Plata Orchestra, the National Symphony, the San Juan University, and the State Orchestra, but they have created the classical music service of the State Radio and its Youth Orchestra. Ciria, A. (1980). *Peronismo y Antiperonismo*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina.

⁴⁰ See García Canclini, 1987; Subercaseaux, 1986; and Brunner, 1992. In the US context, see Gans, H. (1999). *High culture and popular culture. An analysis and evaluation of taste*. New York: Basic Books (revised edition).

⁴¹ See Lipovetsky, G. (1997). *El Crepúsculo del Deber*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

⁴² Emotivo reencuentro de los platenses con su Teatro. *El Día*, October 13, 1999.

⁴³ Giorello, E. (1999). Todo Mendelssohn en el Teatro Argentino. *El Día* (November 16); Vera, R. V. (1999). Gintoli salió airoso de su lucha con el sonido. *La Nación* (November 11).

⁴⁴ For years, every time a cultural product from either popular or high culture was considered worthy, the popular chanted expression to denote it was: *Al Colón, al Colón*.

House Child Chorus Director was appointed as the Argentino Chorus Director. To pursue their policy aggressively, the orchestra played extensively, not in cities of the state that did not have a Symphony Orchestra, but in Buenos Aires and in Mar del Plata.⁴⁵ At Buenos Aires City, they repeated their concert and ballet season between May and September of 2000 until the Argentino Opera House was officially re-inaugurated for a second time. Moreover, they played for free at the Law School Hall, residence of the fall and summer festivals of the City Philharmonic, and at the Coliseum Auditorium, just three blocks away from the Colon Opera House.

The key incident to understanding the policy of duplication of the Colon cultural activities was performed by the new Artistic Director of the Argentino. The Colon Director is a very well known film director that has worked extensively as a regisseur at the Colon and several other opera houses around the world, including his international success at the staging of Dimistri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk* at Madrid, conducted by Rostropovich. Unlike him, the Argentino Director was a singer at a folklore music group linked to the legacy of the cultural left of Peronism who did not have any previous experience as a stage director. However, he decided to be the regisseur of Cocteau and Stravinski's *Oedipus Rex* for the 2000 season. Moreover, he tried to cast Governor Ruckauf as the narrator that introduces and explains, as in Greek tragedy, the musical work. He said his goal was to "link the government acts with the public culture, just as in Ancient Greece."⁴⁶

The representation that linked the Governor, public culture, and the extension of high culture consumption to everybody can be best seen in the programs and in the press releases for the 2001 seasons.⁴⁷ The Governor under the slogan "Culture for everybody" distributed both the envelopes with the information and the back of the hand programs with his signature. At the same time, the governor had distributed sneakers, sugar and milk and signed the bags where they were transported because "he was afraid they were going to be stolen from the deposits." If the historical features of Peronism, as described by authors such as Auyero and Farinetti, have been characterized by some as the distribution of goods, the new Administration has taken this to a new level and activity: the personalized distribution by the leader of high culture goods at cheap prices (the tickets are less than half on average than the Colón ones), guaranteed distribution by the State, pay facilities provided by the State Bank, home delivery, and free transportation from the outer neighborhoods of the city and even from Buenos Aires city.⁴⁸ On the promotional poster for the Picasso exhibition at the Argentino, the parallelism was made obvious, when under the promotional slogan "Picasso for everybody" the signature of the governor underlined the slogan "Ruckauf for everybody."

The other interventions of the Peronist on musical activity and cultural production in general go with the same idea that links cultural democratization with the challenge of the National State Cultural Policies. In Avellandea, Córdoba, and Salta⁴⁹ the ticket prices –

⁴⁵ Mar del Plata has a city sponsored orchestra that was created in the 1940s, and Mar del Plata is one of the other two cities of the state that have an Orchestra.

⁴⁶ Le ofrecieron a Ruckauf un papel en la ópera-ballet Edipo Rey. *El Día*, October 30, 2000.

⁴⁷ Músicos en campaña, *Clarín*, March 18, 2001; Ghitta, V. H. (2001). Zapatillas, si y teatro también. *La Nación* (March 18).

⁴⁸ There is a free bus from the door of the Colón Opera House to the Argentino Theater the day of the performance. This is a more direct way of "stealing" the opera lovers from "Argentina's First Coliseum."

⁴⁹ The Salta Orchestra project follows the guidelines of the Venezuelan state orchestras. They are trying to create a new audience as well as new players. They are having youth and children's concerts and concerts in the inner part of the state. They are sponsoring chamber groups, youth orchestras, and a school of luthiers.

especially when compared to the Colón Opera House – are much cheaper (US \$5 in Avellaneda, US \$1 in Salta, and US \$8 in Córdoba). Both the Salta and the Córdoba government have invited national newspaper critics for their inaugural concerts of the season. The Córdoba government invited some people of “el ambiente” (the musical world) to create some “buzz”⁵⁰ about the season. The 2000 season of the orchestra was highlighted by a concert in Buenos Aires at the Colón Opera House main hall.⁵¹ As in Buenos Aires, the organization of public culture in the state of Córdoba has been very personalized, with its Governor inaugurating with a speech the new musical season and being the keynote speaker at the celebration for the Córdoba Theater’s First 100 years. The influential State Theater Festival of 2001, which brought to the capital city many of the most influential theater companies of the MERCOSUR, began while the City of Buenos Aires III International Theater Festival was still underway, in a clear confrontation with the City and Nation policies.

However, the Peronist intervention in music has not been fruitful for National Conductors as the pressure to achieve a ‘successful’ and publicized season went against musical innovation (which includes commission of plays by contemporary Argentinean composers) and the commitment to Argentinean soloists and conductors.⁵² Moreover, as I show below, the weight of the artistic decision-making and the ‘cult of personality’ have shifted from the conductor to the artistic director of the house complexes or to the orchestra’s executive director.

The Sorcerer’s Apprentice

In terms of micro-sociology, Pierre Bourdieu,⁵³ following Max Weber’s distinction between the roles of priest and of prophet/sorcerer, contrasts two kinds of authority in legitimate culture. Weber himself⁵⁴ contrasted the political authority of the charismatic leader with the bureaucrat or the expert. At this point, I will show the convergence of these two

⁵⁰ See Zukin, S. (2001). How to create a cultural capital: Reflections on urban markets and places. In I. Blazwick (Ed.), *Century city*. London: Tate Modern., to understand the relation between “buzz” and the artistic mode of production in contemporary cities that link tourism and culture.

⁵¹ Performing at the Colón is a way of showing that the orchestra can perform at the top level. The Tucumán Orchestra (1996), the San Juan University Orchestra (1975), the Mar del Plata Symphony (1988), and the City Symphony Band (2001) have performed there. The Salta Symphony Orchestra planned a performance there for the 2002 season.

⁵² Arian (1971) has shown this same relationship between musical conservatism and the corporate patrons of the Philadelphia Orchestra. A closer look at the Córdoba Symphony Orchestra and at the Argentino Opera Orchestra shows that they did not include a single contemporary work and the only Argentinean composition performed is a standard from the early twentieth century (Carlos López Bouchardo), keeping their play inside the standard canon for Symphony orchestras (Beethoven, Debussy, Brahms, Stravinsky, Bartok, Musorgsky, Fauré, Liszt, Dvorak, Mahler). A look at the rest of the season programming shows the same conservative spirit, as we found repeated cycles of “Beethoven’s Nine Symphonies” (Córdoba 2000 and Mendoza 2000), “Beethoven’s five piano concerts” (Santa Fe 2001), “Our pianists” series (Cuyo 2001 and La Plata 2001), and “The Music and the Nations” (Tucumán 1997, Córdoba 2001, and Mendoza 2001). Verdi’s Requiem was programmed during 2001 by Mendoza, Santa Fe, Rosario, OSN, OFBA, and Córdoba.

⁵³ See Bourdieu, P. (1983). *Campo de poder y campo intelectual*. Buenos Aires: Folios; (1988) *Espacio social y poder simbólico*. In *Cosas dichas*. Buenos Aires: Gedisa; *El campo intelectual: Un mundo aparte*. In op. cit.; (1990) *Alta costura y alta cultura*, in *Sociología y cultura*. México: Grijalbo. Algunas propiedades de los campos. In op. cit.; (1992) *Las reglas del arte*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

⁵⁴ See Max Weber’s classic articles “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation,” included in Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, Oxford University Press, 1946 edition.

dichotomies in the role of the Sorcerer's Apprentice. This name – taken from Paul Dukas's Symphony and Walt Disney's *Fantasia* – encapsulates some of the main characteristics of this way of performing cultural policies and activities. First, the passage of artistic decision making from the Musical Directors of the Orchestra to officers appointed by the local authorities. Second, the transmutation of technical authority in artistic competence as some of them take the stage as conductors and stage directors. Unlike the sharp distinction between impresario and arts administrator conceptualized by Peterson,⁵⁵ the new figure works in the formal setting of the latter while conserving the informal practices based on personal ties and lack of specific educational background of the former.

In his theoretical account of the current changes in the world of opera and the status of its performers, Samuel Weber⁵⁶ has called attention to one point: that small name opera houses have shifted their politics of identification from the big name conductors and singers to the individual performance. That is: if the process of identifying, recognizing, and representing cannot be achieved by hiring a big name star, because of budget restrictions and artistic hierarchy, the weight of the performance must shift to the *mise-en scene* or to its integral place inside the whole season as a series. He also calls into attention the political power structure upon which operatic performances occur. The Argentinean Symphony world can be very much explained by a similar model. On the one hand, we have several orchestral organizations where the individual figure of the conductor as a charismatic artist has disappeared. One of the top orchestras has worked with a general director that programmed its seasons and for the 1996–1999 period did not have a principal conductor in place, even though it has been historically the most important orchestra of the country. When the associate in charge resigned, the artistic director of the Complex decided to appoint himself as a musical director and conductor, even though his previous conducting experience consisted mainly of little chamber groups of contemporary music and the conducting of his own work during one of the operatic seasons. He did not have any previous experience with a symphony orchestra. Three of the top second level orchestras do not have a principal conductor and the major decisions are either made by the director of a larger artistic center or by the director of a special institute that oversees the activities of the orchestra.

However, the second and most important part of this phenomenon can be seen in other examples: First, as a result of the opposition politics of the Alianza and Peronism, is the example of the artistic director of the Argentino Opera house, who without any previous experience as a stage director was the *regisseur* of *Oedipus Rex*. Second is the example of the Colón Youth Orchestra, where the coaches (Marco Giordano and Guillermo Genioli) are what we could consider (according to the informal ranking made by conductors and players) among the five most important conductors in the country and the instrument professors are the top musicians in the country, yet the principal conductor is a flutist from the City Philharmonic who presented the idea to the authorities of the Opera House. Third, the newly appointed director of the state radio decided to resurrect the youth orchestra of the station. That orchestra has been historically considered one of the best of the country and its historical conductor is usually referred to as the most important historical figure in Argentina's musical history. However, instead of offering the post to some of the conductors that were already working with Youth Orchestras, he decided to turn it into an Ancient Music Program to be

⁵⁵ Peterson, R. (1986). From impresario to arts administrator. In P. DiMaggio (Ed.), *Non profit enterprise in the arts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁶ This is the main argument of Weber, S. (1993). Taking place: Toward a theater of dislocation. In D. Levin (Ed.), *Opera through other eyes* (pp. 107–144). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

directed by him.⁵⁷ The Program disappeared after two concerts. The creation of that orchestra that provided paid fellowships for the young players drained some of the other amateur orchestras. The Director of the Station was a trainee conductor who did not have any previous experience other than conducting a couple of concerts of the orchestra of a private owned station where he worked before joining forces with the State Radio. He arrived at the State Radio as a way of merging it with the private station that brought the capital for administering the new radio and the expertise for programming it.

As Norbert Elias⁵⁸ has shown, there was a certain social distance between sponsor and performer in the court society. In a situation of institutional weakness like the one that exists in Argentina, it seems as though the sponsor and the performer are sometimes the same people. Going further in this debate it is interesting to notice that most of the non-symphonic seasons by Symphony Orchestras (ballet and opera) are cast, including the conductor, by the producer that is co-producing the work. That is the case at Córdoba where the leading opera conductor was appointed by the main singer brought by the producer, because he was the one that first gave him a role as a soloist in an independent opera company. That is the case also of the ballet, where the producer and the main dancer decide on the conductor. This same process is demonstrated at one of the newest opera companies, which is subsidized by a municipality at the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, Avellaneda, where the principal conductor by competition, Camilo LaRue, was set aside and a new conductor who brought the idea for an operatic season was appointed in his place.

The institutional frame of the music world

To understand the institutional and political world of Argentinean music, we have to look at two key issues. The first one deals with the difference between the state sponsored musical seasons and the ones sponsored by private institutions. Although the state sponsored seasons rely heavily on national musicians (most of the orchestra's musicians are Argentinean in a heavy proportion), the season of the private institutions (as with the Mozarteum, the Wagneriana, or Harmonnia subscription series sponsored by large corporations) is marked by the presence of international orchestras and soloists. The second one, with the national orchestral system. The kind of career a conductor is likely to have and the degree of success depends heavily on the structure of available opportunities, the market demand for his services. These macro aspects direct our attention to the kind of institutions in which the conductors' careers move: the Argentinean Symphony Orchestra System. As Faulkner⁵⁹ defines it, the network of orchestras can be viewed as an organizational set, a stratification system where the higher the rank of the set the more influence on the standards of achievement and the more eminence enjoyed.

The orchestral system

The hierarchy of the orchestral system is stratified in three groups. A brief summary of the Konex prizes of Argentinean music⁶⁰ shows that the best orchestra both in 1989 and in

⁵⁷ The Director has invited himself to conduct one of the top Youth Orchestras during the 2002 season, profiting from the home the National Direction of Music has given to the orchestra during 2001.

⁵⁸ Elias, N. (1983). *The court society*. New York: Pantheon., and (1993) *Mozart. Portrait of a genius*. Berkeley: California University Press.

⁵⁹ Faulkner, R. (1974). Career concerns and mobility motivations of orchestra musicians. *Sociological Quarterly*, 14, 143.

⁶⁰ These prizes are awarded every 10 years and represent an index for the ranking of importance of the orchestras as it is awarded by a jury of specialists (critics, musicologists, and retired musicians).

1999 was the City Philharmonic. The National Symphony Orchestra and the Colon Opera Orchestra were ranked two and three. In 1989 the Spring Chamber Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra of the National Radio were also nominated. The youth orchestra disappeared in the 1990s. In 1999 the orchestras joining the ones on the top level were the Córdoba Symphony Orchestra and the La Plata's Argentino Opera Orchestra.

If we look closely at other key indicators of an orchestra's ranking such as budget, payroll, and the number of musicians, we have a clearer picture of the stratified hierarchy of the orchestras (Table 1).

Three of the four orchestras on the top have native conductors. The OFBA has appointed as musical director a composer and pianist who had been in charge of the Contemporary Music Center of the Colon Opera House, Hugo Sofini. The National Symphony is conducted by the most important conductor of the last decade, Federico García. He has been the conductor of both the City Philharmonic and the artistic director of the Colon Opera House in previous tenures. The Argentino Opera Orchestra has a young national conductor, Jorge Iltristo, who was previously promoted at the City Philharmonic from the assistant to the associate and then to associate-in-charge rank before jumping to La Plata. At this orchestra, the principal guest conductor is an American conductor specializing in opera, who has conducted many of the most important American Opera Orchestras (like Boston, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh). The Colon Opera Orchestra does not have a main conductor; it is under the conduction of theater coaches during rehearsals and of the Opera guest conductors during the season. The musical director of the Opera House does its programming.

Most of the conductors on orchestras of the second level were foreigners. In Cuyo, the female conductor was a Brazilian who is also the conductor of the Federal University National Orchestra at Rio de Janeiro. She has been already invited to the NSO subscription season and one of the fall festivals of the OFBA. In San Juan, the conductor is a little known Frenchman who has not worked in his home country. The Mendoza Philharmonic conductor is from Switzerland and before this post he was in charge of the Montevideo Philharmonic in

Table 1 The stratified hierarchy of the Argentinean Orchestral System, 1999–2001

	Concertmaster salary*	Base salary*	Number of musicians
First tier orchestras			
City Philharmonic	37,000	26,000	115
Colón Opera House	37,000	26,000	98
National Symphony♣	27,000	20,000	103
Argentino Opera House	29,000	21,000	96
Second tier orchestras			
Córdoba Symphony	22,000	14,000	72
Salta Symphony	30,000	16,000	84
San Juan University	19,000	12,000	56–70
Cuyo University			64
Mendoza Philharmonic			60
Santa Fe Symphony			72
Santa Fe State at Rosario	18,000	11,000	80
Third tier orchestras			
Tucumán University	22,000	14,000	50
Bahía Blanca			48
Mar del Plata	18,000	9,400	54

* In US \$, including paid vacation and annual bonus.

♣ Final NSO salaries larger if all off-season performances included.

Uruguay, the second orchestra of that country. At Salta the newly appointed conductor is from Venezuela and won the post in a competitive contest. His previous appointment was at the Mérida Orchestra in Venezuela. The Associate conductor is a young conductor from Argentina who used to conduct a semi-pro orchestra in Rio Cuarto, Córdoba's third city. In Santa Fe the conductor is a young Spaniard, who has only conducted two provincial orchestras in Spain as a guest conductor and had not had any previous appointment in his curriculum. The Córdoba Symphony Orchestra fired their conductor in 1999 and in 2001 had a Chilean conductor as Principal Guest conductor, scheduled to lead five of the nine concerts of the subscription season. Some of these orchestras, like Cuyo and Mendoza, have changed their Conductor over the last years, however, they have changed one foreign conductor for another foreign conductor. In Cuyo the conductor was a Peruvian who is now the conductor of the Chile Symphony Orchestra, in Mendoza the conductor was a Spaniard, who had been invited during the 2000 season to conduct the NSO. I later show the logic of exchanges that explains some of the guest appearances. However, at this point the link between nationality and musical quality for the institutions of the 'interior' becomes quite obvious.

Among the third tier orchestras, it is very unusual to have a foreign conductor. Both the salaries (around or less than US \$25,000 per year) and the prestige are low. The conductors of these orchestras have a tough time being invited to the second orchestral level or into the upper echelon. None of the conductors of orchestras such as Bahía Blanca, Rosario, Corrientes, Tucumán, Chaco, or even Salta have conducted at the National Symphony, the City Philharmonic, or even the Argentino Opera Orchestra level.

This is explained by how the second level orchestras, conducted by foreign conductors, work. Most of these orchestras lead their artistic activity either towards the immediate community or towards the international level. The guest conductors are, as in Cuyo, Mendoza, Córdoba, and Santa Fe, local figures: a state-born conductor who rehearses the orchestra or conducts it for the didactical season concerts (Mendoza); a young conductor that works with the local Youth Symphony or the Director of the State Leading Chorus (Santa Fe); a seasoned veteran who teaches a conducting master class every year at the same location (Cuyo); the conductor of the local Symphony Band (Córdoba). Most of the few national soloists are part of the orchestra. On the other hand, these orchestras do not invite either national guest conductors or soloists from other national orchestras or chamber groups outside their state. However, they do invite many foreign conductors and soloists. For instance, the activities of the orchestras of the Andean region are headed towards exchange activities with the Chilean musical world, either with the University of Chile, the Chile Symphony Orchestra or the Concepción Symphony Orchestra. These exchanges, shared activities such as master classes, courses, and competition for young conductors, have led to the designation of the former conductor of the Cuyo Orchestra⁶¹ as the new head of the Chile Symphony and guest appearances by many young Argentinean conductors at the Concepción Orchestra. The new Cuyo conductor, a Brazilian, has decided to start an exchange program with Brazilian musicians, inviting five soloists and one conductor for the 2001 season. However, at the Rio de Janeiro Orchestra she conducts these invitations have not been reciprocated.

To prove this point and explain this phenomenon, it is important to look at some of the numbers of appearances by foreign conductors and soloists, local or orchestral conductors and soloists, and national guest conductors and soloists. In Cuyo in 1999 and 2001, there were 10 foreign guest conductors, who conducted 13 concerts of the subscription season (out of 38 concerts), and just three Argentinean conductors that conducted four concerts. As

⁶¹ During his tenure, especially in the 1998 and 1999 seasons, he did not include any work or commission by Argentinean composers.

I indicated above, there was only one guest conductor who was not associated with the Orchestra. In Santa Fe in 2000 and 2001, seven foreign guest conductors have conducted, while there have been no invitations outside the immediate local realm. In Mendoza during the 2001 season, the landscape changed somewhat with two national conductors and two foreign guest conductors during the first part of the season. However, as one of the Argentinean conductors signaled in an interview in the local newspaper: “It has been six years since the last time I’ve been invited.”⁶² Neither the new Swiss conductor nor the previous Spaniard relied heavily on Argentinean guest conductors.

This logic reproduces itself at all the levels of the orchestral system. Even in places like Bahía Blanca, an orchestra from the third level, the only two guest conductors over the last two seasons have been an American conductor from the University of South Carolina and an opera coach from the Bahía Blanca theater. Things go more in this direction if we look at the number of guest soloists appointed. All five of the soloists for the 2000 season were unknown foreigners.

In 2001, there were 40 season concerts conducted by foreign maestros and 44 by Argentinean conductors (taking into account the OFBA, the OSN, Mendoza, Cuyo, Córdoba, and Santa Fe). Nevertheless, if we take away the National Symphony, the only top-rated orchestra that invited more national than international artists, we find out that there were only 25 concerts conducted by national maestros and 33 conducted by foreigners. What is even more important for our main argument, guest appearances for conductors without tenure at an orchestra of the first or second level numbered 15 in 2001. It was 17 in 2000 and 22 season concerts in 1997. As we see, the number over the five year period is diminishing.

Most of the time, except for the National Symphony and City Philharmonic seasons, the foreign conductors are not important and some times they do not have a tenure in their or in any musical world. In contrast to the Argentinean situation, there have recently been several Mexican and Venezuelan conductors invited by Argentinean orchestras and all of them are Principal Conductors of diverse orchestras in their home country.⁶³ As a result of the hiring practices of the second level orchestras, there are few chances for Argentinean conductors to conduct. This is especially true for what we might consider young conductors (for the purposes of this article, we consider as young conductors those less than 40 years old, as is generally understood by both musicians and conductors in Argentina). Most of the professional career of a young conductor is made at the independent opera companies or

⁶² Gran Velada de la Filarmónica. *Los Andes*, June 1, 2001.

⁶³ Over the last seasons there have arrived from Venezuela: Riazuelo (Santa Fe 2000 and 2001), Rugeles (Santa Fe 2001), Rahn (Santa Fe 2000 and Cuyo 2001), Amaya (Tucumán 1999), and the Principal Conductor of the Salta Symphony Orchestra; and from México: Díaz Muñoz (OSN 1997 and 2000 and OFBA 1997), Diemecke (OFBA 2000 and 2001), Carrasco (Santa Fe 2001), Barrios (OSN 2001), and Ibarra (Cuyo 2000). Unlike Argentina, those two countries have a national system of youth orchestras that produces high quality players and conductors. As Rice 1996 suggests for Bulgarian music, there has been a close relation between the extension of social rights during the populist and welfare state in those countries and the social organization of music through formal, large, fixed, and directed groups. The Venezuelan program started in 1973 and has taken away many children and young people from the shantytowns and turned them into musicians and luthiers. México started its own similar program near the end of the 1980s under the sponsorship of the OAS and UNESCO. In Argentina, similar enterprises (The Colón Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Libertador San Martín Youth Orchestra, the University of Rosario Youth Orchestra, the Córdoba city Child and Youth Orchestras) have been diminished by the absence of a national plan of youth orchestras, lack of funding, and the low chances of developing young conductors. On the contrary, most of the youth orchestras of Venezuela have developed into full fledged symphony orchestras and their young conductors, nourished by an OAS Fellowship Program, have developed into principal conductors of those orchestras. See Rice, T. (1996). The dialectic of economics and aesthetics in Bulgarian Music. In M. Slobin (Ed.), *Returning culture: Musical changes in central and eastern Europe* (pp. 176–199). Durham: Duke University Press.

private opera productions that are ranked below the Argentino and the Colon Opera houses season, the youth orchestras, the contemporary music scene, or the symphonic bands.

Some of these young conductors have already conducted abroad in other Latin American orchestras but they have not performed with Argentinean Symphony Orchestras. The path for native young conductors is so complex than the Associate Conductor of the City Philharmonic, Jorge Iltristo, had not been invited to perform in front of top second and first level orchestras until he was nominated as associate in charge of the orchestra. Then he conducted the OSN during 2000 and Córdoba during 2000 and 2001. He was later tenured by the Argentino Opera Orchestra during the 2001 season. As I noted above, the path from the third level, where most of the young conductors perform, to the first level is so difficult that just two conductors of the third level – the Principal of Mar del Plata at the OSN 2001 and the Argentino Opera Orchestra in 1999 and the Principal of the Paraná Orchestra in 1997 and 2001 – have crossed the boundary.

Unlike the national conductors, orchestra musicians succeed by means of unionization, not only in limiting rehearsal hours, improving wages, and negotiating paid vacations but in limiting the numbers of foreign musicians. A look at the numbers of foreigners in the top three orchestras demonstrates this point. In the City Philharmonic, there are nine foreign musicians out of 115 (8%), most of them from Eastern Europe and two from neighboring country, Uruguay. At the Colon Opera House, there has been no foreign musician hired recently. At the National Symphony, all three foreign players are from the former eastern bloc. Moreover, the musicians representatives of the orchestra, which were the same as the delegates of the Chamber Orchestra I had worked for, informally enforced a rule in both orchestras that when the quality of playing was very similar they had to hire an Argentinean born player.

Even though orchestra musicians have a strong sense of nationalism when choosing their fellow players, this is not the position the musicians have about the nationality of the conductor. When in 1992 the OSN position was open, the musicians, headed by their nationalist delegates caused a big turmoil that ended with the suspension of their two delegates. They claimed basically “Nobody had consulted them in order to designate the conductor. They did not take into account our desire to be conducted by Mexican maestro Diaz Muñoz.”⁶⁴ On October 7 of 1990, the Mexican conductor had led the Orchestra in a concert to honor the visiting President of Mexico performing in a way that left the musicians ecstatic about the chance of having him. At that point the orchestra had been without a Principal Conductor for more than eight years. Even though diverse prestigious conductors coached it, guest maestros, including the coaches, lead most of the concerts. Even though they respected the appointed Maestro (who had been already two times Principal Conductor of the orchestra) they wanted somebody “they would consider first line, a foreign conductor.”⁶⁵ After just two months, the appointed conductor resigned and instead of his projected season the orchestra continued with their tradition of having a complete season of Guest conductors, including, among others, the Mexican conductor they liked so much. Ironically, when I asked one of the players and one of the then coaches and now Guest conductor at one of the OSN rehearsals how much they liked the Mexican conductor they both answered: “Well, it wasn’t like that, we liked him but the truth was that the 1992 performance bored us and we lost all our interest in him. His Sibelius was awful,

⁶⁴ Riera, D. & Sánchez, F. (1992). Una polémica mantiene paralizada a la mayor orquesta argentina. La Sinfónica Nacional no tiene director y sus delegados permanecen suspendidos. *La Maga* (April 29).

⁶⁵ Riera, D. & Sánchez, F. (1992). Los músicos de la Sinfónica Nacional no están conformes con su nuevo director. *La Maga* (March 3).

worse than CY (the dismissed Argentinean conductor).” As I show below, the persistence of the claims for autarchic decisions on behalf of the orchestra is best explained by the interactions, mechanisms, and representations of alienation among orchestra musicians.

The orchestral musicians’ world

While playing in the National Conservatory Orchestra, I noted that the conductor had as a corrective medicine for out of tune notes a practice called “note per movement,” where he indicated with his baton whether you had to keep playing the same note, because it was not properly tuned, or whether you could move on to the next one. Although I, as a self-conscious amateur musician, found that experience to be a pedagogical tool, most of the musicians in the professional world find it demeaning and annoying. Some years ago I was present at a debate between a conductor and a couple of musicians of the second file of violins. They told him that they “were not going to repeat by themselves the three bars,” that they “have already played it twice,” and that they “feel it is against common sense to have us playing it by ourselves for a third time.” A viola player intervened and said, “The passage has to be played by the whole orchestra and at regular pace,” then he wondered, “what is he running, a school?” As is common knowledge among musical scholars, a situation like this has many of the elements that characterize and define the relationship of the orchestra with the conductor. First, there is the protest of the musicians about what is perceived as a disciplining and authoritarian gesture that goes against the presentation of the musician as a professional. Second, we note the eloquent and didactic character of the action, which is interpreted as part of a talkative practice, something despised by most musicians who usually prefer small indications, clear baton signs, and no talk during rehearsals. Third, the gesture embodies a representation of the place of the authority of the conductor and the orchestra as subordinate that has been especially challenged by the growing unionization of professional musicians.

Several authors have written about the orchestral world, focusing mainly on a interactionist perspective and in subjects like the alienation of the musicians, their freelance or permanent status, the consequences of unionization, and both the structure and the actions in the relationship with the conductor. Drawing on findings by social theorists like Faulkner and philosophers like Adorno, I present below some common features of Argentinean orchestras and how they frame the interactions.

The first feature is related to the unionization of orchestras in contemporary Argentina. As Kammermann has shown the growing unionization of orchestras derives from the decrease of the tenure time of the conductors. As I have shown above, in Argentina this rule has been fulfilled in recent years. Further, some of the orchestras, like the National Symphony have emphasized in their public presentation, that the musicians constitute the orchestra and that the conductor is an appendix. (This is also true for some European orchestras.) For instance in the photos on the cover of the orchestra’s playbill the whole orchestra appears seated with their classical distribution in the scenario while looking at the camera, but, metaphorically enough, the podium is empty (Figure 1). Moreover, as some of the same musicians were the musicians of the Spring Chamber Orchestra, it did not seem strange when they decided to take the orchestra by themselves. As they have said in diverse interviews: “Not having a baton conductor makes the orchestral work so different. We depend on what we hear. And this makes us really deepen a sense that should be the main sense of orchestral musician and, nevertheless, isn’t. Many times, great maestros that come to the Symphony Orchestras have to tell us to listen to each other. How could it be that



Figure 1 OSN Concert program for the 1999–2000 season. Notice the empty place that replaces the podium and, thus, the conductor space in the scenario.

someone has to tell us that? That is what happens when you have to depend upon the baton.”⁶⁶

The second feature, as seen in the previous narration, is the image of the conductor both as an appendix and as an unnecessary mediator between the musicians, draining their knowledge and energy. Is a clear and double problem present in orchestra playing: the relationship between alienation and the technological and structural dependency on the musical conductor. One of the players, appointed as General Manager of the orchestra, said: “That the concertmaster has been chosen as musical director was something natural, it did not need an agreement. It is a musician’s dialog that was built by looking at each other while playing.” The conductor/concertmaster referred to the same spirit by saying: “Now we are an amplified string quintet.” The second chair of the orchestra: “The foundation for a chamber group is to build a team where everybody understands everybody with minimum gestures and just by looking. Where you can guess the other players’ intention.” All of these testimonies go my way in signaling the convergence between alienation and conductor dependence.

The same situation of challenge and feat between conductor and concertmaster or top chairs can be seen in the micro-interactions and at the small sabotages that musicians perform to test the knowledge of the conductor. At one of the rehearsals while working, I saw a problem between a guest conductor and the guide of the second violins that, according to the conductor, had kept playing out of cue or taking other tempos than those preferred by the director in order to test him. Finally he told him: “the last time was OK, I think you don’t seem to notice I know what you are doing.” Even though at the beginning I

⁶⁶ Liut, M. (1999). En agosto regresará la Mayo. *La Nación* (July 23).

was skeptical about something like this happening, a couple of players told me, while hanging out with me on an old bus during a tour, that they always do things like that: “One time they brought a Peruvian conductor. He was so cocky we had to show him up a little, we kept playing notes that even though were not corrected in our scores we knew were wrong. But he didn’t say shit! Another time, they kept bringing this Hungarian conductor, I think he conducted at Chile, and what we did at Ginastera’s Malambo was to respect his wrong cues, even though it’s a work we already know by heart. A whole line of brass and woods were missing in action. It was a disaster! (laughing) He never came back, though, I don’t know if it was because of that or because of him losing the orchestra at Chile.” Another player, second chair of the top orchestra in the country, told me that he: “was already tired of the newly appointed conductor; it is obvious he has not conducted much before. He keeps us playing the same stuff in order to not get caught off-line by us.”

Just as Adorno has extensively signaled, most musicians now believe that the public prestige of a conductor largely exceeds the contribution most of them make to the reproduction of music. However, as he is quick to point out, his activity is not out of artistic justification and necessity. As Schutz has theoretically described while explaining the phenomenology of making music together, a face-to-face relationship like the one narrated by the concertmaster of the chamber orchestra is only possible among a small number of co-performers.⁶⁷ When a large number is reached someone has to assume leadership. That’s the only way to adjust the music *durée* from the inner time with the “objective” or outer time.⁶⁸ The historical analysis of the development of historical conducting goes into this direction. Sennett, Attali, and Galkin all defend the interpretation that links the birth of the contemporary figure of the conductor to the growth of the size and the coordination difficulties of the orchestra.⁶⁹

A third feature that helps us understand the perceptions that orchestra musicians have of the national conductors is the problem of alienation. Some of the conclusions presented by Arian in his work at the Philadelphia Orchestra are of pertinence for this work as it shows the significance of alienation in the orchestral world. This problem is defined as the routinization of the symphonic repertory format⁷⁰ (as it was discussed and presented in note 63), which blocks the musician needs for self-expression, recognition, and interest in his work. Unlike many American and European Orchestras that have small chamber groups or rank-and-file musicians conducting instrumental workshops, most Argentinean orchestras do not patronize activities other than their symphonic season, even though Argentina has a rich tradition of independent chamber music seasons that range from duos, trios, and quartets to the string and chamber orchestras.⁷¹ Further, most of the musicians have studied

⁶⁷ Schutz, A. (1964). Making music together. In *Collected Papers II. Studies in Social Theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

⁶⁸ Galkin (1988) and Adorno, T. W.(1976). *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. New York: Seabury., refer extensively to the failure of the Soviet symphony orchestras that experimented playing without a conductor.

⁶⁹ Kamermann (1990) makes the case for a non-deterministic model of the development of the conducting profession, by showing that the single leadership arose at varying rates in different places and from different sources.

⁷⁰ The few exceptions are the OFBA 2001 program and the 2001 season by the OSN, which abound in new compositions (11) by Argentinean composers.

⁷¹ Among others, we can cite during 2001 the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Banco Nación, Fundación San Rafael, Ars Nobilis, AMIA, and Museo Fernández Blanco seasons. Among other groups, we can name the Camerata Bariloche, the La Plata Chamber Orchestra, the Buenos Aires Chamber Orchestra, the Spring Chamber Orchestra, the San Telmo and the Argentino trio, the CEAMCE quintet, etc.

to be a solo players, either with a maestro or within the conservatory. In the Argentinean case, few players have learned how to play in an orchestra or to subordinate to a larger group while being formally trained.⁷²

This sense of frustration and of accomplishment is felt each time somebody moves up one echelon among the string row, or every time somebody reaches the soloist status.⁷³ In the top orchestras, the soloists are selected through competition and usually are the only players from the orchestra playing by themselves. However, even in the case of the soloist there are small chances of playing outside the orchestral mechanism. For instance at the OFBA season the orchestra soloists have performed at 3 of the 12 subscription series and at four of the eight extraordinary concerts. At the OSN orchestral soloists perform at just 4 of the 30 concerts of the season. Both at the Argentino and at the Colon Opera House there are few chances for orchestral soloists as they are being extensively used for opera and ballet performances. However, in the symphonic season of the Argentino Orchestra during 2000, just 1 of the 10 concerts presented an orchestra soloist (the concertmaster). The same path was followed that season at every orchestral level with Mendoza (0/8), Bahía Blanca (0/6), Santa Fe (1/15), and Tucumán (1/14)⁷⁴ as examples.

As a second chair of one of the top orchestras told me: “You feel better when you make your fellow musicians notice that you can play, that besides being with them at the orchestra you can step up and perform. Even the conductor comes to congratulate you. You feel less rusty, as if you have taken the dust out of you... I have taken every chance I could to perform as a soloist with minor orchestras, with the chamber orchestra I was with, with second tier level orchestras. I have also climbed chair by chair until being at the second one of the orchestra, if you see a picture of the orchestra you can see me, it was not always like that, I started at the eight chair. I also tried to be the concertmaster at the chamber orchestra, it did not work, but I am now playing first chair at a new chamber group which is very good.”

This meaning of the word ‘alienation’ intersects itself with the Marxian sense as the rank-and-file musicians feel dispossessed of the public recognition for their work in the final evaluation of the artistic product. Most musicians feel that an excessive weight lays on the conductor’s work, who asks them to renounce their individuality while they submit themselves to the general will of the music, to use Adorno’s notions. The combination of these two meanings: the disenchantment with the musical profession thanks to the routinized tedium of orchestral life and the fetishization and identification of the musical product with the conductor (usually repeated by the phrase used by most conductors and some critics: ‘the orchestra sounds as the conductor is’) leads to some typical scenes like the ones that happened

⁷² After the dissolution of the State Radio Youth Orchestra, some orchestras have assumed the task of training individual players into orchestra musicians. However, some of them work as para-professional orchestras of cities with small budgets (like Lanús, Hurlingham, Quilmes, and San Martín). Among the ones that work as school orchestras, I want to cite the Colón Opera House Youth Orchestra, the Libertador San Martín Symphony, the Córdoba Youth and Children Symphony, and the University of Rosario Symphony. The National Conservatory has a small orchestra that is seldom used by the students; the Catholic University and the La Plata School of Music do not have a school or youth orchestra to perform or practice in. At present, these are considered to be the most representative musical pedagogic institutions.

⁷³ There is a strong difference accordingly to the played instrument. Violas, French horns, and bass are very much looked after by Argentinean Orchestras. For instance, some of the French horn players of the NSO play at the Colón Opera Orchestra, even though both are full time jobs. The same happened between the NSO and the City Philharmonic, which share the bass soloist. Instruments like violins and flutes, however, are in abundance. Some of the youth orchestras, for instance, have so many flutes that all the players rotate from concert to concert.

⁷⁴ The only exception was the Cuyo University Orchestra, which had eight orchestral soloists during a season of 14 concerts.

at the orchestra where I used to work. The Orchestra, for outsiders like the critic or the audience, was so strongly identified with the conductor that they were considered interchangeable synonyms. This caused rivalries and factions to arise not only with the orchestra musicians but also with the other conductors. At one point the challenge was so open that two of the musicians claimed to the General Manager that the management ‘had bought the press’ and that was why they did get good and extensive reviews of their concerts.

A fourth phenomenon that helps us to understand whether musicians have a horizontal relationship with their fellow musicians and with the conductor is the institutional framework of the orchestra, such as whether we are dealing with musicians who run the orchestra as a cooperative and decide to hire a conductor or whether we are talking of a vertical organization where the artistic decision lays within the conductor who is hired as Artistic Director either by patrons or the state appointed authorities. As Couch⁷⁵ shows with the difference between English Orchestras and the institutional history of US based ensembles. In the Argentinean case, there is a large history of institutional creation by the state or by private patrons, and just the chamber groups tend to work in a cooperative way. These two different perspectives over the artistic work were at stake in the fight between the OSN union delegates and the National Authorities in 1992, with 53 protest concerts on behalf of autonomy, and in the firing of the conductor described at the beginning. In both cases two diverse logics collide, one logic of autonomy or auto-government, in which the musicians are in charge of the decision-making process (who they hire, who are the guest conductors, what they are playing, the season dates) and a logic where the decision process follows a hierarchical road in which the authorities are involved, including the conductor, and the musicians are consulted just to a certain extent. As the National Director of Music said in 1992, “We pay them a salary. While they still depend on us they should obey what the Ministry programs. The orchestra musicians have a position taken with respect to their decisions that does not coincide with the reality of a society organized in each and every field. Can a regiment work if the soldiers are not happy with their superiors?”⁷⁶ The comparison made by the then Director between a regiment and an orchestra and the eagerness of the union delegates to cut every possible dialogue with the authorities had the orchestra in crisis for most of 1992 and 1993 and it stabilized a little after the designation in 1994 of the first principal conductor in more than 10 years.

The fifth and final phenomenon that shapes the interaction between musicians and the conductor depends on the employment status of the orchestra: whether it is a full time job or freelance work. In a full time orchestra the conductor has rational legal authority, based on both his position and technical expertise. In a freelance orchestra the conductor is perceived mostly in charismatic terms and as an entrepreneur.

As Faulkner has shown there are several pros and cons in being a freelance musician. He signaled as an advantage a certain degree of artistic freedom when compared to the bureaucratized full time orchestras: technical expertise and dexterity nearer to a virtuoso experience and a more crafty feeling of the “artist’s life.” A negative is not knowing the music that they have to play with only a few rehearsals. (“Why does the Maestro choose these things... Doesn’t he know how few rehearsals we have? Why us? Why us?” – the concertmaster of the chamber orchestra said while referring to an Eric Charpentier piece they were going to premiere in Argentina); that the music is difficult for such short

⁷⁵ Stephen R. Couch, “Patronage and Organizational Structure in Symphony Orchestra in London and New York,” in Kamerman and Martorella, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ Riera, D. & Sánchez, F.(1992). Un conflicto de poderes enfrenta a la Sinfónica con la Secretaría de Cultura. *La Maga* (Buenos Aires, May 20).

rehearsal time (“You have to count a lot and be very concentrated, the work is very easy technically speaking but it is easy to get lost. And then you are damned” – one of the second violins said to his row during lunch while referring to Philip Glass’s company) and that they are playing in a very risky way (“Here is like being in the circus without a net. You have few rehearsals and you have to play well. If you don’t you will probably be out of the orchestra for the next concert” – said a young third chair of the violins while coming back on the bus from a performance).

There are also two ways in which their work is represented by other musicians and by the conductor. On the one hand, a certain ethic of professionalism that involves versatility (“The guy can play. He’s old and everything, but you throw him an old hat and he can play it,” the orchestra’s concertmaster talking about the featured soloist), quick adaptation skills (“I am calling JCRA instead of KL, you know he can play almost anything without knowing it, he is a quick reader” – the musician-broker⁷⁷ talking to the maestro about the convenience of changing a musician), repertory changes (“I am very thankful for the opportunity, at the Opera Orchestra we don’t get to play much music. It’s great to do chamber music like this” – a second chair cellist sweet-talking the conductor after his first rehearsal for the orchestra). On the other hand, the negative representations group themselves around the adjective “changuero,”⁷⁸ Buenos Aires slang for “gig player.” From the point of view of the conductor, especially in a full time orchestra, that name corresponds to the players on the orchestra who, because of wanting to make some money on the side, have little commitment to their job and are full of musical tricks, professional recurrences, and playing patterns that make their skill for style variation and adaptation to diverse conductors difficult.

I want, as a way of concluding this point about musicians’ interaction, to focus on two central features that have direct consequences for the politics of musical conducting. On the one hand, there is the increasing unionization of Argentine orchestras, their quest for autarchy that has resulted in less stability for the conductor. As I have mentioned, almost 20% of the Argentinean orchestras were without a conductor during the 2001 season. On the other hand, the growing influence of music in artistic designations has resulted in changing career patterns where the conductors are former musicians of the orchestra (at the Santa Fe Orchestra at Rosario,⁷⁹ at the Colon Youth Orchestra) or have had an active participation in union or non-conducting activities (at the City Philharmonic and the Córdoba Symphony opera season).

⁷⁷ An important feature is the presence of a music-broker (in the case of the orchestra I worked for, *MB*, second chair of the City Philharmonic, and first of the chamber group) who secures the freelance musicians and guarantees his own progress within the scale of prestige, reputation, and power. I attended some of the meetings where he and the conductor pinpointed the names of the desired players. He knew most of them either from his job at the City Philharmonic (he usually recommended the union delegates) or by his work as a freelance player at recording companies (playing as background for pop music) and at Broadway-like musicals. He created his own network of musicians and had a certain inter-dependence with the conductors in the decisions on whom to call.

⁷⁸ Americans call these orchestras pick-up orchestras. Venezuelans call them “vente tu” (You, come!) orchestras. In Argentina, they are considered “changas” or “curros,” which are words normally used for informal kinds of jobs.

⁷⁹ According to one of the juries of the contest for principal conductor at Rosario, the bases of it were violated when the musicians asked not for a Curriculum and Project contest, but for a competitive contest where all conductors were called to perform. The bases stipulated that “they would call competitive contest only if the participants presented the same curriculum.” As a result of that, all the important conductors deserted the competition and the finals were conducted with just 13 of the 33 original applicants for the position.

The field of musical conducting

When dealing with the meaning of charisma, we cannot avoid the work of Max Weber. In the next few pages, I present several features that shape the musical conductor's social world as a field (as understood by Pierre Bourdieu) and I discuss its link with charisma during the history of conducting through Goffman's concept of performance.

The figure of the conductor is born in its contemporary form at the end of the nineteenth century (see Attali, Sennett, Horowitz, Galkin). Its charismatic component is presented as an institutional construction and as a derivation of the representation of the musician as a Romantic artist. Using Weber's *Sociology of Religion* categories we can think of the modern figure of the conductor as a prophet.⁸⁰ Why? Because it adopts a unitary purpose about life in a conscious way. The interesting problem arises when thinking about whether we are in the presence of someone of who constitutes and presents himself from an "exemplary prophecy" or ethic prophecy.⁸¹ Even if we look at the differences among interpretative styles, especially the divide between the virtuoso and his politics of interpretation and the conductor as the "objective" representative of the composer, we are going to find that the conductor falls under the broad Weberian category.⁸² A conductor can either go the way of revelation and divine mission or the way of the ascetic exemplary sacrifice. Some conductors are instruments of a god (the music in the score) that asks them to proclaim its existence and will, imposing the mandate of obedience to the prophet, and others are vessels and united as one in mystic communion with music inviting those in need of salvation to follow them. When conductors prepare the score at home before rehearsals – a work that needs silence and concentration and is the bulk of the conductor's job before approaching the orchestra – it fits perfectly Weber's description of an exemplary prophecy. However that illusion is broken when the conductor takes the next step and uses this concentration with an end, intervening in the world while conducting the orchestra in the rehearsals and "performing" in front of the orchestra itself. As we are going to see later in the testimony of some retired players, I am extensively using the religious analogy as it is something that arises from the musicians themselves.

One of the most important indicators of how the charismatic authority of the conductor has diminished over the years is by looking, as Mauss in his classic work *The Gift* suggests, to the exchange economy among the principal conductors and then to the structure of the conductor market in Argentina. Most invitations and invitations in return by conductors are arranged by their agent or by a concert promoter. When someone is invited to conduct the orchestra the fees must be fixed and must match the return invitations accordingly.⁸³ The

⁸⁰ As Weber (1946, 248–249) notes, "the very existence of charismatic authority is specifically unstable... The charismatic leader gains or maintains authority solely by proving his strength in life... he must prove itself in that those that faithfully surrender to him must fare well."

⁸¹ I am following the Section IV 'Profetas' of Weber, M. (1997). *Sociología de la religión*. Madrid: Istmo.

⁸² See Sadri, A. (1992). *Max Weber's sociology of intellectuals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁸³ If the price of the guest conductor is US \$3,000, then that is the fee for the principal conductor when the time is due at the guest conductor's orchestra. Most conductors tend to offer the guest conductors what they perceive as their maximum fee according to the exchange circumstances. If a conductor has a range between US \$2,500 and \$5,000 what he does is invite the conductors of the provincial orchestras paying them US \$3,000, if the orchestra is from another Latin American country the fee will be \$4,000 and if it is from Europe, the top of the range: US \$5,000. He just reserves the US \$2,500 fee for provincial orchestras with small budgets and without a principal conductor.

diminution of what Mauss calls *mana*⁸⁴ and the ordinary character of the exchange can be seen in the following features: the automatism of the exchange and its immediateness or lack of deference over time, its explicitness – the contract is a two side agreement in which the invitation to another conductor means the invitation of the receiving conductor (sometimes simultaneously), as stipulated by a formal contract.⁸⁵

The invitations defy all work of dissimulation. If a conductor is invited it is because this guarantees an explicit contra-gratification. “Capturing” a Principal post assures much more than artistic authority, it ensures a series of invitation for the one in charge. For instance, the last two conductors of the City Philharmonic received invitations that they never had before. The 1999–2000 conductor, Jorge Iltristo, who had been invited just to Cuyo, his former orchestra and to a minor orchestra in Chile previous to this engagement, was invited in 1999 to conduct the San Pablo Philharmonic and in 2000 to conduct the NSO, the Montevideo Philharmonic, and the Chile Philharmonic. Although all the other invitations can be traced to the performances of the principal conductor of the NSO at the City Philharmonic during 2001, the conductor of Montevideo during 2000, the conductor of San Pablo during 2000, and the conductor of Chile during 2000, the Córdoba explanation is due to the tour of the orchestra that ended at the Colon Opera House during 2000. The 2001 conductor, Hugo Sofini, had never conducted an orchestra in a symphony performance before his tenure at the City Philharmonic. During 2001 he was invited to perform for the Chile, México, and Montevideo Philharmonic, and also to the first symphony music season of the City Symphony Band.⁸⁶ The invitations of some Argentine conductors conducting abroad work in the same way, either by performance exchanges or by invitation to conduct the orchestra in festivals or recordings. If we look at the roster of the NSO for the last five years, we can find only two conductors invited that have not constantly had a counter-invitations opportunity: the “demised” conductor, Alberto Soriano, and the choral master and composer, Armando Maria Tedesco.

Because the fees must match, most of the invitations are made among those at the same orchestral level. The only exception is Federico García, the conductor of the NSO, whose travelling expenditures and half of the fees are paid by the National Secretary of Culture. That is why he has conducted during the 1998–2001 in orchestras with small budgets like Tucumán, San Juan University, Cuyo, Córdoba, Paraná, or Rosario. Any of those orchestras would have serious problems hiring any of the “big names” of Argentine’s conducting game and thus invite them sparingly.⁸⁷

A second feature that helps us understand why a conductor with a big fee and without orchestra cannot get many performances in Argentina is the inverted economy of the musical market. As Plattner has shown for the US art market and Towse for the English

⁸⁴ I explicitly follow Bourdieu’s equation of Weber’s charisma with Mauss’s *mana*. Mauss, M. (1950). *The Gift*. New York: Norton.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1998). *The Economy of Symbolic Goods*. In *Practical Reasons*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁸⁶ The City Symphony Band season at the Colón Opera House was paradigmatic, as the three concerts were not conducted by its Principal, but rather by the conductors of the NSO (who invited him for the 2001 season), the City Philharmonic (who programmed him for the 2002 Autumn season), and the Córdoba Symphony Band (who had invited him during both 2000 and 2001).

⁸⁷ For instance, Guillermo Genioli was invited to conduct at Cuyo in 2001 and at Mendoza in 1999. Alberto Soriano conducted at Tucumán in 1998, San Juan in 1999 and 2000, La Plata in 1999, and Córdoba in 1999 and 2000. Marco Giordano, even though one of the more prominent conductors at the Colon Opera House and a former conductor of the NSO, has not been invited in recent years to conduct symphony concerts in the Argentinean circuit.

opera market, the performers cannot increase the demand for their services by lowering their honorarium, a lower price depresses the demand as it shows that the performer is now less valuable in its translation to economic prices. The only time conductors can consider lowering their price is right at the beginning of their careers. A good example of this was the operatic performance of one of the youth orchestras that for repeated concerts for little pay was led not by the principal conductor but by one of the orchestra's former assistants. We notice that in a downsized market like the Argentinean, some young conductors are working professionally for the first time. A different conductor under 35 years old has performed this season at Tucumán, the University of San Juan, the NSO, and the City Philharmonic. The opera orchestras outside the major circuit have been using young conductors sparingly over the last two seasons, especially the Avellaneda Opera and the Juventus Lyrica Company.⁸⁸

The case of the conductor is one of the few that breaks the “golden rule” of an artistic career: to be or at least to appear young.⁸⁹ Although youth is an important attribute for a conductor, a conductor needs to demonstrate in performances virtues of a mature leader: sobriety, seriousness, character, and poise. However, the counterpoint between youth and sobriety is going to be managed by the conductor while performing for segregated audiences (the orchestra and the concert public). This is true both for the concerts, when the conductor performs onstage, and for rehearsals with the conductor's own back stage hidden for the occasion.

The musicians themselves presented the idea of performance while referring to the conductors. As a second chair of the City Philharmonic told me of their new conductor: “Well, the guy composed, played piano, gave lectures, had his own experimental center, had a contemporary ensemble... the only thing he lacked to be like Boulez was to play the conductor.” For the musician, the newly appointed conductor was “performing Boulez.” As Kamermann has shown in his criticism of occupational sociology, the conducting profession was shaped by a few incumbents when it came into its own during the Romantic era. Boulez, with his special link to the Post-Romantic composers and his technical authority, has achieved the ultimate authoritative synthesis.

According to Goffman,⁹⁰ an organization like the orchestra may be viewed “technically,” politically, “structurally,” or culturally. I want to focus on a fifth perspective: the dramaturgical, which is concerned with the analysis of the impression management techniques of several teams of the institution and their interrelations. I examine the *conductor's* presentation of himself or herself as a restoration of the romantic and authority-oriented figure of the charismatic conductor. This set of practices gives the actors a chance to present themselves and their activity in public interactions and serves to influence any other participant in the interaction (in this case, both the musician and the audience). A performance like this seeks a reinvention/restoration of a past or a cultural model that is recognized (by the observer) as the source of the performance. The performance of the *conductor* is more oriented toward the romantic artist-model than to their actual socio-economic conditions of existence. They present all the elements that have characterized the

⁸⁸ By this means the more prolific conductor of operas outside the Colón and Argentino Opera House has started to forge a career, Sebastián Fernández, conducting not only at the provincial level in Argentina but in minor opera houses in Italy, while awaiting a call to the Colón Opera season where he works diligently as a Chorus unionist.

⁸⁹ Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Las Reglas del Arte*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

⁹⁰ Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of the self in everyday life* (pp. 239–241). New York: Doubleday. See also from Goffman (1961). *Asylum. Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. New York: Anchor.

conductor as a romantic hero: authority, magnetism, dedication, and distance. According to Schechener,⁹¹ the performance is “always restored behavior.” Performance means “never for the first time;” for the second to the *n*th times. “It is always twice-behaved behavior.”

This charismatic relationship between the conductor and the musicians can be seen in the behavior of some of the musicians from Soriano’s new chamber orchestra: these musicians showed their attachment and their belief when most of them (12 out of the 18) offered themselves to play for free at one of the chamber orchestra concerts for an important concert series after their sponsor for the concert forfeited, later the support for the performance was guaranteed by an oil company and the Society of Composers and the musicians got paid.

However, the relationship is best understood in a larger cultural sense, if we look at the second picture (Figure 2), with Soriano looking powerfully at the camera in a pose that aims for both poise, character, age, and determination, or if we follow closely the words of two retired players, one of them my childhood violin maestro, as it closely resembles one of the Romantic conductors:⁹² “The identity of a great conductor is defined by several components: he’s got to be authoritative, magnetic, tormented, ascetic.” When I asked him and his wife what they mean by ascetic (as she nodded at his comments), she said: “Well, he must be like a priest, like a mystic. He must be in some way related to the spiritual part of music.” Then, she defined another typology of conductors: “You gave the acrobatic one, the weak, I don’t like them. The one that they have now at the X Orchestra (where she used to play for 30 years) is a disgrace. He waves his arms like a chicken. He seems like he’s going to start flying anytime soon. It’s a pity because chickens don’t fly.” As I mentioned earlier, most musicians despise conductors that either gesticulate too much or are not clear with their signs, as her husband intervened: “if he raises the elbows over his head, you know that everything is lost, he doesn’t have any control.” Then she concluded: “You must find a middle point. A conductor has to be expressive without being a puppet, must be eloquent without being didactic.” However, some musicians also despise the other extreme of bodily conducts: “he was so fat and so immobile that we could not know what he wanted,” the bass soloist of the two top orchestras said while referring to an obese Russian guest conductor.

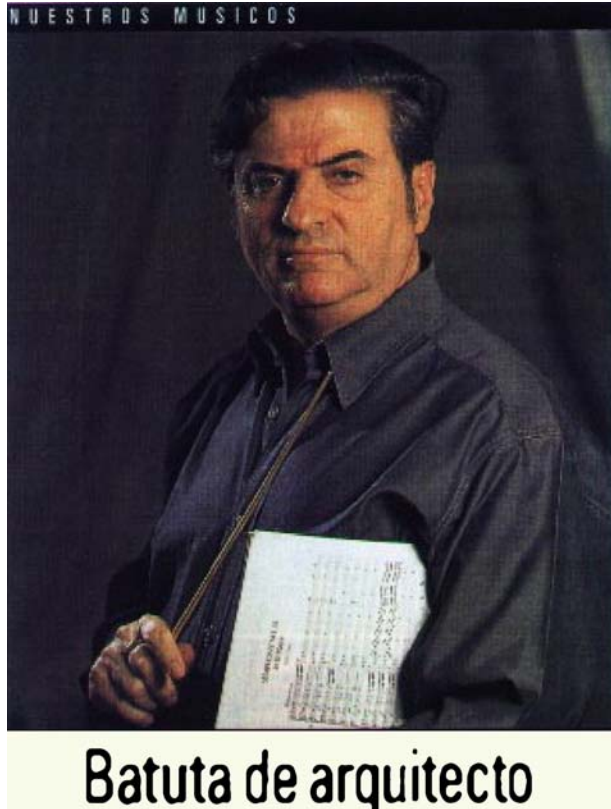
The conductor fulfills many obligations in an orchestra organization above and beyond conducting, such as selecting the players, choosing the season program, discussing the budget, rehearsing, and studying. These last two are very important as they play an important part in the “performance of charisma.” Although it is clear that the conductor is working at the concert for segregated audiences, arousing the audience while hiding all the rehearsal work he has done with the orchestra (this is more easily noted when the concert is televised), there is a second part of his job where the Goffmanian distinction between backstage and front stage takes place: the work at home and the rehearsal. Most conductors work extensively on their scores, marking their cues, working with the strings, and trying to achieve one of the most important goals for a conductor: conducting from memory, being one thus with the music in the eyes of the players, the critics, and the audience. On the other hand, the young conductors, and the older conductors in their youth, prepare a second part of their control of impressions in public: the body and facial gestures they are going to perform in front of the orchestra.

The performance of bodily conduct that suggests charisma is an important point as it is linked to the limits of the legitimate definition of who is a conductor. If, as I have said, the

⁹¹ Schechener, R. (1985). *Between theater and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁹² See Sennett, 1977; Lamont and Wu, 1989; Galkin, 1988; Kamermann, 1983b.

Figure 2 Article on *La Nación* Sunday Magazine. A perfect example of the public performance of charisma among the older generation of conductors.



bases for the authority of the conductor are both legal–rational and charismatic, how is it possible to achieve a legitimate definition of a trainee conductor when an important part of the *metier* is almost *oxymoronic* in itself: how to build a charismatic leader technically? As Weber asks, how is it possible to have a church of virtuosi? How is it possible to routinize the production of producers of charisma, of owners of a personal grace, both irrational and inexplicable? Or as Sennett states, how is it possible to create somebody that people would like to obey, instead of someone whom people must obey? The problem of a legitimate definition of the limits of the conducting profession in Argentina deals exactly with the combination of the absence of certain external institutional regulations in the musical world and the inherently unstable character of the bases for conductorial authority.

Who can be considered a conductor? What are the limits of the conductorial field? Following Pierre Bourdieu, we say that a field is a structure of distribution of capital, structured in a system of differences and associations between positions. The idea of field is based on the struggle for maximizing capital (in this case, musical capital). It presents a labor division among those who produce this capital (the musicians), those who consume it (the public), and those who distribute it (conservatories) and legitimate it (academies, newspaper reviews, musical journals and magazines). It also presents two kinds of interests: the generic ones, associated with taking part in the “musical game” and its existence (this would involve questions such as “What is music?” or “What is good music?” instead of asking whether music should or should not exist); and the specific ones, linked to each relative position in the field, that presume the interest of each and every agent in

reproducing or improving their position, and reproducing or maximizing their capital. The different positions inside the field are defined through three capital possession criteria: (1) Whether an agent has any capital; (2) How much capital the agent has; and (3) The more or less legitimate quality of the possession of capital. The specificity of the conductor sub-field can be seen in the weakness of codification. The rules of the game are within the field and not outside of it. Even though its limits were converted in juridical boundaries, protected by a codified entry right, like having a conductor's license, passing an exam, being a graduate of conducting in a conservatory or school of music or studying privately with one of the well known pedagogues, the musical world in Argentina does not ask for credentials.⁹³ Following Weber we may say that it has not become associated with a legally guaranteed and monopolized claim to rights or to income and profit opportunities of a certain kind.

As an example, during the 2001 season in the programming of the OFBA (4) and the NSO (2) we find several guest conductors who did not have an official license that entitles them to conduct. The OFBA titular conductor, Hugo Sofini, who conducted six performances during the 2001 season, is a composer and pianist, two others are retired players of the Berlin Philharmonic training themselves as conductors, another is a rank-and-file percussion musician of the orchestra, and two others are chorus directors.

In such an uncertain world prestige is represented by certain symbolic certifications that define and authorize the conductor as a conductor. Among the older generation of conductors, like Armando María Tedesco, Federico García, Alberto Soriano, and Guillermo Genioli, prestige is achieved and sustained by citing studies abroad, especially by conducting a major orchestra abroad, and by citing studies with the founding fathers of Argentinean Music or major pedagogues and schools around the world. It is worthwhile looking at the CVs of the younger Argentinean conductors. Even though most of them allude to their institutional studies, the highlighted names are always the ones not from the best pedagogues but from the best-known conductors. Most conductors write on the local level that they have studied with Federico García, Alberto Soriano or Guillermo Genioli. On the international level, they usually refer to some obscure summer course with the likes of Leonard Bernstein, Daniel Barenboim, Seiji Ozawa, or Sergiu Cellibidace.

Because of the structural pressures of a small market for many competitors, the relation between maestro and apprentice is subverted immediately. Reciprocity does not exist, probably because the authority is not recognized as such by the apprentice, as we have seen in the appropriation and transmission of charisma as presented in the CVs. As an example, after the demise of Alberto Soriano many of his former students⁹⁴, decided not to name him anymore in their CV, especially those who had developed a promising freelance career and had to face him as a live competitor, without a principal post. Being alive, he could not be appropriated like Castro, Gilardi, Gianneo, or Fuchs (historical Argentinean conductors) or

⁹³ Priscilla Ferguson claims that the more circumscribed the field, the more solid ground for sociological scrutiny. Unlike vast or imprecise fields like the "field of power" that invite lots of speculation by the author, the musical and especially the conductorial sub-field provide a delimited space for investigation. The more limited focus facilitates situating the field both as a historical entity and as a sociological concept. Ferguson, P. (1998). A cultural field in the making: Gastronomy in nineteenth century France. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103.

⁹⁴ One of them, Camilo LaRue, was brought to the City Philharmonic by him to work as his assistant and inherited his post. He is regularly called to conduct ballet at the Colón and the Argentino Opera House. A second one is the coach of the Córdoba Symphony and the Principal at the Córdoba Symphony Band. A third one, his former Assistant at the National Conservatory, Sebastián Fernández, is a freelance opera conductor and worked the last two seasons for the Córdoba Opera. A fourth one, Roberto Boboni, was Soriano's Assistant at a top youth orchestra and is now conducting the Avellaneda Opera season.

the retired Ljerko Spiller. Living in the country, he did not offer the distance and the impossibility of competition because of the different circuits of the global musical world.⁹⁵ He is only cited as a professor by minor younger conductors who are still either too young or too unknown to feel threatened by their former maestro and try to use his prestige to their advantage. This lack of obligation to reciprocate, however, is not due to chance or personal decision but a coherent set of structural opportunities and constraints.

It is important, in order to present the conclusion of this point, to note the conductors performing during the 2001 season at the places that work as ‘minor leagues’ for conductors, at the second tier orchestras, and the top orchestras, and also present how they got there and why they are performing.

At Juventus Lyrica, one of the conductors is a female opera coach, Susana Bianchi, from the Colon Opera House, the second one is Emilio Garreman, and the third one, who conducts most of the performances (three out of five) is Armando Tedesco, a choral conductor who has also worked extensively as a symphony freelance conductor. At the Avellaneda Opera, that also includes a small concert season, the conductors are the current principal of the City Symphony Band, who presented the idea of a season along with a producer to the municipal authorities, displacing the tenured principal conductor, a young conductor, Ruben Boboni, who conducted the inaugural two operas during the 2000 season and the young principal conductor of the Mar del Plata City Symphony, Claudio Jeune. He was replaced in one of his dates by an opera coach at La Plata Opera House, Andrés Bambuses.

At the second tier orchestras, as I have discussed above, there are very few national conductors performing. Among those performing we can find most dates taken by Federico García, and then by unproved young conductors in Tucumán and San Juan. Among the list of conductors performing for the OFBA and the NSO as an indicator of importance, few of the important conductors are invited to perform at this level. Just one date was conducted by Guillermo Genioli, one by Camilo LaRue, the former director of the Ballet Orchestra at the Colon Opera House, and one by Juan Rommer, a conductor who works for a music academy in Germany.

At the NSO, besides the dates conducted by its principal and vice-principal, the Argentinean performers are Guillermo Genioli, Armando Tedesco, and Alberto Soriano, the last two operating largely as freelancers. Camilo LaRue, conducts another concert and this season is conducting a ballet at the Colón. The newly appointed City Director of Music, a composer and musical journalist who is now a local political authority, conducts another concert. Rubén Cornide, a former vice-director of the orchestra and the prodigal student of Federico García, conducts a fifth concert. The last two concerts of the season are conducted by Claudio Jeune and by conductor of the Paraná Orchestra, the birthplace of the NSO conductor. At the OFBA, besides the concerts conducted by its principal and by the foreign guests, the performers were: Federico García, Juan Rommer, Alberto Soriano (who was invited for an extraordinary concert after three years of not conducting it), and Roberto Cornide (for the first time). The other five concerts (one co-organized with the opera season) were conducted by musicians who work at the Colon Opera House as coaches not for the orchestra but for the Opera, the Chorus, and the Experimental Musical Center, respectively. At La Plata, after the budget deficit suspended its international season, its

⁹⁵ On the other hand, both Guillermo Genioli and Alberto Soriano figure prominently in the CV of many young Latin American conductors who studied with them under the sponsorship of the OAS from 1991 to 1994.

principal, Jorge Iltristo, conducted most of their performances. The three times he did not conduct the concerts were directed by two of the coaches of the Argentino Opera House, showing thus the pattern that unites bureaucracy and artistic careers.⁹⁶

Conclusions

The aim of this article is to describe and to analyze the evidence for the disappearance of the national charismatic conductors. To accomplish this, I have incorporated into the explanation several levels of analysis, ranging from the everyday world of interactions in the orchestra to the state policies of musical promotion, making explicit the micro–macro link. I have found, as a consequence of this analysis, that the decision making power of the musical conductor is challenged on two levels. I learned that the degree of success a conductor enjoys depends basically on his or her ability and willingness to fit into the existing network of both informal and formal relationships mediating between the musicians and the hiring authorities. As many musicians have acknowledged, how a conductor behaves with the orchestra and within the political circumstances is more important than how well he or she conducts. Or as a couple of musicians (a violinist second chair and a composer) said while laughing, 50% of a conductor's career depends on musical talent and the other 50% on how the conductor negotiates with the musical world.⁹⁷

As a result of the processes described, we can build four ideal types of this relationship and its influence on the conductor's career, in order to understand the relationship between orchestras and conductors:

1. *The charismatic conductor.* Currently disappearing or, as Alberto Soriano told me in 2000, “after the death of Simon Blech,⁹⁸ I am the last of the authoritarian conductors in Argentina.”
2. *The “rational” conductor.* The conductor in a relationship that involves both economic motivations and charismatic attraction: the conductor as a broker tied in a behavioral relationship to the economic results and the performing dates the conductor attracts for the orchestra. In this relationship of obedience, there is an overlapping of roles (conductor and broker) for most musicians. The NSO works under these guidelines for all its off-season or extraordinary concerts.
3. *The ritualistic conductor.* The conductor inside a bureaucratic structure that justifies his or her actions because these are done in the ways they always have been. To sustain a

⁹⁶ At Córdoba, the roster of performers is easily explained by the features already presented: one of the concerts is conducted by the coach of the orchestra, who conducts regularly the Córdoba Symphony Band, the inaugural concert of the season was conducted by Jorge Iltristo who helped the orchestra perform at the Colón Opera House, a third conductor is Federico García to whom the National Secretary of Culture pays half of the cachet, a fourth conductor is an Argentinean who resides in Russia, where he is a coach of the Majarisnky Theater. The marquee singer and the private producer who brought the idea of a season to the state authorities imposed the conductor for the opera season, Sebastián Fernández.

⁹⁷ According to this logic, the conductor of the NSO tops the chart because while he was characterized by both musicians as a seven in musical talent, he was given a 10 in his negotiation skills. He was, then, an 8.5 conductor.

⁹⁸ He was one of the most important conductors in Argentina's history. He constantly barked at musicians and was famous both for his fights in rehearsals with some of them and for his love for tango-playing. He died in 1998 after being the Principal of the City Philharmonic, the NSO, the San Pablo Philharmonic, and the Bogotá Philharmonic.

reputation beyond the rational–legal frame of legitimacy, the conductor works diligently to de-identify himself from the patron side, using strategies of “involving a third party’ and functional differentiation that recognize the Weberian lesson that distinguishes charisma from discipline.⁹⁹

4. *The “egalitarian conductor”* This conductor presents himself or herself as “part of the orchestra,” utilizing the rhetoric of “learning as things go,” “being a facilitator,” “one of the gang.”

We can listen, among examples of these strategies and their discursive representations, to a choir of new and noteworthy voices of recently appointed conductors that fit perfectly under the fourth and the third ideal types presented: the new conductor of the Cuyo University Orchestra (“The musicians voted for me, I was overwhelmed”... “Musicians like a great maestro, competent and quiet, not an actor who ‘makes theater’ in front of them. You have to have conviction, communicate and transmit to achieve the collaboration with the musicians”... “Authority cannot be based on screaming and commanding: in Latin America we know for good how fake an authority is based on violence and fear”¹⁰⁰); the new conductor of the Rosario Symphony Orchestra (“the maestros of the past with their great virtues, with their great performances and their accuracy made us think that we have to conduct in a dictatorial way. But the times have changed for good, and today there are few directors that work that way. Until two decades ago, orchestral direction was like most of the governments of the world: dictatorial; what the conductor said was holy word. Today there is a strong tendency to change the name from director to conductor. I am all for that idea. I like the idea of conducting instead of directing an orchestra, where everybody can participate with their own ideas. The figure of the omnipotent director is out of time”¹⁰¹; and the last two conductors of the City Philharmonic (“I cherish and I am deeply thankful to the chance to learn from the best: you”), (“I do not decide, I am just an intern, you have to talk to the Director of the House or with Hugo Sofini – the Artistic Director of the Orchestra”).¹⁰² These voices announce a change of guard in the forefront of Argentinean orchestral conductors.

C. Wright Mills¹⁰³ taught us that the sociological imagination can and should help an individual to understand his own experience, that it should help individuals to locate themselves in their time and become aware of all the other individuals in their circumstances. In many ways, he writes, it is a magnificent lesson, in many ways a terrible one. As I said at the beginning, both as a sociologist and as the son of a musical director, this particular lesson cannot be more pessimistic for an authoritarian and charismatic conductor.

⁹⁹ Weber (1946, 254, 263–264, 299).

¹⁰⁰ “Ligia Amadio dirige concierto de la Orquesta Sinfónica de Chile,” *La Tercera*, Santiago de Chile, January 24, 2001. Pulgar, L. (1999). Soy una Loca. *La Tercera*. Santiago de Chile (May 7).

¹⁰¹ Cavazza, J. L. (2001). Juan Rodríguez debuta esta noche como titular de la Orquesta Sinfónica Provincial de Rosario. *La Capital*. Rosario (March 29).

¹⁰² Part of the inaugural speech of the new conductor, as told by several musicians and answers by the then conductor, when asked by several musicians for a conducting opportunity for another Argentinean conductor they liked.

¹⁰³ Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press (p. 5).

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