Women Conductors on the Orchestral Podium: Pedagogical and Professional Implications

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Introduction

Recent discussions about women's experiences in the orchestral profession[1] have revealed the gendered politics behind many of the generally accepted norms and customs in the orchestral tradition. With the bourgeoning of feminist musicology, these voices have intensified and resulted in a greater representation of women's stories and experiences in orchestral music-making. Notwithstanding these efforts, however, surprisingly little attention has been given to women conductors, a small minority in the orchestral profession's most prominent discipline. In the mid-late 1990s a handful of articles published on women conductors appeared in the *College Music Symposium*;[2] however, more recently, a curious silence and lack of discussion have accompanied the growing number of women in this field. In-depth analyses of women conductors' experiences on the orchestral podium, in particular, have been surprisingly rare.[3]

The absence of women's voices and their untold stories in this profession moved me to undertake a four-year ethnographic study of seventeen professional women conductors in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, in the years 2000 through 2004.[4] In order to develop a broader picture of the profession and its ethos, I also included in my study interviews with artistic administrators of four of the world's leading orchestras,[5] with conducting pedagogues from six institutions,[6] and with administrators from the American Symphony Orchestra League and the Women's Philharmonic (U.S.). For the most part, I limited the study to women working as professional orchestral conductors, but I did also include two professional wind-band conductors. I chose these fields because I believe they are the most revealing about issues relating to power and prestige, patriarchal control, and pay according to rank. This is not to say that women choral conductors, for example, do not face similar issues and do not de-

[1]See, for example, Macleod, *Women Performing Music*; McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 53-79; Neuls-Bates, "Women's Orchestras," 349-69; Osborne, "Art Is Just an Excuse," 6-14; Reich, "European Composers and Musicians," 147-74; and Shepherd, "Difference and Power in Music," 46-65.

[2]See Hetzel and Norton, "Women Choral Conductors"; Jackson, "Women as Leaders of Collegiate Bands"; and Jagow, "Women Orchestral Conductors in America."

[3]While there have been a limited number of books (primarily anthologies of women conductors, composers and performers), statistically-focused journal articles and theses (mainly in the area of college band and choral direction), and stories in the press, extensive research into women conductors' experiences in the orchestral profession has been minimal.

[4]This was part of my research for my doctoral dissertation at the University of Queensland. See Bartleet, "Gendering the Podium."

[5]These included the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra.

[6]These institutions included the University of California Los Angeles, Northwestern University, State University of New York at Fredonia, Royal Academy of Music, University of East Anglia and Canberra School of Music.

serve to be included in this discussion; in fact, I suspect a number of the issues raised in this article will indeed resonate in other areas of conducting. Rather, each area of conducting has its own ethos and unique concerns, and examining women's experiences in each of them was simply not within the scope of my study.

This research was simultaneously political and personal; as a young woman conductor I endeavored to construct a somewhat subversive discourse in my profession, which openly acknowledged women's experiences on the podium. My research revealed a number of issues relating to the profession's lingering nineteenth-century ideology, and to women conductors' bodies, gestures, power, leadership, relationships, motherhood, education, and opportunities. While many of the world's leading orchestras are approaching a near equal representation of men and women players in their organizations, I discovered that a markedly different situation is occurring on the podium.

The Ethnographic Methodology

This article reflects the cooperative and contextualized ethnographic methodology that was utilized in my research. Because an ethnographic approach focuses on openness and reciprocal exchange, with its point of departure being the *lived* experiences of the research subjects, it was necessary for me to come face-to-face with the women conductors themselves.[7] I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the women conductors for a period of approximately two hours, and when possible attended their rehearsals and performances. The rationale for choosing the interviewees, locations, and sites of interviews was both pragmatic and culturally based.[8] While the conductors whom I interviewed do spend a large proportion of their time abroad, in most cases I met them in their home cities. Due to the trans-national nature of the conducting profession and the mobility of these women, the "field of study" could not be neatly defined and contained in each of these countries or a specific site, for example a concert hall or a recording studio. My field of study, thus, became wherever I happened to be, and wherever the women happened to be. Hence, the field was defined not in terms of a locality, but rather as a field of shifting and fluid relations significant to the people involved in this study.[9]

As the focal point of each interview was the individual woman's narrative, the interview questions varied slightly from woman to woman. The questions were drawn from my own experiences as a conductor as well as the broader theoretical ideas explored in my research. While the questions were designed to cover key topics, they

[7]Full ethical clearance was given by the University of Queensland to undertake this research, and all the women conductors gave 'informed consent' for their identities and words to be used in resulting publications.

[8]These three countries were chosen because my initial enquiries showed that they contained the highest population of women conductors. Investigations were also made throughout Continental Europe but women conductors there were spread across different countries and proved much harder to locate. They were also selected as research sites because they are English-speaking countries. As this is the language in which I am fluent, they did not pose any communication barriers before or during the project. Of course, it should also be acknowledged that I shared a cultural commonality with the women from these countries, who were predominantly educated in Western society, which aided the fluency of our communication.

[9]See Norman, "Phoning the Field," 121, 138

allowed for flexibility and spontaneous exchanges. Consequently, each interview was a new, unique experience. As the emphasis was on *understanding*, rather than explaining, processes of analysis were subordinated to the process of listening.[10] As a result, it was the quality of human relationships that was developed rather than methodology that determined the quantity and quality of the information gathered. In our exchanges the women and I relied on trust and mutual understanding with one another. Within this shared space we felt safe to let down our defenses and explore sensitive issues particular to our experiences.[11] My own status as a female conductor played an important part in this process; it provided a point of introduction and a point of common ground. It defined me as more "native" than others might have been, more an insider than outsider. My subject position also clearly affected the words and stories they chose to impart to me. The close communication we shared resulted in a reflexive process, as I considered their responses and related them to my own experiences as a woman conductor.

Even though the women's stories were grounded in their own personal experiences, they still revealed significant broader social, cultural and gender-related issues. As a result, analyzing their accounts required careful consideration of a number of elements. Narrative, contextual, temporal, and analytical dimensions all played a part in the process of transforming the experience into my own language. During this process some analytical concepts arose spontaneously from the women themselves. Other analytical concepts arose whilst I was "inside" the bodily experience of fieldwork, and further ideas were also generated "outside" the bodily experience, from theory and the words of other scholars. Thus, the process of analyzing and writing about this ethnographic research called for a balance between the women's stories and a broader social critique; between the ontological understandings that came from working in the field and the epistemological explanations based on relevant literature.[12]

This article interweaves the words of the women conductors, administrators and pedagogues whom I interviewed, with feminist and poststructuralist theoretical frameworks, as I begin to consider some of the pedagogical and professional implications of women on the orchestral podium. I have chosen to focus on both of these issues because I believe the need for gender critique extends from the beginning of conductor training (and indeed earlier) to the height of professional conducting. While the current employment status and recruitment of women conductors also requires analysis, so too does the professional training available to the next generation of women conductors.[13] Although I primarily focus on pedagogy within the university context, many of the issues raised in this article could also be applied to traditional apprenticeship models or professional development programs.[14] For the sake of clarity, I have sub-divided the

[10]See Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," 11-15.

[11]See Minister, "A Feminist Frame," 34-39.

[12]See Rice, "Toward a Mediation," 106.

[13]See Morley and Walsh, *Breaking Boundaries*, 3.

[14]I single out the university context because my research has revealed the importance of university courses in training the next generation of women conductors. While other learning contexts—such as traditional apprenticeships or masterclass/workshop programs—are also playing an important role in training women conductors, university courses are working on a much broader scale. These institutions are "scouting-out" potential women conductors during their undergraduate studies, and offering them the opportunity to study

article into five sections; however, I should say that these are all deeply inter-connected in real *lived* experience. I should also say that this article does not present any conclusive ideas or answers; rather it aims to open-up some of the issues raised in my research that warrant further discussion and consideration.

The Current Status of Women on the Orchestral Podium

Throughout its roughly two-century history, the role of the "modern" orchestral conductor has undergone continuous changes that are linked to the rise and fall of musical institutions, the changing social nature of music and musical institutions and the increase of orchestral forces required by composers from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. However, despite these fluctuations, a dominant masculine presence has consistently remained the norm.[15] Men have had the authority to create and cultivate the traditions in this profession, and as a result the role of conductor has always been imbued with inherently "masculine traits." At least until very recently: as Matias Tarnopolsky from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra explained, "The orchestral world has been balanced in favor of males for a long time, but I think that balance is changing."[16] While the role of conductor is slowly shifting to comply with recent democratic trends in orchestral music making, my research suggests that much of its ideology continues to remain rooted in nineteenth-century concepts of patriarchy. This enduring ideology has had a profound affect on the profession's small number of women conductors.

Despite women's long lineage in conducting, which can be traced back to the Renaissance figure of Tarquinia Molza,[17] their voices have barely filtered into the prevailing discourses of the profession. Not only have women's voices been marginalized, their presence has also been limited to a token minimum. A brief look at current statistics worldwide certainly shows the extent of their minority status today. According to the American Symphony Orchestra League, five out of their 122 member orchestras (that is, 4.10%) with operating budgets of over one million dollars (US) have a female as Music Director or Principal Conductor (see Table 1 in Appendix 1).[18]

When reflecting on women's minority status in this profession, Tarnopolsky concurred with these statistics and confirmed, "Since I have been here [for three years] no women conductors have been engaged by the Chicago Symphony to perform. My perception is that there are not many women conductors."[19] Clive Gillinson from the London Symphony Orchestra remarked, "There are relatively few women conductors around

conducting further. Given the limitations of space for this publication, I will limit my discussion to pedagogical concerns and not curricula issues.

[15]See Stevens, "Why Conductors?"; and Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting*.

[16]Matias Tarnopolsky, interview with author, February 1, 2002.

[17]Tarquinia Molza organized and conducted her own women's orchestra at the Italian court of Ferrara. See Jagow, "Women Orchestral Conductors in America," 131.

[18]Figures supplied by the American Symphony Orchestra League, Information Resource Center. March 2006.

[19]Tarnopolsky, interview.

so the chances are, at the moment, it's not going to be a woman."[20] Jeremy Geffen, at the New York Philharmonic, stated that the women conductors "who are at the head of that list are still not quite at the level . . . I wish there were more female conductors of the level that we would want to engage at the New York Philharmonic."[21] Edward Yim from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra observed, "at this point we have a very small pool of women conductors compared to the pool of male conductors, so I don't find it surprising that we haven't yet found a woman conductor with whom we feel comfortable engaging on a regular basis."[22] The recurring theme in these comments is that the so-called "pool" of women conductors is simply too small, and the women who are in this pool are not mature enough to lead the world's flagship orchestras.

This situation raises the question, *why* are there so few suitably qualified women conductors? The answers to this question are certainly multifaceted, and will be considered from a number of perspectives in this article. They do, however, partly stem from this concept of a supposed pool of women conductors. This perception alludes to the idea that women are systematically and symbolically positioned in a separate group on the podium, due to their minority status. Their difference from the male norm distinguishes them as *Other*, a devalued and under-qualified category in their profession. Of course, this generalization fails to acknowledge the differences among women conductors, and makes it difficult for them as individuals to emerge from this marginalized group. As the statistics indicate, such a situation appears to be most pronounced in the upper echelons of the profession, where masculine traditions and patriarchal customs are most entrenched.

Further down the rungs of professional conducting – with middle-tiered and semi-professional orchestras—there seems to be a slightly greater representation of women. According to information gathered by the American Symphony Orchestra League, twenty-nine out of their 389 member orchestras (7.46%) with operating budgets between $130,000 and $880,000 (US) have a female as Music Director or Principal Conductor (see Table 2 in Appendix 1).[23] As these orchestras have different purposes, performance standards, traditions, budgets, and outlooks in comparison to the leading orchestras, the pool of suitably qualified woman conductors from which they can draw on appears to be larger. This prompts the question, *why* are women congregating at this level and not progressing further up the rungs of conducting?

The artistic administrators whom I interviewed suggested that this horizontal segregation (or pool) of women conductors at the middle-rungs should slowly change over time as these women rise through the system, and more young women begin to study conducting. As Geffen explained, "it just sort of builds on its own and there's a natural progression. . . . Most conductors start off at smaller-tiered orchestras and then they work their way up . . . and eventually they'll get to one of the big guys."[24] Gillinson suggested that this horizontal segregation will improve over time, as more women progress

[20]Clive Gillinson, interview with author, February 26, 2002.

[21]Jeremy Geffen, interview with author, February 13, 2002.

[22]Edward Yim, interview with author, January 15, 2002.

[23]Figures supplied by the American Symphony Orchestra League, Information Resource Center. March 2006.

[24]Geffen, interview.

through the "pipeline": "if the talent goes in at that end, goes through the system, gets the training, acquires all the skills, gets the experience, we're going to grab them."[25] This reasoning implies that as more women move through the pipeline alongside their male colleagues and achieve the same education and opportunities, a critical mass of women conductors will eventually develop at the top-end of conducting.[26] While the pipeline theory has been useful in discussions about women in non-traditional areas of work, I question whether it is directly relevant to the conducting profession. My research suggests that the conducting pipeline is inherently gendered, and that men and women do not share the same experiences and opportunities whilst in the pipeline. As Colin Metters at the Royal Academy of Music argues, "person-for-person, the female conductors who audition here for the postgraduate course probably have less experience than . . . their male counterparts."[27] Hence, it may be considered a rather simplistic assumption that women and men will all exit the pipeline with the same credentials and achieve equal levels of success in their careers. In a similar vein, Yim suggested that the number of woman progressing to the higher levels of professional conducting will simply increase with *time*: "the idea of a woman conductor is fairly recent in the grand scheme of things . . . we've just got to let time play it out."[28] My concern with such reasoning is that it does not encourage an active critique of the current system. A reliance on time and the pipeline to increase women conductors' status suggests that neither the profession's structures nor the behavior of the men who continue to dominate it need to change. As Gillinson explained, "I would say it's not about the profession. I'd say it's much more about perceptions of women . . . assuming that it isn't for them."[29] The implication in this comment is that the profession on the whole is not responsible for women's minority status; but rather that the women themselves are to blame. This reasoning leaves women conductors as the problem, or as having a problem, and male conductors as achieving success in a *neutral* system through no fault of their own.[30] While more time in the pipeline might indeed result in a greater number of women conductors in the future, both my research and reports from the National Women Conductors' Initiative (NWCI)[31] also indicate that the current system, as it exists, requires further critique. Indeed, many of the women conductors whom I interviewed strongly argued that the system is certainly not neutral. These women explained that in the conducting profession, *as it currently exists*, they are subject to the preferred (masculine) values and behaviors of this field. Currently their success or failure depends on their *ability to comply* with the profession's gendered expectations. This has meant women have faced the problematic task of adapting their dress, gestures, leadership, and familial commitments to conform to the prevailing male-oriented paradigm. They have also had to conceal aspects of their

[25]Gillinson, interview.

[26]See Sinclair, *Doing Leadership Differently*.

[27]Colin Metters, interview with author, February 28, 2002.

[28]Yim, interview.

[29]Gillinson, interview.

[30]See Currie, Thiele and Harris, *Gendered Universities*, 73.

[31]The NWCI was originally set up by the Women's Philharmonic with a one million dollar anonymous seeding grant; however, the project has reached a slight standstill with the closure of the Women's Philharmonic. When I was in San Francisco in 2002, I was able to obtain a number of reports and research documents from the initiative.

private lives such as sexuality, marriage and motherhood to ensure their acceptance on the podium.

Even further down the hierarchy, at the level of university conductor training, this trend continues. At the time of my ethnographic research, five of the seventeen women conductors I interviewed were teaching conducting at a university.[32] They all observed that while more and more women are studying conducting, through compulsory undergraduate courses, they are still in the minority at the graduate level. As Denise Ham explained, "[Women] are filtering through slowly, I think there are still more men who decide they want to do this. . . . I'd say two-thirds men to one-third women."[33] This provokes the question, *what* role can conducting pedagogy play in encouraging more women to begin graduate studies in conducting? When I asked Metters whether he had considered such a question in relation to his students at the Royal Academy of Music, his response was, "Only in as much as I've had female conductors. I've taken female conductors into the class whenever we have had anyone who has showed the talent."[34] While the admission of women into his graduate course is certainly representative of progress, is this progressive enough? Can *more* be done to encourage and assist potential women conductors from a pedagogical perspective?

While feminist literature on education suggests that a gendered critique of pedagogy could result in an increase of women's participation and connection with the learning process,[35] I suspect many conducting pedagogues would argue that this move would not only compromise "musical integrity," but also serve to reinforce women's minority status. Furthermore, I suspect many might fear that broaching such issues would lead to conflict in their conducting studios. As bell hooks perceives, "Lots of people fear encountering difference because they think that honestly naming it will lead to conflict. The truth is our denial of the reality of difference has created ongoing conflict for everyone."[36] In line with hooks' argument, my research indicates that critiquing some of the basic gendered assumptions in conducting pedagogy—relating to the body and authority, for example—could lead to a more inclusive approach to learning, which acknowledges the experiences of those who differ from the Western masculinized norm on the podium.[37]

The Ramifications of the "Masculine Norm" on the Podium

Due to women conductors' minority status, they have had to comply with the profession's male-defined "rules" and modify aspects of their behavior in order to blend in with their male colleagues. This process of integration has often left their individual voices smothered and the uniquely "womanly" parts of their lives closeted. Paula Holcomb

[32]Subsequently one of my interviewees has left their university position for a Music Directorship with a ballet company, while two of my other interviewees have joined a university conducting-faculty.

[33]Denise Ham, interview with author, February 26, 2002.

[34]Metters, interview.

[35]Lather, *Getting Smart*, 154.

[36]hooks, *Teaching Community*, 109.

[37]Refer to Lather, *Getting Smart*, xvi.

described her own difficulties: "It took me the first fifteen, maybe even twenty years of my career to figure out how to do that . . . how do I still maintain my femininity and what I'm all about, yet project what is perceived as the male powerful macho, testosterone, excuse me, sort of image that's there?"[38] If she adopts too much "masculine authority," she is characterized as "butch" or a "bitch" and if she reveals too much of her femaleness she is disparagingly labeled weak or a "pushover."[39] On the orchestral podium, women are continually measured against the "masculine norm" and found wanting.

Women have to contend with the deep-rooted orchestral hierarchy that continues to privilege men, and negotiate a role that is still heavily imbued with masculine notions of power, authority and leadership. No matter how successful women might be in assuming this male-defined role, their difference continually remains markedly visible. As Jesse Rosen from the American Symphony Orchestra League identified, "Whether it's issues of what do you wear, ways of communicating with musicians and how people's attitudes about gender affect the extent to which people will work with you or be responsive to you, I think all those things come into play for women in ways that are much more pronounced than for men."[40] The problem with these dualisms on the podium, or indeed elsewhere, is that they take into consideration only single aspects of people, in isolation from other characteristics that make up the specificity of their lives.[41] The experience of being a woman can never be a singular one and will always be dependent on a multiplicity of locations and positions that are socially constructed.[42] In reality, the dualistic positioning of women conductors does not offer an accurate picture of how these women *live* their own lives and transgress this opposition. I suspect such matters are often left unaddressed in conducting studios, thus serving to reinforce the current status by leaving women to privately grapple with them on their own. By making these individual "women's problems," any serious gendered critique is evaded. This somewhat misleadingly separates academic knowledge from the gendered experiences of students, as if the two are not intertwined.[43]

While I acknowledge that many female students may resist the notion that gender should be a discussion point in the conducting studio, I believe these issues will become more pronounced when they finish their studies and begin working within the professional circuit, and hence need addressing early on. During my own undergraduate training, matters relating to my gender were never addressed and it was only when I entered the semi-professional arena that I realized their significance, and had to learn to deal with them on my own. Rachael Worby concurs, "Not until I actually embarked on a life as a conductor of professional musicians, did it begin to dawn on me that this was not something that women did."[44]

A survey of feminist pedagogical literature suggests that the rift between academic knowledge and the lived experiences of students is not exclusive to conducting, but also

[38]Holcomb, interview with author, September 25, 2001.
[39]Ibid.
[40]Jesse Rosen, interview with author, February 13, 2002.
[41]Solie, *Musicology and Difference*, 17.
[42]Moore, *A Passion for Difference*, 3.
[43]For further discussion of this in the context of academia, see Bannerji et al, *Unsettling Relations*, 8-10.
[44]Rachael Worby, interview with author, May 14, 2002.

indicative of a widespread problem facing academia in general. In this light, feminists such as hooks have called for pedagogues to transform their classrooms into sites of resistance where hegemonic discourses can be resisted and student's multiple subjectivities can be embraced in the learning process.[45] I would argue that conducting pedagogues should take such calls (if they are forthcoming) seriously, if they are committed to changing the masculine-dominated landscape of the conducting profession in the future. Such a process could begin with conducting pedagogues critiquing some of the issues discussed in this article for their inherently gendered (masculine) values and norms, rather than leaving them as "women's problems." In so doing, pedagogues could critique *their own* podium practices with students, in order to develop a higher level of trust and commitment when addressing such matters on a personal level.[46] This could not only assist their students (of both genders) to understand the dynamics of the role better, but also begin to counteract women's Otherness in this profession. This is a complicated matter, particularly if the conducting pedagogues are female. Being a small minority and still seeking acceptance, the women pedagogues whom I interviewed are loath to create "trouble" by radically critiquing the implicit "masculine" norms in conducting pedagogy as well as the implications of the norms for women's behavior on the podium. Instead, they are opting for a less drastic approach, relying simply on their positive presence to encourage young women conductors to follow in their footsteps, and only sometimes raising such issues privately with their female students.

The Repercussions of Women Conductors' Bodies on the Podium

Another significant issue, which has far-reaching professional and pedagogical implications, relates to women conductors' bodies on the podium. Indeed, one of the ways in which women conductors' Otherness is most pronounced, is through their bodies, and their obvious physical difference from the privileged male norm. Given the physical nature and visual aspects of conducting and the importance of the body in communication, a woman's bodily difference – in terms of her sexuality, stature, dress, and gestures—serves to reinforce her Otherness. This has serious implications for women conductors, as normative femininity becomes more and more centered on a woman's body.[47] Her physical appearance remains the criterion for femininity, sexuality and normality as an "acceptable" human being.[48] From a poststructuralist standpoint, women's bodies are subjected to dominant social discourses, and also to a self-disciplining that encourages them to conform to particular institutional regimes in the pursuit of an ideal femininity.[49]

The situation of a woman standing on the podium thus presents a contradictory situation: dominant social patriarchal discourses encourage them to pursue their femi-

[45]See Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 21.
[46]See Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?", 316.
[47]See Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity," 81.
[48]See Corrigan and Meredyth, "The Body Politic," 54.
[49]Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity," 81.

ninity through their bodies, while dominant conducting conventions suggest that they need to renounce their femininity and adopt a surrogate masculinity. Such a situation enforces a "Cartesian mind/body split," which continues to reduce women conductors to their bodies.[50] As Holcomb explained, "The pretty thing really worked against me for many years, because they didn't think I could be of a *brain* and be *pretty*. . . . I'm older now so it's not such an issue. I'm not the cute pretty young thing that everyone can hit on."[51] As Holcomb's comment suggests, no matter how musically gifted a woman conductor might be, this Cartesian split continually aligns women with their bodies and reduces them to objects of desire.[52] They are repeatedly judged on their bodily appearance over and above their musical capabilities. Corporeal feminists have argued that this binary account does not reflect a balanced opposition but rather a single standard whereby the devalued term—whether it be the body, corporeality, or nature—is measured against the primary norm—the mind, intellect or culture—and found wanting. Such a situation compels women conductors to discipline their bodies into an acceptable and appropriate form. As Lucinda Carver revealed, "I'm very concerned about maintaining myself in good shape . . . you know a lot of guys can get nice and rotund but it wouldn't be good for us to do that, would it now?"[53] Carver's comment reiterates how compelling society's demands are for women to monitor their body size and weight. As she implies, an overweight male conductor's large bodily presence might even convey a sense of physical grandeur that allows him to transcend his "rotund" body with his musicality, intelligence and wisdom. However, a "rotund" woman conductor would not be able to evade the profession's disciplining in the same manner, and would be judged in a noticeably different way.[54]

The objectification of a woman's body on the podium seems to become magnified even further with respect to dress. On the podium, acceptability is often marked by prescriptive dress and body regulations intended to de-emphasize female sexuality through a denial and masking of the body. This erasure of the body is perceived as "professional," but it is, of course, inherently masculine. The long-established uniform on the podium has been a black tuxedo and has customarily been used by conductors worldwide. This "uniform" was designed for a male body; however, no such standard uniform has been developed for women conductors. As a result, women have had to dress cautiously, in a manner that avoids sexual objectification, but also conveys their own personal femininity. On this matter Nan Washburn commented, "I think that you have to be really careful not to detract from what you're doing and the music-making. . . . I've opted to wear a tuxedo with tails and it seems to work really well. . . . For the big power

[50]The notion of a mind/body split was conceived by Plato and Aristotle and later theorized by René Descartes, whereby the mental and the material comprise two different classes of substance that are independent of one another. This split has always been linked with a number of other binary oppositions – such as man/woman, and intellect/emotion – enabling them to function interchangeably in certain contexts. Consequently, the Cartesian mind/body split has equated the intellectual mind with men and the emotional body with women. See Brook, *Feminist Perspectives on the Body*, 14-19.

[51]Holcomb, interview..

[52]Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity," 64.

[53]Lucinda Carver, interview with author, February 17, 2002.

[54]For a discussion of the conductor Sarah Caldwell's weight issues, see Jagow, "Women Orchestral Conductors," 132.

concerts definitely I always go for that one."[55] The fact that Washburn has to put on a traditionally male uniform for the "big power" prestigious concerts, demonstrates the compelling notion that women have to de-emphasize their female sexuality if they do not want to "detract" from their work on the podium. While some women conductors may enjoy "cross-dressing," others resist the implication that they should have to do this. As Mallory Thompson emphatically stated, "I love being a female! . . . I have a beautiful dress that I wear when I conduct. . . . If I wore a tux people would laugh . . . because it just wouldn't be consistent with who[m] I am as a person."[56] Even though Thompson embraces a feminine body image on the podium, and slightly evades or subverts the profession's bodily disciplining, she is still noticeably aware that she should not wear something that takes away from her conducting. She also related how she is careful not to evoke the disciplining male gaze of the profession, which often attempts to reduce her to a sexualized object of desire.

The women conducting pedagogues, whom I interviewed, re-iterated the importance of these bodily issues. As Kate Tamarkin contended, "I don't think there are enough women teaching conducting. [When teaching in Minnesota for two years] we talked about the body and how to use the body and I had to tell the women what to wear to an audition. There were some really basic things they didn't seem to know."[57] Tamarkin explained that performing on the public podium puts the female body on display in ways that may contradict the constructions of normative femininity, and women students need to understand this. As Tamarkin explains to her women students, the conducting profession requires women to temper their attractiveness—in the manner in which they dress and present themselves—if they want to be taken seriously in the role and not be reduced to disruptive objects of sexual desire.

With respect to movement and gestures on the podium, women conductors seem to face another paradoxical situation, for current dominant social attitudes about how women should move often conflict with ideas about how a conductor should act. Dominant social discourses suggest that feminine movement should be restricted in its spatiality and should exhibit constriction, grace and a certain eroticism restrained by modesty.[58] Thus, the physical gestures required on the podium place female conductors in a conflicting situation. On this subject Marin Alsop stated:

> When a woman makes a physical gesture, which conducting is, it's all about gesturing and getting a response, it's interpreted very differently societally than the same gesture from a man. For example, if I am very strong to you as a woman . . . people say, "Oh she's a bitch," excuse my language, you know, "Oh my god, she's too macho" . . . but if a man does that, people melt, "Oh he's so manly." If a woman is very . . . frilly and delicate they say, "Oh it's too lightweight, it's too feminine." If a man's like that he's "sensitive."[59]

[55]Nan Washburn, interview with author, February 6, 2002.
[56]Mallory Thompson, interview with author, January 30, 2002.
[57]Kate Tamarkin, interview with author, January 21, 2002.
[58]Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity," 67.
[59]Marin Alsop, interview with author, November 16, 2000.

While the gestures in conducting are not necessarily intrinsically gendered or, indeed, perceived as such when performed by a male, when a woman makes a conducting gesture, she will be perceived differently on the podium due to the influence of social conventions that specify how she is supposed to move. Indeed, the very same behavior that makes a male conductor appear "attractive" seems to make a woman conductor appear "unattractive."[60]

In pedagogical literature about conducting, the body is given a tremendous amount of attention, in terms of the conductor's "instrument" of communication. While this focus does move beyond the traditional mind/body split that still pervades much pedagogy within academia, the body is still seen as a subservient and functional tool, not as something to be critiqued for all its subjectivities. When I studied conducting, I was taught that my individual personality could be expressed to a certain degree, but my bodily identity was never allowed to "interfere" with the music. As the body is the music's pious servant, the social, cultural and political meanings ascribed to it are rarely considered in conducting pedagogy. Take for example the following comment by McElheran: "The conductor must constantly remember to 'mold the music' with *his* actions, somewhat as though *he* were shaping clay. Each motion should portray in visual terms what *he* feels the music should sound like."[61] In McElheran's descriptions of how to achieve this, the conductor's body is always discussed as though it is an "unmarked" male entity. Such discourses examine a conductor's arms, hands, neck, face, posture, and legs, and so on, without any consideration of how these corporeal regions are inscribed with societal, cultural, political and gendered significance. The unarticulated assumption here is that the body of a conductor belongs to a white, Western, heterosexual male, and hence is exempt from such analysis. This, of course, has significant ramifications for bodies that are marked by gender, race and sexuality.

If pedagogues and students were to examine the diverse meanings ascribed to a conductor's body, they could begin to interrogate the rigid values and assumptions associated with the established masculine bodily norm on the podium. From a pedagogical perspective, hooks explains, "Once we start talking in the classroom about the body and about how we live in our bodies, we're automatically challenging the way power has orchestrated itself in that particular institutionalized space."[62] Indeed, if conducting pedagogues were to reflect honestly on their *own* bodies from this perspective, they could actively confront the notion that they are omnipotent, all-knowing subjects that are above such concerns, and in turn, critique the Cartesian mind/body split that deems women's bodies inferior on the podium. As hooks goes on to say, "Those of us who are trying to critique biases in the classroom have been compelled to return to the body."[63] Such an acknowledgement in conducting studios could encourage students to reflect on the significance and meanings ascribed to their *own* bodies on the podium, and better understand, and possibly even re-define these dynamics of their role in conducting.

[60]See Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 30.
[61]McElheran, *Conducting Technique*, 83; italics added.
[62]Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 136-37.
[63]Ibid., 139.

The Implications of Women Conductors' Authority on the Podium

While an analysis of the meanings ascribed to conductors' bodies reveals important professional and pedagogical implications for women, so too does a critique of power and authority on the podium. This is particularly the case, because the role of an orchestral conductor has *traditionally* been modeled on notions of greatness, divinity, authority, power and tyranny.[64] As many feminist writers have shown, masculine concepts of power and authority can be very intimidating for women.[65] According to Sinclair, women often feel uncomfortable labeling themselves "leader."[66] This unease does not come from their lack of ability or even confidence, but rather the perception that leadership requires ambition, single-mindedness and ruthlessness.[67] Cox contends that feeling and possessing power are not experiences many women share or find familiar.[68] As Alsop explained, "as women, we have a different approach to life and interpersonal relationships, so we have to retrain ourselves in order to be the figure of authority."[69] The notion that women have to "retrain" themselves and mold their feminine behavior to fit into this leadership position has been a complicated issue for women conductors. Some of the women conductors whom I interviewed recounted experiences of trying to emulate a "masculine sort of leadership" so that they would be taken seriously early in their careers. As Tamarkin described, "What had been going on before was people were saying, 'you really need to be more business-like, men conduct business in a business-like manner. You need to be business-like, you need to rehearse business-like.' So I just cut myself off and tried to be this little business-like person, which wasn't what I was and it wasn't as successful."[70] Of course, the term "business-like" has been traditionally associated with "male-like." Tamarkin's comment implies that she had to detach herself from her female body in order to pursue this "no-nonsense," professional approach. Her experience shows how the conducting profession not only expects women to desexualize themselves and "cut" themselves off from their womanly experience, but also requires them to "masculinize" their conducting methods.

As Cox argues, a major barrier typifying women's experiences in leadership is that when they adopt such aspects of power and influence they can be seen as "unfeminine."[71] Accordingly, a number of my interviewees spoke about their outward rejection of the traditional dictatorial approaches to power and authority on the podium. They confirmed that such techniques were not consistent with their own personal ideology, and explained that if they were to apply these inherently masculine methods, they would not be viewed positively.[72] Many of these women described the ways in which they embody a more collegial approach to authority on the podium. As Worby commented, "I

[64]Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, 2.
[65]Cox, *Leading Women*, 17.
[66]Sinclair, *Doing Leadership Differently*, 95.
[67]Ibid., 106.
[68]Cox, *Leading Women*, 17.
[69]Alsop, interview.
[70]Tamarkin, interview.
[71]Cox, *Leading Women*, 19.
[72] Some of the women conductors referred to the ways in which pioneering conductors, such as Antonio Brico (1902-1989), attempted to emulate masculine styles of leadership, often to their detriment.

try to lead an orchestra from a non-authoritarian position. . . . My approach is to be a colleague, a musician alongside those musicians with whom I'm working."[73] In a similar vein, Victoria Bond commented, "I think that women have a tendency more to be team players, to appreciate input, to have a respectful kind of leadership. . . . I think a woman is better equipped to bring a sense of cooperation to a group than a man is."[74] Many of the other women mentioned using networking and team building, developing mutual appreciation, and acknowledging their humanity and flaws on the podium.

Of course, it would be precariously essentialist to try and quantify these actions precisely, as male conductors also use many of these methods, and the success of these methods will always be contextual. As Alsop conceded, "The challenge for me sometimes is working with orchestras in particular countries and particular cultures who [sic] aren't that collegial in this kind of work, they really want someone to be . . . very authoritative.. . . So I have to really change my approach when I work with orchestras from that kind of approach."[75] As Alsop's comment suggests, these women have to be flexible and adaptable to the context in which they find themselves. Every orchestra, of course, is different in size and "personality," and will react differently to their leadership methods.

A survey of pedagogical literature about conducting indicates that these more egalitarian and inclusive approaches to leadership and authority on the podium are discussed on occasion.[76] However, what is not discussed is how to deal with the diverse ways in which these leadership approaches may be perceived by musicians and audiences, and so on. Due to the masculine norm on the podium, women's leadership methods are often interpreted differently from men's. While democratic leadership styles are becoming more common practice on the podium, when utilized by women conductors, they appear to be subjected to a different, and I would argue heavier, form of scrutiny. As Gatens explains, the very same behavior that makes a man appear pleasant and socially appropriate seems to make a woman appear unpleasant and socially inappropriate.[77] A comment made by Daniel Barenboim exemplifies this: "whenever I have seen female conductors, I have been struck by the fact that either they try to conduct in a false masculine way and to show, you know, 'we women are just as strong and here we go.' Or else they didn't even try that and had a very effeminate nature and that didn't work at all."[78] Of course, if a male conductor were to use the "masculine" techniques Barenboim describes, he would be seen as "normal"; if he were to use the "effeminate" approaches he describes, he would be seen as sensitive.

While women seem to be drawn to more collegial approaches to leadership, perceptions such as those articulated by Barenboim appear to have a profound effect on the way each female conductor balances her personal spectrum of masculine and feminine characteristics on the podium. This leads to the question, *could* conducting pedagogy provide more guidance about this balancing act? Thompson responded to this question:

[73]Worby, interview.
[74]Victoria Bond, interview with author, February 15, 2002.
[75]Alsop, interview.
[76]See for example, Boonshaft, *Teaching Music with Passion*.
[77]Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 30.
[78]Cited in *The Young One*.

"What I tell conductors when I teach is, you know, there are masculine and feminine things and we both have to be everything. So it's not that anybody really has an advantage. Everybody has to embrace this whole spectrum of characteristics that are part of being a human being."[79] Thompson's call for a balance between masculine and feminine characteristics is certainly laudable, given the spectrum of feelings and emotions that one has to evoke when conducting a wide range of repertoire. However, I still wonder whether this idea of a spectrum really means that nobody has an advantage. As my research indicates, if a woman utilizes the "whole spectrum" of masculine and feminine qualities, she is nevertheless going to be perceived differently from a man who is seen to be adopting the same approach.

The Ramifications of Women's Decisions Regarding Conducting

The enduring customs and traditions in the conducting profession, and their resultant challenges for women, appear to have an impact upon the next generation of potential women conductors. It seems that many young women musicians still do not see professional conducting as a viable career option. As Rosen explains, "I think a lot of it is the choices women make. It's still not a profession that is widely thought about . . . it's not like being a teacher."[80] Thompson also concurred with this, "Girls say this to me all the time, 'Wow, I didn't know a woman could be a conductor, maybe I can be a conductor.'"[81] Similarly, when speaking about the University of East Anglia, Sharon Choa mentioned, "I have a lot of female conducting students. However, I don't think that any of them is really seriously going to pursue conducting as a career."[82] About her compulsory undergraduate conducting classes at the Royal Academy of Music, Ham revealed, "I've had several girls in the class who haven't thought about conducting at all, but they happen to be able to do it very well. . . . I suppose they could look at it as a bit of an uphill struggle, because it will be."[83] While compulsory conducting courses—such as those at the Royal Academy of Music and the University of East Anglia—are strategically useful for "scouting-out" potential women conductors, they are somewhat of a lost opportunity if these young women are viewing conducting as an "uphill struggle" and opting not to pursue it. Clearly, this problem does not only rest on the women themselves, but also concerns conducting pedagogy, the learning environment of universities, and the conducting profession itself.[84] This situation evokes issues that have been raised in feminist discussions of young women, education and other non-traditional fields of study.[85] As Kenway notes, even if the teacher is female, the pedagogy and curricula in such fields have often been developed, propagated and consumed in terms of masculine

[79]Thompson, interview.
[80]Rosen, interview.
[81]Thompson, interview.
[82]Sharon Choa, interview with author, February 27, 2002.
[83]Ham, interview.
[84]See Kenway, "'Non-Traditional' Pathways," 84.
[85]See Stone, *The Education Feminism Reader*; Weiner, *Feminisms in Education*; and Blackmore and Kenway, *Gender Matters*.

terrain, reflecting and building on masculine values, interests and learning styles. When this pedagogy and curricula is combined with a learning environment dominated by men, it becomes apparent why young women might feel alienated by this profession while attending university.[86] As Geffen reiterated, "One of the reasons you don't see many females studying conducting is because there aren't so many female conductors around. It's a vicious circle."[87]

In the case of Ham's students, the presence of a woman pedagogue could counteract to some extent the learning setting dominated by two-thirds male enrollment; however, this gender imbalance still permeates the rest of the profession. As Ham's observation suggests, young women are clearly aware of this, and are perhaps being pragmatic and realistic about their chances of building a career as a conductor. Worby concurs: "There are plenty of people who secretly harbor the desire to become a conductor and then when they come up against what it really is, they just say, 'Too few positions, too much competition, too much required, I would have to give up too much.'"[88] Given the difficulties women might encounter in the learning environment, many of the administrators and pedagogues I interviewed suggested that a mentoring relationship could possibly improve this situation. Rosen expressed some hope about this possibility, "Whether it's through mentorships or coaching or something that gives women who are coming into the profession an opportunity to work on some of the issues they face as women; I think that can improve the likelihood of them being successful."[89] The benefits of developing a mentoring relationship to assist women's professional development have been well documented in feminist literature.[90] As Grant argues, identifying and mentoring young women with potential is vital to the process of inclusion in the field of conducting.[91] Given the enormous challenges that conductors face and the added issues that women in this field have to contend with, having a mentor to offer guidance and to assist with professional networking seems crucial. Moreover, the need for mentoring is not only restricted to the beginning of women's careers.[92] Research from the NWCI has suggested that creating a continuing mentorship opportunity for women conductors, in the form of a supportive network, could also assist women in their conducting careers. As Ham confirmed, "I think maybe you feel you're a lone voice a lot of the time and to have a few more voices together, so there is an actual body, might be a good idea."[93] Feminist theorists have also argued that when women build a network such as this, there is enormous potential for them to contribute towards an alternative perspective that transforms parts of their profession and also nourishes them individually and collectively.[94]

[86]See Kenway, "'Non-traditional' Pathways," 83-84.
[87]Geffen, interview.
[88]Worby, interview.
[89]Rosen, interview.
[90]Scutt, *Living Generously*.
[91]Grant, *The Impact of Mentoring*.
[92]See Marshall, *Women Managers Moving On*.
[93]Choa, interview.
[94]See hooks, *Yearning*, 148-53.

Conclusion

Given the seemingly turbulent future of the orchestral profession, it is difficult to predict how the status of women conductors will evolve in the coming years. Nonetheless, as this article has shown, there are a number of professional and pedagogical issues surrounding women's participation on the podium that require further analysis and critique. Since the acceptance of women into graduate conducting courses and professional conducting positions is a relatively new development, the profession is clearly in the early stages of addressing such issues. Indeed, it was only in 1977 that Victoria Bond became the first woman to earn a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting from Juilliard. Moreover, following the lineage of ground-breaking women conductors such as Caroline B. Nichols (1864-1939), Ethel Leginska (1886-1970), and Antonio Brico (1902-89), a number of the women whom I interviewed have also been pioneering conductors, often making history as the first woman to conduct or direct a musical institution.[95] Tamarkin described this process with the following story:

> I am reminded of the story of Moses leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land. The era in which we have been living has been the era of what we might call "The Exodus," the time of the journey. . . . I realize that as women conductors it's not just what we do; it's what we represent in the lineage. However, in the story, Moses doesn't actually set foot in the Promised Land. His role is to lead them there and view the new horizon. I believe that several of us have entered the new land to an extent, but the time when people will happily dwell in the land is still to come. It's not here yet. We're in that interesting traveling exodus time. Everyone has a role to play in every generation.[96]

As Tamarkin's Biblical analogy suggests, the journey of women conductors to-date has been conditional upon their ability to *comply* with certain traditions and many of these women have not been permitted to set foot in the "Promised Land." While it will take time to develop a critical mass of women conductors, the current system also needs further critique in order for women conductors to be accepted in their own right, and "dwell in the land." Such a critique must consider both pedagogical and professional perspectives in a holistic manner that takes into account individual women's experiences, current conducting pedagogy and curricula, the customs and norms of the profession, as well as its associated support structures. While this article has only broached a select number of these issues, it has aimed to re-open the discussion that flourished in *College Music Symposium* in the last decade, by positioning some of these lingering concerns in their current professional and pedagogical contexts.

[95]See Pugh, *Women in Music*, 21.
[96]Tamarkin, interview.

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