

**AMERICAN CHORAL REVIEW**

**KURT THOMAS**

**THE CHORAL CONDUCTOR  
AND THE ORCHESTRA**

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English Adaptation

Alfred Mann  
William H. Reese

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*Wm Thomas*

## Preface

*The Choral Conductor and the Orchestra*, adapted from the *Lehrbuch der Chorleitung* by Kurt Thomas, is published as a sequel to *The Choral Conductor* (Volume XIII, Numbers 1 and 2 of the *American Choral Review*). The American Choral Foundation once again gratefully acknowledges permission received from the publishers of the original German edition, Breitkopf and Härtel, Wiesbaden, and their American representatives, Associated Music Publishers, New York. Having been intended to mark the occasion of the author's seventieth birthday, the publication of this small volume is a memorial tribute: Kurt Thomas died on March 31, 1973.

It was the author's explicit wish that selected chapters from the two supplementary volumes of his text be added to the English publication of the work. The discussion presented here (Volume III, Chapter 1 of the *Lehrbuch*) reflects his experience in combining choral and orchestral practice which culminated in his direction of the *Thomaner* and the *Gewandhaus-Orchester* as Cantor at St. Thomas's in Leipzig. At the same time it suggests a fundamental artistic goal that guided him in his historic assignment: to reinstate the natural integration of vocal and instrumental elements that characterized choral performance in the days of his great predecessor.

Alfred Mann  
William H. Reese





## Introduction

While we are not going to attempt an exhaustive discussion of the problems of orchestral conducting, our concern will be to deal with all aspects of orchestral practice that should be understood and mastered by the choral conductor.

In spite of fine *a cappella* achievements, the director of a chorus will often find himself berated for his lack of skill in handling an orchestra. This lack may be due in part to the fact that choral conductors are apt to be self-taught or that the formal instruction and experience to which they have been exposed are inadequate. They may be unfamiliar with the nature and technique of orchestral instruments and given to conducting mannerisms to which the choir might be accustomed but which the orchestra will reject.

This is not the place to reflect upon the equally prevalent inadequacy of orchestral conductors in handling a chorus, or upon the unsatisfactory situation in which an orchestral conductor has the chorus prepared by a specialist but fails to do justice to the result. Either predicament arises out of the profusion of musical repertoire and the concomitant rise of specialization which we ought to overcome.

Training in choral and orchestral conducting should go hand in hand. Aside from studying the technique of conducting, the orchestral conductor should acquaint himself with vocal and choral technique, and the choral conductor should acquire as part of his preparation a knowledge of orchestral matters.

It will be our aim to deal with these matters as fully as possible. A number of fundamental considerations, however, will require no formal instruction. It is necessary to obtain a certain knowledge of the instruments of the orchestra. Of essential help will be the study of books on orchestration and of orchestral scores. The choral conductor should make it a point to attend orchestral performances and especially orchestral rehearsals, taking his place, if possible, variously with the string, wind, and percussion sections. Ideally, he would study an orchestral instrument and participate actively in orchestral work. In any event he should seize every opportunity to join with orchestra players—either in performance or merely in discussion of their manifold concerns. An absolute “must” is the study of different bowings, under a capable and sympathetic string player, so that the choral conductor becomes aware of the full range of string articulation.

Before proceeding to specific points of technique, finally, we must turn our attention to some basic differences between choral and orchestral situations—at the risk of touching upon the obvious—in an attempt to clarify the choral conductor's attitude toward the orchestra.

1. Whereas in choral work the conductor deals with the human voice, in orchestral work he deals with mechanics and techniques founded in a wide range of instrumental construction.
2. The members of a chorus are in the majority of cases amateurs, those of an orchestra in the majority of cases professionals.
3. The chorus is therefore usually motivated by sheer interest and enthusiasm—a situation which, due to prevailing working conditions and pressures, unfortunately does not apply in the same measure to the orchestra.
4. Chorus and choral conductor form a close and steady working association, whereas orchestral musicians are often obliged to play under a number of different conductors.
5. The chorus normally has much more time at its disposal than the orchestra whose rehearsal schedule is limited—often far too limited—for economic reasons.

We no longer know the ideal circumstances under which, for instance, Hans von Bülow was able to work with the Meiningen court orchestra—there was no set schedule, and a symphony was allotted as many rehearsals as a perfect performance might require. Unknown, too, for all practical purposes, is the ideal working situation in which gifted young instrumentalists at a music school will combine their fine training with genuine devotion to the orchestral tasks involved in a choral work. One can only hope that the few existing exceptions may lead to better norms in the future.

For the time being, the choral conductor is committed to the typical modern orchestral situation which—far more than the typical choral situation—is subjected to one prime requisite: *saving time!*

## Details of Preparation

Economy of time and effectiveness of schedule are thus key factors in the collaboration between chorus and orchestra. In studying Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, for instance, twelve rehearsals, each lasting two or two and a half hours, might be considered a required norm for the chorus—thus a possible total of thirty hours. For the orchestra, three rehearsals, lasting at the most three hours each—a total of nine hours—will likely have to suffice. Considering the fact that the chorus is involved for less than half the total performance time, whereas the orchestra is involved throughout, we arrive at a ratio of approximately 6:1 in comparing the amount of time for choral and orchestral preparation. Needless to say, the chorus is placed at a considerable advantage in absorbing the nature and spirit of the work.

### *Marking Parts*

How can the conductor best compensate for this disparity of schedule? His strongest asset will be his own preparation. Just as he should be familiar with each part and each entrance of the choral score before embarking upon choral rehearsals, he should master the orchestral score before facing the instrumentalists. He should have decided—and, wherever necessary, completed—all markings of rehearsal letters or (preferably) measure numbers. He should have entered all details of dynamics and articulation, as well as all bowing marks—the latter possibly with help of a specialist—in both score and parts.

What good would it do to have choral diction, articulation, and phrasing prepared to the last detail, only to find all this work at the last moment obscured and negated by inconsistent instrumental phrasing?

As a matter of principle, any choral caesura should be observed in the orchestral section doubling the melodic line in question. Similarly, the placing of accents should be coordinated in chorus and orchestra. To what extent these matters need to be indicated in the orchestral parts depends upon the sensitivity of the available players and upon the effectiveness of the conductor's motions, but all essential marks ought to be entered *before* the first rehearsal.

It would be desirable to include portions of the verbal text in the instrumental parts.<sup>1</sup> The breathing mark (?) is of course as familiar to

<sup>1</sup> This practice has since been introduced in performance material issued by a number of publishers.—*Ed.*

the wind instrument player as it is to the singer. But it should also be applied to the string parts, for to know where the singers breathe is obviously of equal importance to wind and string players.

In addition, the conductor will have to mark bowings that are important from the point of view of phrasing as well as from the point of view of consistency and clarity within each group of the string section.

We may assume that the elements of bowing technique are understood. Suffice it to remind the reader that  $\sqcap$  stands for down-bow,  $\vee$  for up-bow, and that the bow pressure is naturally heavier at the frog than it is at the tip of the bow. Consequently the downstroke—leading from frog to tip—begins with a relative amount of accentuation and gradually decreases in intensity ( $\succ$ ), whereas the upstroke—commencing at the tip—gains intensity, anticipating the next point of accentuation in the manner of an upbeat. The string soloist will often manage to counteract these normal bowing functions and obtain interesting effects through the use of bowing patterns which run counter to the rhythmical accent. In orchestral playing, however, it is preferable to follow the natural inference of up and down. In fact, even the visual impression upon the listener will matter. Thus the accented conclusion of a phrase will invariably be more convincing if played down-bow (Ex. 1, (a)), whereas a half close or a caesura marking a colon in the text is apt to sound better if played up-bow (Ex. 1 (b)):

#### EXAMPLE 1



We may also accept it as understood that the volume of string sound is greater when fewer notes are played on one bow stroke. At times it is advisable to divide a long slur, or, conversely, to play more notes on one stroke than is indicated in the music. Such changes, of course, must not amount to an alteration of the composer's intentions; they should never turn a *legato* into a *non legato* or *staccato*. Yet a bow change from note to note does not necessarily rule out *legato* playing, just as combining several notes on one stroke does not necessarily rule out a *non legato*. The slur signifies merely that several notes are played with the same direction of bow stroke. We should mention here that dots placed under a slur are interpreted differently by the string player and the keyboard or wind instrument player. Whereas the latter will perform  $\dots$  as *non legato*, the string player will render this combination of symbols in

regular *staccato* manner (though played on one bow stroke). *Non legato* is to be marked — — — — for the string player (each note receiving a separate stroke) or  $\underbrace{\quad\quad\quad}$  (the notes all played in the same direction of bow stroke).

Although in the case of orchestral literature the bowings are often decided by the concertmaster—with or without the advice of the conductor—in choral literature the conductor should never entirely delegate this task, especially if there is a considerable amount of unison doubling in choral and instrumental parts. Aside from the need for entering breath marks, which we have mentioned, the difference between heavy and light syllables and even between long and short vowels may have to be taken into consideration.

In giving some concrete examples we might begin with an entirely unproblematic excerpt from Haydn's *Creation*:

EXAMPLE 2



Beginning with upstroke, the phrase is so arranged that each emphasized syllable will be accentuated by down-bow whereas the light syllable will coincide in each case with up-bow—the aural and visual impressions being equally clear. What might be marked here is merely the initial upstroke, and even this would normally not be necessary.

A little more thought is required in marking the next example:

EXAMPLE 3



This passage from the same work might again be performed without any added markings, as shown in version (a). In order to express the proper stress on the first syllables (downbeats) the two preceding eighth notes might in each case be combined on one upstroke, thus reaffirming the accents with downstrokes which, moved back to the frog through the preceding upstroke combination, are invariably rendered more effective; see version (b). In Ex. 4, an excerpt taken from the *German Requiem* by Brahms, the situation is similar:

EXAMPLE 4



It would be possible to present this theme, beginning with a down-bow accent, by simply following the normal change of up- and down-bow and observing only the slur called for in the next to the last measure; indicating the two breathing marks will be of help. There will be a certain flaw, however, in having the last note come out up-bow, especially in view of the text, which requires added emphasis at this point. It would be better to play the notes *d* and *e* at the sign + on the same upstroke, saving the downstroke for the accented beat—which the discerning string player would likely do in any event. But the bowing on one upstroke for the half notes in measures 1 and 2—preferable because of the resulting accents on the down-beats of measures 2 and 3—would have to be marked by the conductor.

At times greater intensity and clearer articulation will be attained by surrounding a breathing point with two down-strokes or upstrokes ( $\square' \square: v' v$ ). There is a considerable difference of execution between  $\square \square$  and  $\square$  or between  $v v$  and  $v$ . While we are obviously dealing in each case with a succession of two notes bowed in the same direction, the bow is used in a totally different manner: in the case of  $\square$  it is stopped but then continues its motion at the same spot, whereas in the case of  $\square \square$ , it is lifted and drawn back in the air to touch the string again closer to the frog. The result is an intensified caesura and an accentuated new starting-point; see the following example taken from Mozart's *Requiem*:

## EXAMPLE 5



In the case of  $v v$  the breathing point is underlined by an increased upbeat crescendo; see the example taken from Bach's *B Minor Mass*:

## EXAMPLE 6



Special attention should be given to string passages supporting choral coloratura. (*Note:* In all examples slurs marked under the notes refer merely to the melismatic distribution of text syllables; slurs marked above the notes refer to the string articulation.)



(a), yet the recurring downstroke accents on "Kyrie" might give an impression of too much uniformity. Version (b) would retain the strength of attack and take advantage of the driving character of the upstroke placed on the notes before the rests, but it would also mean a certain loss of volume. Version (c) offers variety and continuity, which will enhance the repetition of the rhythmic motif. Thus there is some justification for each of the three solutions.

## EXAMPLE 9

Adagio

Ky-ri-e, Ky-ri-e, Ky-ri-e e-lei-son

The ensuing principal theme of the movement is so magnificently phrased by Bach that any change would be disturbing:

## EXAMPLE 10

Kyrie e-lei-son, Ky-ri-e e-lei-son

The marking of parts should never be postponed until rehearsal time or left to the orchestra.<sup>3</sup> Lengthy discussions about proper markings would completely undermine the rehearsal morale. Discrepancies between score and parts will have to be corrected ahead of time; to settle them during the rehearsal would require a number of minutes adding up to an irreparable loss, especially because of the unrest and irritation that such lapse of time would cause.

Once orchestra members are convinced that the conductor is well prepared and thoroughly familiar with the score, a most important point is gained. Often older and considerably more experienced, the orchestra musician will readily spot any weakness on the part of the conductor, though competence—and competence alone—he will not fail to recognize. Yet if the orchestra feels its time is being wasted, restlessness, discussion, and antagonism will inevitably result.

<sup>3</sup> This is not meant to imply that the conductor should be inflexible about suggestions from the orchestra. But these should logically grow from, and revert to, a co-operative working association between conductor and concertmaster preferably established before the first rehearsal.



### *Rehearsal Plan and Procedure*

One of the most important details of preparation is a carefully designed rehearsal plan. Once the conductor knows how many hours will be at his disposal, he should draw up a precise schedule.

What are the principles by which the conductor should be guided? His first consideration must be constant concentration upon the essential: never to expect groups of players to stay when they are not occupied. Thus he should not proceed according to the order of movements but according to their scoring. Beginning the first rehearsal with the pieces involving everybody, he should plan to dismiss sections or individual players as they are no longer needed (they—in fact, everyone—will appreciate this manner of planning).

Even in such a large score as the *German Requiem* by Brahms a logical schedule will easily emerge: Trumpets, timpani, and tuba are employed only in the second, third, and sixth movements; horns III and IV are no longer required in the fourth and fifth movements; and in the first movement neither clarinets nor violins I and II (a rare case!) are used. In works of the Baroque period usually the strings and continuo instruments—eventually only the latter—will remain to the end.

In contrast to the first rehearsal, the second rehearsal might be so arranged that only those wind instruments which have solo tasks are scheduled at the beginning. Gradually other groups are added, so that the complete orchestra is assembled only toward the middle of the rehearsal, for a precisely specified amount of time. This amount of time should be used to review the most important tutti portions; then, on a schedule similar to that of the first rehearsal, section after section is dismissed. Thus the conductor will obtain a four-hour rehearsal involving no more than a three-hour schedule for most of the players.

Even if the vocal soloists are present for the second rehearsal, the indicated plan seems advisable: it represents the most sensible use of everyone's time. Barring occasional needs for special arrangements, it will be better to have one or the other soloist wait for a number than to have entire groups of orchestra members wait.

Only in the rehearsals involving chorus and orchestra, especially in the dress rehearsal, will it be necessary to observe the sequence of movements faithfully in order to study the problems arising from the proper continuity and to achieve an understanding of the total design.

As an example, we might present a thoroughly tested rehearsal plan for Bach's *B Minor Mass*. Time apportionments should be strictly observed. It is possible, of course, that a fine orchestral ensemble will get ahead of this schedule. There is nothing that will raise the morale more than ending a rehearsal early. Conversely, if because of some exigencies the number of minutes allotted to a given portion of the work has

to be exceeded, the loss must be made up in the next movement—at the latest, in the one after that. Nothing is more nerve-wracking than to feel that an orderly rehearsal is turning into a mad race.

It is even advisable to make use of the intermission; for instance, by checking some difficult passages with a group of the players that will be ready to leave when the others return from the break. Or one might take advantage of the intermission by discussing solo numbers with the concertmaster. If he wants time off, the orchestra could resume work for the duration of the required recess without him.

TABLE I  
*First Rehearsal: Orchestra (Choruses only)*

Instrumentation	Numbers	Time
Tutti	4	10:00 a.m.
	6	10:15
	11	10:25
	13	10:40
	17	10:50
	19	11:05
	20	11:20
	21 (24=6)	11:35
Trumpets, timpani leave 11:45		
Intermission 11:45		
Strings and woodwinds	1	11:55
	3	12:10 p.m.
Oboes, Bassoon leave 12:25		
Strings and flutes	8	12:20
	16	12:30
Flutes leave 12:45		
Strings only	12	12:40
	15	12:50
End of rehearsal 1:00		

*Editorial Note:*

The reader will have to keep in mind that details for rehearsal plans given here are based on European orchestral norms and may require some modification. American professional orchestras will require more intermission time than that allotted in Tables I-III and will likely insist on intermission periods applying to all players simultaneously.

The listing of No. 22 from the *B Minor Mass* as an aria involving solo violin (Table II) is based on the original *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition. The new complete edition (*Neue Bach-Ausgabe*), not yet in print when this discussion was first published, presents in its Critical Commentary, p. 184, a convincing argument for the use of solo flute instead of solo violin. Bach's autograph score does not specify which instrument is intended.

The numbering of movements used here corresponds to that given in the vocal scores published by Novello (H. W. Gray) and G. Schirmer.

TABLE II  
*Second Rehearsal: Orchestra and Vocal Soloists*

Instrumentation	Numbers	Time
Horn, bassoons, continuo	10	9:00 a.m.
2 oboes, continuo	18	9:20
woodwinds and strings	7	9:40
	9	10:00
	14	10:15
Intermission 10:30		
	Review of tutti sections	10:45
All winds leave 11:30		
Strings only	5	11:30
Violas leave		
Strings without violas	2	11:50
	23	12:10 p.m.
All tutti strings leave		
Solo violin, continuo	22	12:30
End of rehearsal 12:50		

Quite understandably, instrumentalists will be least sympathetic with the rehearsal combination of chorus and orchestra; they are apt to feel that they are merely supporting the chorus in a rehearsal which they themselves do not need. Here one should be particularly considerate towards the orchestra, possibly having the chorus correct problematic spots *a cappella*, and in suitable instances pointing out the special needs of choral-orchestral ensemble work. The more problems of particular interest to the orchestra are stressed, the better.

TABLE III  
*Third Rehearsal: Chorus and Orchestra*  
*(Choral numbers in proper sequence)*

Numbers	Time
1	7:00 p.m.
3	7:15
4	7:25
6	7:40
8	7:50
11	8:00
12	8:15
Intermission 8:25	
13	8:35
15	8:45
16	8:55
17	9:05
19	9:20
20	9:35
21	9:45
(24=6)	9:55
End of rehearsal 10:00	

Fourth Rehearsal = Dress Rehearsal  
 The entire Mass in proper sequence

The principle of this rehearsal plan can be applied, with whatever adjustments may be needed, to all works for chorus and orchestra. In compositions requiring larger orchestral forces, the difficult string passages might be rehearsed first and the difficult wind passages last: 9:00 strings only, 10:00 tutti, 12:30 winds only, or vice versa.

Such a rehearsal plan obviously calls for utmost precision on the part of the conductor—precision above all in giving his directions and making his announcements. Any superfluous word should be avoided. Any needless repetition or mere playing through should be ruled out: the result will in no way justify the expenditure of energy. Concentrating upon the really difficult spots—precarious entrances, fermatas, transitions—will mean the most efficient use of rehearsal time.

The conductor should always express himself clearly and unequivocally. Any unessential explanations are a mere waste of time. As in choral rehearsals, counting measures in order to identify a starting place should be done simultaneously by conductor and orchestra, thus: "from letter G, as in George, please count back, one, two, three, four measures," not "one, two, three, four before G." In the latter case, the orchestra

members could not *begin* counting until the conductor has finished—counting with him will do away with *two* void stretches of time: theirs and his. It is even better to reduce the time spent on counting to a logical minimum by having measure numbers conveniently marked at the beginning of each line in score and parts.

The same precision should apply to the conductor's gestures. It is in this respect, especially, that many a choral conductor will invite criticism from the orchestra. The chorus, usually lacking a means of comparison, will readily accept deficiencies in conducting technique—not so the orchestra. Instrumentalists demand absolutely clear motions, unmistakable conducting patterns, a definite "one"—in short, all internationally accepted details of clear direction. There should be no waving or swaying; perfect economy should be the rule.

A last point: economy of time and manner requires strict discipline. The conductor should not let any disturbance or irregularity pass—some instrumentalists tend to take a little time in looking over a new conductor, trying out in various ways what the traffic will bear.

It is very important, for instance, that marked bowings are uniformly observed; if a change is decided upon at the recommendation of the concertmaster, it should immediately be entered in all parts, but the conductor should not let a discussion arise. Nor must the conductor ever permit any conversation or distraction while an explanation is being given. If restlessness should set in at some point, he should briefly, quietly, and firmly impress upon the orchestra the obvious loss of time. The majority of the orchestra members will doubtless agree and cooperate—any loud word or show of temper would therefore be unnecessary and ought to be avoided in any event.

On the other hand, the conductor will have to be guided by sensitive judgment in deciding whether a mishap is due to a real mistake or to an accidental slip. The latter should be registered, noticeably but silently and without disturbing the continuity of the rehearsal; the former will require interruption and explicit correction.

The same care is needed in determining whether an occasional lack of concentration is due to stress and ought to be ignored. Wind players—especially oboists and trumpet players dealing with the high tessitura of Bach's trumpet parts—can easily be overtaxed. The conductor must spare them as much as possible without compromising the artistic goal.

## Details of Technique

The principles of conducting technique are essentially the same for chorus and orchestra. Yet certain modifications are required by the different nature of vocal and instrumental ensembles discussed initially, as well as by the difference between vocal scores and instrumental parts.

### *Upbeat and Entrance*

In giving a preparatory beat for the chorus, for instance, the count immediately preceding the entrance will normally suffice. This holds for an orchestral entrance too, provided it occurs exactly on an upbeat or on a downbeat. If, however, the orchestral entrance occurs after the downbeat, a different rule applies: the upbeat preceding this downbeat will have to be indicated as well.

#### EXAMPLE 11



For the chorus it would suffice to give a preparatory beat on “one” so that the entrance will follow on “two.” For the orchestra it would be necessary to mark, at least with a slight raising of the hand, the preceding “four.” The orchestra player has no way of telling whether or not another instrumental part might enter on “one,” and thus he expects an upbeat. The chorus’s greater familiarity with the work could in itself render this procedure unnecessary in choral conducting. Nevertheless, I recommend transferring the orchestral principle to the chorus—not the reverse: it will insure the greatest clarity to acknowledge the upbeat with a small unaccented motion of one hand before giving a strongly marked preparatory beat on “one.” A similar situation can be seen in the following example from the *B Minor Mass*:

#### EXAMPLE 12

Et re-sur-re-xit, re-sur-re-xit...

Here “three” and “one” should be marked by unaccented raising and lowering of one hand, then “two” is given so strongly accented that the entrance *must* follow. Very important in this case is that the beats for “three” and “one” are completely passive—they must not suggest breathing—and they must so obviously serve for orientation only that a premature entrance is virtually impossible.

Consistent observance of the generally valid principles of conducting cannot be urged strongly enough—any exceptions are bound to lead to trouble. As an example, we might quote a typical incident: A choral conductor had accustomed his chorus to preparatory beats on “three” and “four” in order to solidify the rhythm for the opening of the *Sanctus* in the *B Minor Mass*.

## EXAMPLE 13

San - ctus, San - ctus...

He announced this in the orchestral rehearsal, and the players took smiling notice of an “amateurish procedure” (actually quite justified and sensible). As is unfortunately the case at times, some orchestra members, having missed the rehearsal and announcement, came in a beat early at the dress rehearsal (an occasion with invited audience) and caused a general confusion so that the movement had to be stopped and started again. Now the conductor announced to the chorus that he would give only the preparatory beat “four.” But being used to two beats, the chorus entered one beat late in the performance, so that here, too, the movement had to be stopped and started again.

Another point about which the choral conductor should be cautioned is this: In interrupting a work in rehearsals, the chorus will more easily resume the phrase according to the logic of melody or text, whereas the orchestra expects to start on “one” unless there is a specific announcement “with upbeat.” Even if “one” represents the final note of a phrase followed by a number of rests, the orchestra would normally re-enter by playing this note, and the conductor ought to observe and enforce this practice in order to avoid misunderstandings.

### *Use of Baton*

There is no reason why the choral conductor accustomed to conducting without a baton should have to use it when dealing with the orchestra.

In an earlier discussion the author has presented the point of view that there is no compelling reason why the conductor should use a baton at all.<sup>4</sup> There can be no denying the fact that the baton restricts the freedom of one hand, that it limits manual expression, that its motions are no clearer or more rhythmical than those of the hand which guides it, that from a distance it may not even be clearly visible. There remains only its function as "status symbol," which indeed the cantor's staff originally was—held in one hand while the *other* conducted.

The decisive argument, however, is that at all times in the history of conducting—whether the implement was the scroll of music manuscript or Lully's famous long wooden stick—the natural form of conducting with free hands was also in use. I have never found an orchestra that objected to my conducting without baton.

The choral conductor should feel no hesitation in following his personal preference in this matter.

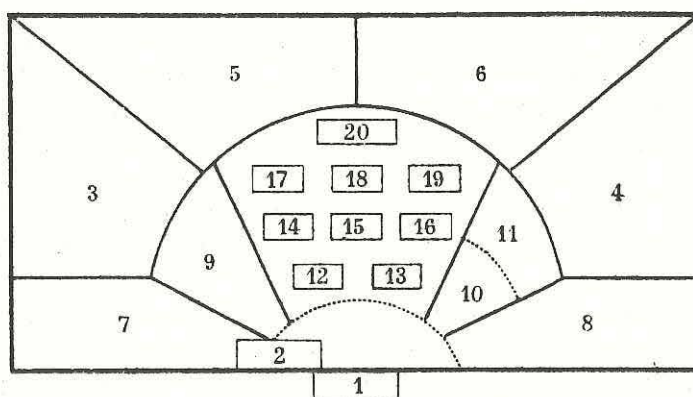
<sup>4</sup> "Conducting Without Baton," *The Choral Conductor* (*American Choral Review*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1-2, pp. 4-5).



## Placement of Chorus and Orchestra

In arranging chorus and orchestra on the stage, it will be important to have the various sections of the orchestra as close as possible to the choral sections they support. With the sopranos on the left of the conductor and the altos on the right, the second violins should be placed facing the firsts. Corresponding to this arrangement, the violas should be grouped with the tenors, and the cello and bass sections with the choral basses (see Table IV).

TABLE IV



- |                  |                  |               |
|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1 Conductor      | 7 First Violins  | 14 Horns      |
| 2 Vocal Soloists | 8 Second Violins | 15 Clarinets  |
| 3 Sopranos       | 9 Violas         | 16 Bassoons   |
| 4 Altos          | 10 Cellos        | 17 Trumpets   |
| 5 Tenors         | 11 Double Basses | 18 Trombones  |
| 6 Basses         | 12 Flutes        | 19 Tuba       |
|                  | 13 Oboes         | 20 Percussion |

In this manner all strings are properly grouped with the respective choral sections, but at the same time all orchestral sections are logically connected: the bass instruments are together, the woodwinds are together adjoining the horns, which, in turn, are grouped with all the brasses, and the percussion section is together. In addition, all instruments apt to be used in solo passages are conveniently close to one another.

In works with continuo it is best to place the harpsichord—in the case of Bach's works preferably a positive organ—directly in front of the conductor with the continuo cello and next to the soloists.

Some works will require special variants from this norm. For a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, with its two choirs and two orchestras, the entire first orchestra should be on the left and the entire second orchestra on the right of the conductor. This arrangement will work out best with the second violins in each orchestra placed behind the firsts, cellos and basses behind the violas, and the winds forming a raised wedge between the two vocal choirs.

The conductor should also concern himself with the proper specifications for the podium. In checking them it might not hurt if he himself lends a hand: competent and reliable stage hands will very likely be available, but only by working directly with them will the conductor be assured that everything is in good order—and only he can judge the complicated requirements of the entire physical arrangement.

One final word of advice: Prior to the performance the conductor himself should review this entire arrangement, try out the podium, count the chairs, and make sure that all the stands have the right music—somebody might have tampered with it. All this might seem to be unnecessary precaution, but it is much to be preferred to possible frustration and disillusionment. For the same reason, it is by no means unimportant for the conductor to check the physical properties of the hall from the point of view of chorus, orchestra, and audience. It is he who is in the best position to judge all questions, aural and visual—including the lighting.

The choral conductor cannot afford the pose of the maestro who appears at the last moment, possibly having someone carry his baton in for him. Nor is the attitude of the esoteric artist—far removed from all realities of everyday business—appropriate, no matter how valid and attractive in itself. He should be neither star nor dreamer nor tyrant but should always remain true to his role as leader among equals.

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19th Century

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*Missa super "Osculetur me"* for two four-part mixed choruses. Edited by Siegfried Hermelink. BA 4396. DM 9.-

### HANS LEO HASSLER (1564-1612)

*Kirchengesänge*. Selections from 32 chorale movements for four- or five-part mixed chorus. Edited by Ulrich W. Zimmer. German text. BA 6221. DM 9.50

### MICHAEL PRAETORIUS (1571-1621)

*Kyrie and Gloria (Missa sine nomine)* from *Missodia Sionia* 1611 for four-part mixed chorus. Edited by Otto Brodde. Latin and German text. BA 4399 DM 2.50

*Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr*. Chorale arrangements for three-, four- and eight-part mixed chorus. Edited by Ulrich W. Zimmer. German text. BA 4398. DM 5.-

### HEINRICH SCHÜTZ (1585-1672)

*Ausgewählte geistliche Chorsätze*. Selected sacred choral settings for four- to eight-part mixed chorus, some with basso continuo. Edited for the Schütz anniversary 1972. German text. BA 6222. DM 5.-

### JOHANN HERMANN SCHEIN (1586-1630)

*Trinklieder*. Seven drinking songs from *Studentenschmaus* and *Venuskränzlein* for five-part mixed chorus, some with basso continuo. Edited by Marianne and Siegmund Helms. German text. BA 6227. DM 6.-

### GIACOMO CARISSIMI (1605-1674)

*Jubilemus omnes et cantemus*. Cantata for three-part mixed chorus (SSB) and basso continuo. Edited by Ebbe Selén. Latin and German text. BA 6225. Chorus score DM 6.50, b.c. (violoncello) DM 2.-

### SAMUEL CAPRICORNUS (1629-1665)

*Mein Gott und Herr*. Sacred Concerto for three-part mixed chorus (SSB), two violins and basso continuo. Edited by Ebbe Selén. German text. BA 6226. Full score with parts DM 12.-, Chorus score DM 3.-, String parts available separately, each DM 2.-

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