

# The challenges of guest conductor-musicians relationship in symphony orchestras

**Home > Insights into arts and culture > Organisational change in arts and culture**

This research was conducted by **Dmitry Khodyakov** at the **RAND Graduate School, USA**.

## Summary

This paper focuses on orchestral musicians' perspective of the role of guest conductors and how they manage the power relations between them and the musicians in a short period of time. The methodology consisted of 18 one-to-one interviews with instrumental musicians, as well as two with orchestral conductors.

Three types of authority are studied in this context: traditional (taking into account the historical role of conducting), charismatic (influenced by how guest conductors convey their authority on the stage) and legal-rational (the powers derived by the role the person occupies).

## Guest conductors are at the same time the most and least powerful members of the orchestra on stage

On the one hand, they control the musical interpretation of the piece, regardless of the fact that their relationship with the orchestra is temporary. On the other hand, guest conductors differ from music directors as they may not be able to use their legal-rational authority compared to principal conductors, such as hiring and firing musicians, or choosing repertoire. Also, they depend on musicians' willingness and ability to perform.

# The authority of guest conductors is related to their influencing abilities and relationships with musicians

Such relationships are a two-way influence process: the guest conductor must allow musicians to shine, as well as having a constant dialog with players who, in turn, make sure to show their professional competence in performing, as well as accepting the conductor's musical interpretation.

## The success of the performance depends on how well the guest conductor utilises musicians' abilities and how well the orchestra performs to the conductor's interpretation

Musicians will feel that the guest conductors helped them to showcase their talents in relation to other orchestras, whereas the guest conductors will become confident that their views on the composer's pieces will be conveyed successfully by the orchestra. It's about not exhibiting *the "God complex,"* in which conductors think that *'they are above everyone else in every way'*.

This summary is by **David Kohan Marzagao, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

### Keywords

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